

INFORMATION FOR LIBRARIANS



The Hobart Human Library is a library just like any other – except the 'books' are real, living people!

The aim of the Hobart Human Library is to build empathy and increase the understanding and acceptance of difference between members of the community. It is all about two way listening and learning which empowers 'books' and readers alike.

This document is for people interested in becoming a librarian and it is designed to be read in conjunction with the *Hobart Human Library History* document.

Who can be a librarian?

Librarians can come from any walk of life and from any background; although it should be kept in mind that the purpose of a human library is to promote an acceptance of the differences which may exist between members of a community. Librarians are required to engage respectfully and to communicate effectively with human 'books' and the participants at workshops (called readers).

While everyone has their own story, during a Hobart Human Library workshop, it is important that 'books' tell their story, and librarians support them in doing so. We encourage librarians who have a story of their own that they wish to tell, to train as a human 'book', either instead of or in addition to undertaking librarian training.

Your role as a librarian

All of the human 'books' in our library have experienced some form of stereotyping, stigma or discrimination in their life – it could be as a result of their culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance or wellness. It takes a great deal of courage to share their story with others and for many it has also taken considerable time for them to be comfortable to share. It is important to note that human 'books' are trained to share their stories and engage in conversation with strangers about their experiences and so are often well-equipped for some of the more difficult HHL situations that can occur. The most important part of the librarian's role is to assist the human 'books'. We do not expect librarians to be counsellors and only ask for librarians to be aware of potential signs of distress in readers or 'books'.

Other tasks expected of a librarian might include:

- Helping to set-up and pack-down at events.
- Welcoming readers and ensuring they follow the library rules.
- Watching to ensure 'books' and readers are comfortable and that conversations remain respectful.
- Being prepared to intervene sensitively if 'books' or readers show signs of distress.
- Using language that is calm and non-confrontational when there are moments where you need to intervene.
- Ensuring the comfort of 'books' including rest and refreshment.
- Timekeeping.
- Ensuring that feedback forms are completed by all readers, 'books' and librarians.
- Being reliable, punctual and well presented in a librarian uniform at all events (black trousers/skirt with an A Fairer World T-shirt and name badge).

Training and support

Before beginning your time as a librarian with the Hobart Human Library you will be required to undertake essential training. Until you have completed all of the necessary training you will be a trainee librarian. Required training includes:

- attending one a human 'book' training session (2 hours);
- attending a Hobart Human Library workshop (2 hours); and
- communication and emotional safety training designed specifically for librarians of the Hobart Human Library, delivered by a mental health professional (4 hours).

For librarians who wish to participate in online delivery of the Hobart Human Library (the virtual and/or modular Hobart Human Library formats), you may need to undertake additional training.

You will be recognised for your contributions to the Hobart Human Library with a certificate at the end of each year. Training that you complete and workshops that you attend will be recorded at A Fairer World.

Tips from past librarians

- Get to know the 'books' prior to an event.
- Be strict - but never bossy - in applying the library rules and ask the same from readers and 'books'. (Communication training will help you to find ways other than saying 'no' and ensure that your language is calm and respectful.)
- Do your best to assist the 'books' and talk immediately to the Hobart Human Library manager about anything you think is an issue or you notice any potentially difficult readers.
- You are not a counsellor – don't offer advice or preach.
- You are there to support the 'books', not as their advocate or facilitator – don't ever speak for 'books'.
- Listen to the stories of the 'books' and get to know how readers respond to their stories.

For more information about the Hobart Human Library contact:

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