Investing CKRN/Elsevier savings to improve EDI in collections

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CRKN Conference, October 15, 2021
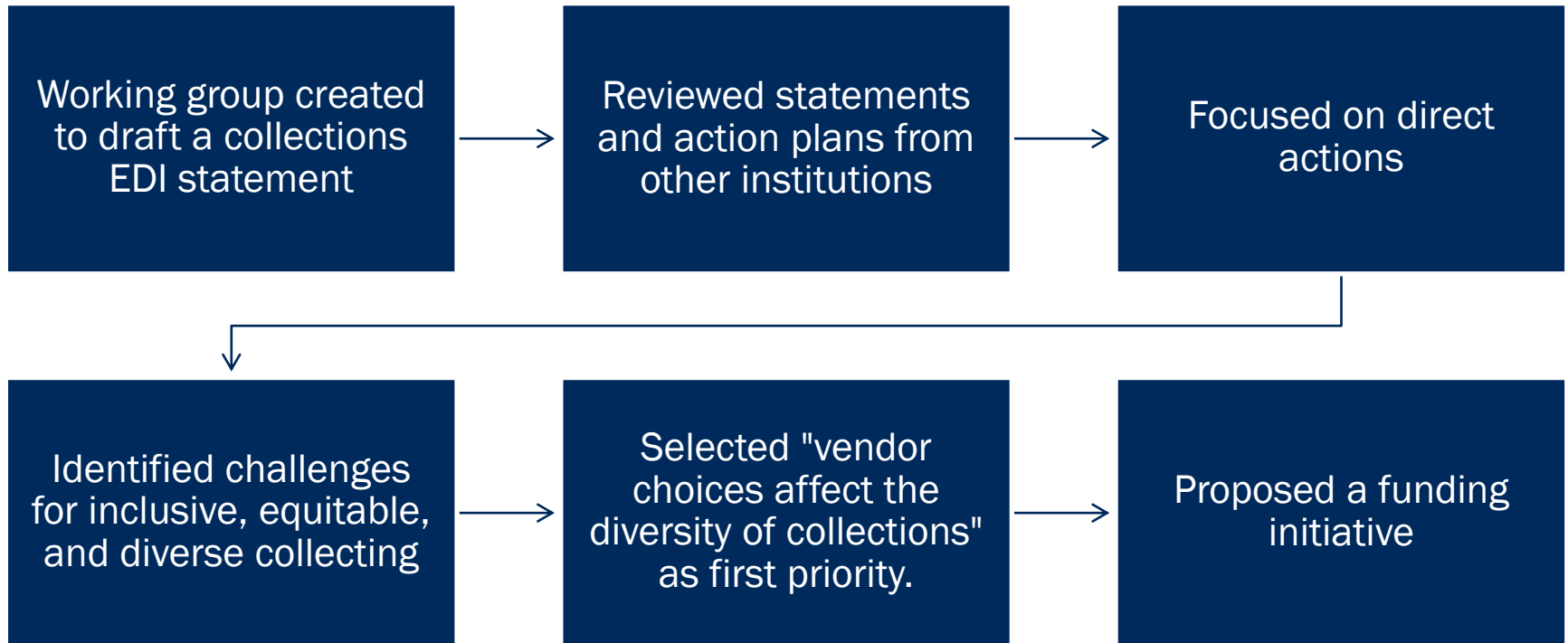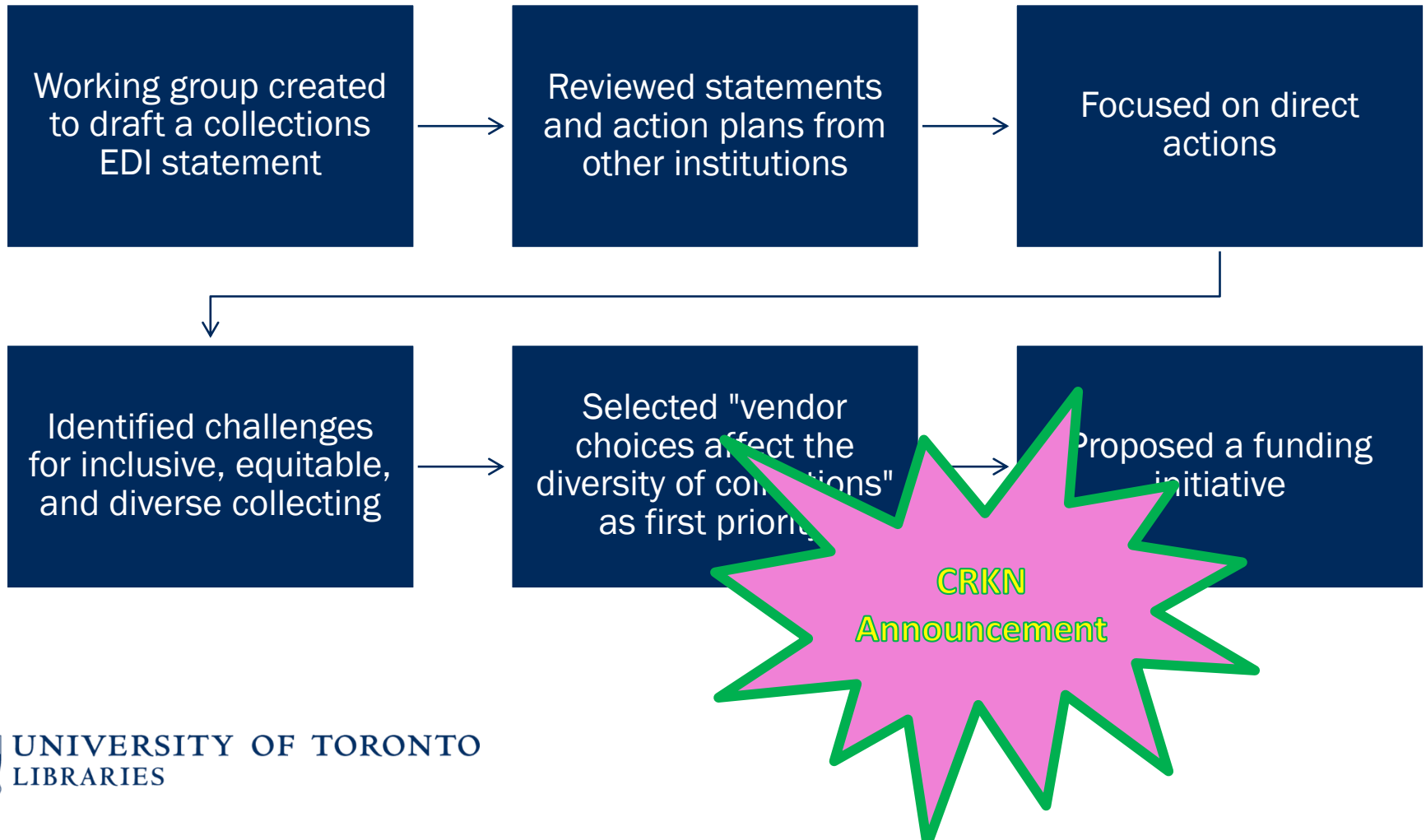
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Outline

- Development/planning of the Initiative
- The Proposal
- Description of the projects proposed so far
- Hopes for further/future development

Planning

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│ Working group        │ ──►  │ Reviewed statements  │ ──►  │ Focused on direct    │
│ created to draft a   │      │ and action plans     │      │ actions              │
│ collections EDI      │      │ from other           │      │                      │
│ statement            │      │ institutions         │      │                      │
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│ Identified           │ ──►  │ Selected "vendor     │ ──►  │ Proposed a funding   │
│ challenges for       │      │ choices affect the   │      │ initiative           │
│ inclusive,           │      │ diversity of         │      │                      │
│ equitable, and       │      │ collections" as      │      │                      │
│ diverse collecting   │      │ first priority.      │      │                      │
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Planning

Working group created to draft a collections EDI statement	→	Reviewed statements and action plans from other institutions	→	Focused on direct actions

Identified challenges for inclusive, equitable, and diverse collecting	→	Selected "vendor choices affect the diversity of collections" as first priority	→	Proposed a funding initiative

CRKN Announcement

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Proposal - Main Principles

- Intent is to surface ideas that enhance the diversity of collections and acquisitions practices

- There is more than one path to improved EDI in collections

- Proposals will be given the most generous interpretation

- Open to staff from all University of Toronto Libraries

- The process will change as we learn

Proposal Criteria

- Builds new collection development channels that will increase our direct engagement with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color)-owned publishers and vendors.

- Strengthens existing channels with BIPOC-owned publishers, vendors and content creators, formal and informal, local and international, that individual selectors already leverage to build broadly representative collections.

- Commits resources to developing collections or publishing in areas that have not traditionally been well-funded.

Application Process Year 1

Applicants submit a brief proposal

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Committee encourages and develops applications

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Approvals

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Application Process Year 1

Proposal Review Committee

Membership:

- senior staff member with collections responsibilities
- one library staff member with collections responsibilities
- three BIPOC-community members

Duties:

- project selection and, as needed, project development

Members will be asked to serve for a one-year term.

This year, the committee was recruited and selected, but we hope future iterations will include open calls for committee members from larger UofT community

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Proposals Submitted

Snapshot

Expanding Digital Access to Literature by Black Canadians

The University of Toronto Libraries holds Canada's most comprehensive research collection. This collection serves each broad discipline as either the raw material for research or the overarching structure that places its scholarly production in context. As the University has reaffirmed its commitment to diversity in research, focusing particularly on groups who remain under-represented at U of T, the library's digital collection will play a vital role in fulfilling that commitment.

The project of recovering or uncovering texts that lie outside of dominant Western discourses is foundational work to many digital humanities scholars and is at its core the purpose of this project. To that end, this project seeks to expand the digital availability of the creative, political, documentary and scholarly writings of black Canadians that have been insufficiently studied due to the difficulties scholars encounter in accessing the works in question. This project aims to acquire or create new digital content created and/or produced by Canada's black creators and make that content available in its diverse fullness for teaching, reading, and research through Scholars Portal, a trusted repository of Canada's cultural and historical record.

Opportunity:

This project brings a range of opportunities, both for the University as well as the research community at large. First, it will allow the UofT Libraries to engage with and support small publishers, bringing literature that has been missed by large publisher agreements and traditional acquisition methods into our collections. If successful, this model of purposeful acquisition can be rolled out to improve access to works by authors from other groups that are currently underrepresented

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Proposals Submitted

Snapshot

EDI Collections Funding Initiative request for Qwest.TV

Co-founded by music legend Quincy Jones and jazz impresario and producer Reza Ackbaraly, Qwest TV features a diverse collection of hundreds of concerts and documentaries, with a focus on Jazz, Soul, Funk, Blues, African music, Latin music, Indian music and more. UTL has had free trial access to this new platform from September 2020 through September 2021. With our free access ending shortly, I think this may be a good candidate for funding consideration under our EDI Collections Funding Initiative.

I have been very impressed with the content available so far. The platform contains an incredible collection of live performances and documentaries, with a distinct focus on musical styles that are traditionally underrepresented in academia. Moreover, the platform has been continually adding new titles throughout the year. Every time I log on, I find several newly added videos that would surely be of interest to students and faculty within the Faculty of Music, as well as other Arts, Humanities and Social Science departments. For example, the platform recently added a documentary on Northern Indian Classical Music, entitled *Raga Revelry*, as well as a fascinating documentary on legendary jazz bassist, Charles Mingus, entitled *Charles Mingus: Triumph of the Underdog*.

This platform would serve as an excellent companion to classical-focused streaming services like Berliner Philharmoniker Digital Concert Hall and Medici.TV.

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Proposals Submitted

Snapshot

Blacks in the Soviet Union

This project is modest in scale and budget. It proposes to fill in lacunae in the University of Toronto Libraries' holdings documenting Blacks in the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet Union was formed in 1922, the new state became a highly attractive destination for many Blacks for the next two to three decades. They were drawn to the Communist revolution and to an ideology that promoted racial equality, world peace, anticolonialism, and the economic advancement of the working class. Communism seemed to offer an ideal society to those who suffered under colonial rule in Africa, or racism and economic depression in the United States. Some Blacks came from Africa, the West Indies, and North America to study freely in Soviet educational institutions; writers, artists, and performers visited to express themselves freely, without racial discrimination, and to experiment with Marxist ideas. Still others immigrated to the Soviet Union to work in trades and industry. Some of these individuals stayed for several years while others never returned to their home countries.

A number of Black activists and intellectuals who visited or lived in the Soviet Union

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Proposals Submitted

Snapshot

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Collections Initiative: Ethiopic Manuscripts

Proposal

To acquire a collection of thirty Ethiopic manuscripts (and one ceremonial cross) dating from the 16 or 17th century to the 20th century.

Intended Community

Scholars from a variety of disciplines (Ethiopic Studies, Religion, Book History, etc.) with research and teaching interests in this area; graduate and undergraduate students with interests in this area, and especially those in the University of Toronto's Ethiopic Studies programme; the wider community, and especially Toronto's large Ethiopian and Eritrean community.

Overview of the Collection

The University of Toronto is one of a very few institutions in North America to offer Ethiopic Studies. Courses on the Ge'ez (or Classical Ethiopic) language and on the cultural history of Ethiopia are taught by faculty in the Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations (St George) and the Department of

Proposals in discussion

- Hold for proposals that come in after September 24, 2021

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What's Next

- Assess in May 2022

- Determine process for inviting community members to participate in review

- Promote the initiative more broadly to gain interest/proposals from the larger community

- Integrating new workflows

- Develop best practices for making what we learn available system-wide

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CREDITS

Slides based on those created by Jess White

Original Proposal for Initiative written by: Jess White, Ben Walsh, Caitlin Tillman, Mikayla Redden, Jeff Newman, and Patricia LaCivita

Year 1 Review Committee: Weijing Yuan, Desmond Wong, Sandy Sun, Mikayla Redden, and Richard Hydal

Proposals for funding developed by: Ben Walsh, Tim Perry, Jeff Newman, Ksenya Kiebuzinski, Eva Jurczyk, Trevor Deck, Chad Crichton, Nelly Cancilla

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Thank you!

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