**PPT 1 TITLE** EDI IN THE WHITTAKER LIBRARY.

**PPT 2.** The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is a small, specialist institution. We cover classical, traditional and jazz music; drama, technical production arts, film and ballet. Our student numbers are small, although we have wide cultural impact -and an abundance of ambition. The Whittaker Library’s equality and diversity activities might seem small-scale. However, some of our efforts are achievable because of our small, specialist focus. For example, in an effort to increase our holdings of music by women composers and composers of colour, it has been possible to make contact with a number of composers and activists, engaging in correspondence about our project and what we’re trying to achieve.

**PPT 3 CATEGORIES** Considerations of equality and diversity fall into broad categories: the stock itself; the documentation, ie cataloguing; exploitation of the stock via reading lists; and general reader outreach.

The library team has approached the matter from various perspectives, whether ensuring a better balance of music by women composers or composers of colour; tagging titles that might use inappropriate, outdated or offensive terminology; helping academic colleagues with decolonising reading lists; or providing reading material on such issues as neurodiversity, mental health and wellbeing. Meanwhile, our outreach activities defy description in a single sentence!

I would like to underline from the outset that I’m merely a team-member of this initiative; I do not wish to claim credit for all that I’m about to tell you about!

# Documentation

In terms of documentation, we’ve been taking steps to identify books and music, largely amongst our older stock, which may contain offensive terminology.

**PPT 4 IAML** Just over a year ago, my colleague Catherine Small and I chaired a panel discussion about diversity issues for UK music librarians at our professional association’s annual virtual study event. Catherine invited Carissa Chew, at that time Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion intern at NLS, to join the discussion. Carissa’s extensive list of sensitive keywords and their context informed the drawing up of our own Whittaker Library list. Caroline Cochrane, our Head of Information Services, also liaised with our Black Students’ Union. Since then, we’ve included a collection statement on the catalogue homepage, and we’ve been trawling the catalogue to identify entries using these words, adding a note in the 500 field to alert readers that these items might have offensive content. Reading directly from a powerpoint slide isn’t normally good practice, but it’s important to share this, from the point of view of accessibility.

**PPT 5 - COLLECTION STATEMENT - - - PPT 6 – 500 FIELD NOTE**

However, this task is not without its problems.

Firstly, We can only identify what’s in the catalogue record. We can’t know what emotive language might be between the covers of a playscript, or in the lyrics of a song. Neither would we know that an early 20th century music primer could contain advertisements for items with offensive titles, which we don’t even stock. Being a primer for beginners, this one was a donation that fortunately does not need to be added to our collection.

**PPT 7 - HONEYMAN’S YOUNG VIOLINIST’S TUTOR, PLANTATION ADV**

Secondly, Some words may not seem obviously offensive, unless you know the history. In the case of plantation songs, obviously plantations originally relied on forced labour by enslaved people. A late Victorian or early twentieth century song postdates the abolition of slavery, but still evokes the Jim Crow era. In that context, middling class late Victorians and Edwardians might have seen images of plantations like these, but the lived reality may have been very different for many workers. **PPT 8 – PLANTATION IMAGES**

There are plenty of other such terms! Take, for example, the dance called the ‘Cakewalk’; this has origins in slavery, but subsequently became a dance-form falling under the general jazz umbrella of Ragtime. Today, we do understand that the cakewalk has racist origins.

In different ways, both jazz music and gospel music, aka spirituals, can contain terminology unacceptable to us today, but to suppress jazz and gospel music for such reasons would, in itself, be an act of erasure. Both are forms of music by which the black community communicated, are still valued as such, and are appreciated by a much wider constituency. Ask yourself what to do with a score like this:- **PPT 9 – Negro spirituals**

Thirdly, Our students highlighted some words – eg “gypsy” - which could be used in an offensive context as a racial slur, but are not always so. The term appears in many music compilations (gypsy waltz, gypsy dance, and so on), where there is nothing about the music itself that’s objectionable. A so-called gypsy dance is a genre of music, like a Viennese waltz, a Scottish strathspey or an Irish jig. **PPT 10 - BLACK EYES**

It’s worth pointing out that there are serious Twitter accounts using the term ‘gypsy’ within this community, and there is currently a Channel 5 series of documentaries, *Here come the Gypsies*. Although the individuals profiled in the series aren’t necessarily heard self-identifying as Gypsies, it does appear that the term, ‘Romany Gypsy’ is not universally considered offensive. **PPT 11 – TWITTER, CHANNEL 5**

A book published by the English Folk Dance & Song Society in 2006, also appears to endorse the word … **PPT 12 – TRAVELLER’S JOY**

Libraries who specifically work with groups of travelling people, have not reported a problem with using the word “gypsy”. There’s a CILIP event coming up soon, about these outreach activities. **PPT 13 – CILIP EVENT 17 June 2022**

Other words on our list are not offensive in themselves, but are listed because they concern sensitive subjects. For instance, the composer Wagner’s views about Jewish people are controversial, but to see the word “Jewish” in a song title or a book about Jewish music, is not offensive per se.

And of course, there’s also the question as to where to draw the line. This was a recent donation. It smacks of colonialism – but it’s quite a well-known old song. Would you add it to stock or bin it? **PPT 14 – On the Road to Mandalay**

All these examples fall under the umbrella of what our counterparts in museums and art galleries describe as “Curating Discomfort.” Initiatives like the Curating Discomfort intervention currently on display in the Hunterian Museum, are an effort to acknowledge and contextualise the dark and unpalatable side of some of their holdings. **PPT 15 HUNTERIAN** The intervention is well-worth a visit, and there’s a great website, too. The Hunterian’s Curator for Discomfort, Zandra Yeaman, recently spoke at the CILIP conference.

At the National Gallery, Conservation Fellow Kendall Francis has similarly recorded a thought-provoking video about the colour indigo, in connection with a picture there. Quoting her words, it addresses, ‘The histories of people beyond those explicitly depicted.' (You can find it on YouTube.)

Libraries aren’t museums - we don’t generally exhibit artifacts with dubious backgrounds or obtained by dubious means, and there’s no opportunity for helpful and provocative contextual legends to inspire our visitors. Nonetheless, there’s food for thought here, about our attitudes towards old stock reflecting historic attitudes. Their presence affords the opportunity to consider and explore the truths behind the words themselves.

**PPT 16**

Some months ago, my colleague Catherine Small embarked upon a large-scale project, inviting academic colleagues to work with her in assessing course reading-lists. Catherine couldn’t be with us today, but has given me an overview of her work, to share with you:-

Catherine says,

Over the past two years, all of the programmes at the RCS have been asked to diversify the resources they use within the curriculum. The library took the opportunity to offer analysis of their current reading lists to gauge how diverse their lists were, as a starting point for their work. This analysis was based on the work that Glasgow School of Art had already conducted within their institution. Lecturers with static lists were contacted and offered the service: these were mainly from the School of Dance, Drama, Production and Film and the School of Learning and Teaching. A total of 99 lists were analysed for ethnicity, gender, place of publication, and an average date for publications was also given. This involved researching each author to try to ascertain their gender and ethnicity through images and any biographical information that could be found. A margin of error was acknowledged, and in some cases assumptions were made from what information could be found. LGBTQ+ and neurodiversity were also harder to identify if the author did not openly refer to them. In some cases it was not possible to ascertain the information needed and these were left as unidentified.

To support lecturers to then update their lists, support pages were created which include advice on starting the process, lists of diverse publishers and lists of current publications that we have in our collections. These were divided by subject area and also included open access material that could be used. For the lecturers who then made changes, we further analysed their lists and gave feedback. We have also sourced lists from other performing arts institutions to allow them to see what others are doing; and we are currently exploring further work to expand our pages of resources. This reading list analysis has been received positively by the lecturers who have taken part and has given some a starting point of areas in particular that they need to look at.

We have now held one reading list workshop as part of the Spotlight on Diversity project supported by the SLIC Innovation and Development Fund and we will be holding another in September. These workshops are to create a space where staff can come together to discuss challenges, talk about their work in this area - and it allows the library further to advertise the work we are doing to support them. A couple of staff from other performing arts institutions also came along to present on their work to broaden the discussions. From this, the library will identify further ways to support staff in this area; and ultimately further diversify the library collections through purchases for reading lists.

I’m sure Catherine would be happy to discuss with anyone who has questions about this project, if you’d like to email her.

**PPT 17** Our outreach efforts have included blogposts, tweeting, an equality and diversity Padlet, and recommending new materials to students. Last year, Dr Andy Dougan – a film studies lecturer – contributed a very successful fortnightly series of blogposts entitled, D is for Diversity, featuring twenty-six different film producers, for our library blog - Whittaker Live. (No connection with the children’s book by the same title by Shannon Jett.)

We started a new series of blogposts this year, endorsed by our Equality and Diversity team. We hoped to engage our readers in a collaborative series of reviews - looking for responses to library items which they found particularly inspirational. To date, there has been no take-up. You win some, lose some.

# SLIC & Intended Activities

**PPT 18** Caroline and Catherine recently successfully competed for funding from SLIC – the Scottish Library and Information Council – to enable us to push forward with new initiatives. As well as helping us further diversify our library collections, we’re scheduling workshop and performance events in the autumn to encourage further student and staff involvement, and to showcase some of our new materials in live performances.

# Drama

There are three of us Performing Arts Librarians – the third is Alan Jones, who takes major responsibility for drama and film coverage in the library. Whilst his own diversity work has not been mentioned in detail in today’s talk, he has long taken a proactive stance to improving diversity and equality in that part of the library’s stock.

# Conclusion

**PPT 19** In conclusion, the Whittaker Library has in a variety of ways been demonstrating its commitment to improving library coverage of groups who have been marginalised for far too long. We’ve made a promising start, but this is an ongoing task, and we’ll probably never be able to claim to have got to the end of it!

Incidentally, a useful new book about decolonising the library was published by Facet Publishing in 2021; I haven’t yet had opportunity to read it, but it was reviewed in the April/May issue of *Information Professional*, and CILIP members can get it with a 35 percent discount, so I’ll share details on my final slide. It’s called *Narrative Expansions*, edited by Jess Crilly and Regina Everitt.

**PPT 20 Thank you and a couple of links to share.**