

INFORMATION FOR LIBRARIANS



A human library differs from a conventional library in that the 'books' are living people that 'readers' can engage with in conversation.

The aim of a human library is to increase the understanding and acceptance of difference between members of a community. Human libraries are about two-way listening and learning.

This document for librarians is 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. 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 the *Hobart Human 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 usually well-equipped to deal with uncomfortable situations that might occur.

The most important part of the librarian's role is to assist the human 'books'. Librarians are not counsellors, but are required to be aware of signs that may indicate distress in a 'reader' or 'book' and know how to deal with such a situation.

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 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 training. Until you have completed all of the necessary training you will be a trainee librarian. Required training includes:

- attending the first half of a human 'book' training session (2 hours),
- attending a *Hobart Human Library* workshop as an observer (2 hours), and
- communication and emotional safety training delivered by a mental health professional (4-6 hours).

For librarians who wish to participate in online delivery of the *Hobart Human Library*, additional training is required.

All librarians are recognised at the end of each year with a certificate that shows training completed and workshops attended.

Tips from past librarians

- Get to know the 'books' prior to an event.
- Be careful - and never bossy - in applying the library rules. 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 if you notice any potentially difficult situations.
- Librarians are not activists or facilitator – do not lecture 'readers' or ask questions on their behalf.
- Librarians are also not counsellors or advocates - do not offer advice or speak for the 'books'.
- Listen to the stories of the 'books', learn how 'readers' respond to their stories and how 'books' respond to questions.

For more information about the *Hobart Human Library* contact:

A Fairer World

4 Battery Square, Battery Point, TAS, 7004

P: 03 6223 1025

E: humanlibrary@afairerworld.org

W: www.afairerworld.org/hhl/