Thanks very much to the Symposium organizers for inviting me to once again deliver the closing reflection.

We’re going to talk about patterns, positions, and constructing a wearable, livable specialty of data librarianship.

If you attended MDLS19 and heard my closing talk about Fast and Slow, you might consider this a continuation of that work. If not, you’re just fine right here and now.

I am struggling with fit here because of my personal experiences in the past year – professional and sewing related – and because I see so many colleagues experiencing professional and personal struggles as well. This talk is not going to pretend that fit is easy.

And I say “Post” because the pandemic is not over and is still hitting so many people hard.
Grounding

- My ancestors sewed out of necessity and joy, making it possible for me to sew and be with you today.

- They lived and sewed on the traditional lands of the Tsoyaha-Yuchi, Cherokee, and Moneton peoples.

- I live, and sew when I can, on the traditional lands of the Kaw, Osage, and Shawnee peoples and recognize the sovereignty of the four federally recognized tribes of Kansas: the Prairie Band Potawatomi, the Kickapoo in Kansas, the Sac and Fox of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska, and the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska.

Read the slide.

These are some grounding thought for this talk, as I pieced together ideas from many other authors with my own thoughts – much as one of my ancestors pieced together this quilt that I am lucky enough to be the current caretaker for.

This talk doesn’t have to be Right, but it does need to explore things about our specialty. Maybe a grounding in the land and in materiality – in literal material – is a good way to start our exploration.

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“Discovery is the goal – not being Right.” (Bielenberg et al, 2016, p. 172)

Quilt image copyright Jamene Brooks-Kieffer 2021
What are we doing today, and also, in the bigger sense, what are we doing, or what should we be doing, within our specialty when it comes to writing and posting position descriptions and job openings?

We’re talking about the absolute necessity for making space for all bodies in our profession and specialty, and we’re doing it through the lens of making and fitting clothes.

This framing is not entirely metaphor, because constructing and fitting garments are all about making space for bodies.

Because our specialty is relatively recent, we practitioners are the ones constructing it, and we need to be learning to fit it, too.

In this talk I’m going to be moving back and forth between talking about sewing and patterns and talking about jobs and position descriptions. They’ve become very entangled for me.
Why am I talking about sewing at MDLS?

I do love a metaphor, and I’ve found that I enjoy the perspective sewing brings to my work. Sewing also seems to be resonating with a lot of other people right now.

In mid to late 2020, sewing machines were really hard to find. It’s possible that ongoing supply chain issues contributed to the problem, but, anecdotally, the wait for professional repair of a sewing machine was really long, too. Many news outlets reported a huge upswing in demand for sewing machines.

People stuck at home were looking for things to do; cooking and making with fiber and fabric became outlets. Plus, we also needed masks, and that combination of need, time at home, and free mask patterns and tutorials available online created incentive and resources for people who weren’t already sewing to revive their sewing skills or learn some new ones.

I am one of those people – digging out my ancestral sewing machine in summer 2020 to make masks and, eventually, restart garment sewing – something I hadn’t done in years. For me, hands-on making was a tangible way of finding some stability and control in an upside-down world.
And it’s not just me. Unrelated to the pandemic, MDLS as a group has been and is full of makers who create real-world objects by hand. Some of those objects are data-driven, such as Kristin Briney’s COVID deaths data viz scarf that she posted to her blog in March 2021.

But these aren’t the only reasons.
This framing also resonates with me because it seems that we are more aware of the comfort and fit of the clothes we wear every day.

Throughout 2020 there was plenty of humor about working from home and living in sweatpants or pajamas 24/7. Folks who tuned in to Fresh Air were reassured that even Tim Gunn had stopped wearing suits.
(Gunn is a former host of Project Runway and a current host of Making the Cut)

And as businesses and workplaces have tentatively opened up in 2021, we’ve made or seen many snarky memes about putting on “real” clothes to go back to the office.
The final reason I think this framing works for our reflection this afternoon is that this awareness of comfort and fit is happening in our jobs, too, in all parts of the economy.

This phenomenon of people quitting their jobs in 2021 has been dubbed The Great Resignation or The Big Quit. Many, many folks have found their jobs to be unsustainable for personal and professional reasons as well as reasons of health and safety. My organization has seen many departures over the past 18 months due to personal decisions aligned with the Big Quit as well as financial incentives my institution has offered for retirements. It’s likely that your organization has seen something similar.

We’ve discovered our own needs for adjustments within our positions, and we’re increasingly impatient with our employers when those adjustments aren’t available.

We’ve also found over the past 18 months that our organizations CAN adjust norms and expectations in ways that they may have previously claimed were impossible.
### Scope and Terms

- **Sewing:**
  Sewing garments from existing patterns for oneself

- **Pattern / Flat Pattern:**
  Two-dimensional guide for cutting pieces of a garment out of fabric

- **Fit:**
  Description of how a garment accommodates a body

- **Fitting / Altering:**
  Changing a pattern to improve the garment's fit on a specific body

- **Position Description / Position Posting:**
  Description of an information or data job used for advertising for applicants or defining an information worker’s duties

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Let’s define some terms to locate ourselves more firmly in the scope I’m working from today.

Sewing happens in many ways. Today, we are talking about sewing garments. More specifically, we are talking about garment sewing for oneself from an existing pattern.

A pattern is a guide for cutting pieces of a garment out of fabric. Patterns are usually paper, either purchased or printed at home. Patterns are sometimes called “flat patterns,” drawing attention to the fact that the two-dimensional pieces of paper or fabric will eventually accommodate a three-dimensional body.

Sewing garments implies learning some techniques for changing a pattern to obtain a good fit – meaning a good match between the garment and the body it’s intended for. These techniques are collectively known as “fitting” or “altering” a pattern.

We will also be talking about positions today, so we’re using the terms “position description” or “position posting” to indicate both an existing employee’s description of duties and the description used to advertise for applicants for that position.
Metaphor

- **Fit:**
  Description of how a position accommodates a body

- **Fitting or Altering:**
  Changing a position description to improve the position’s fit on a specific body

- **Pattern / Position Description:**
  Two-dimensional description of an information or data job that will be used to create space for a three-dimensional body in an organization

Because I work in metaphor, I want to make the terms of today’s metaphor very clear.

In today’s talk, Fit also refers to how a position of employment accommodates a body.

Fitting or Altering describes changes to a position description to improve the position’s fit for a specific body.

And a position description is really just a flat pattern for a position. Both are two-dimensional objects that don’t appear as functional things in the world until they are filled by a three-dimensional body – a person.
Facets of Fit

I said that fit is a description of how a garment accommodates a body – how it makes space for that body.

Let’s dig a little more into what it means to make space for a body.
When you are trying to fit a pattern or a garment to your body, you very quickly run into the fact that the body is a thing that exists in three-dimensional space. Which is not necessarily an easy fact for me, specifically, as an academic who often lives in my head.

Some garments need to accommodate more movement than others – for example, workout wear is usually less constraining than formal wear – but the body still needs to be able to sit, bend, reach, breathe.

And if it can’t do one or more of those things, the garment doesn’t fit.

Likewise, fit is concerned with the body as it is right now in the present. Fit is not about the body as it was before childbirth or as it might be after working with a trainer.
Fit is Privileged

Sewing and pattern fitting require:

- Money
- Time
- Skill
- Equipment

Having or acquiring fit is a privileged activity.

The myth of making one’s own clothes is that a home-sewn garment is cheaper than ready-to-wear. With the right comparison points, this is true, but the comparison points are:
- You already have sewing and fitting skills
- You own the necessary equipment
- The garments you make more resemble couture than mass market or fast fashion

There are considerable costs in time and money to learn and practice sewing and pattern fitting before these comparison points are attainable.

There are other reasons someone might consider sewing besides the cost of a garment:
- They could be concerned by the ethics and environmental impact of the fashion industry
- They could have difficulty finding ready-to-wear garments that fit their body and express their personal style

These are great motivators, but any of these reasons requires that you either:
- Are willing and able to learn to sew garments for yourself and have the time to do so, OR
- Are able to pay someone to sew or alter garments for you
Fit is Powerful

As my skills grew ... my body image started shifting.... As I shrugged off set clothes sizes and started making garments that precisely fit my dimensions, the feeling of abnormality and exclusion began to lift.

(Holroyd, 2017, p. 83)

Even with those obstacles, fit is desirable because fit is powerful.

Wearing garments that fit one’s body and express one’s sense of style are huge confidence-boosters.
The skill to make those garments for oneself brings independence from the assumptions and exclusions of the fashion industry.

And, as Jenny Rushmore describes here, making and wearing garments that fit can change how one feels about one’s body. (read the quote)
(Jenny Rushmore is co-founder of the Curvy Sewing Collective and founder of Cashmerette Patterns)
Every time you fit yourself, you accept yourself.

Fit is Personal

(Emodi, 2018, p. 15)

Learning to alter a pattern to fit a body means learning how bodies take up space – specifically how one’s own body takes up space.

For me, learning to fit is deeply personal – it’s a journey of self-discovery and being critical of the pattern and the fit, not my body.
I love this quote from Barbara Emodi, whose book of sewing advice is helpful for anyone who did not learn to sew from a family member. (read the quote)
How’s your fit?

Garments don’t fit when they are:

- Tight, constraining the body’s movement
- Big, creating too much volume for the body
- The wrong shape, pulling and bunching on the body

Garments = Positions

With all this talk about fit, you might be more aware of how your clothes are feeling on your body right now. Garments can not fit in a lot of different ways, but the basics are (read the slide)

Now (click) replace “garments” with “positions” – the same ways that garments don’t fit, positions don’t fit.

They can:
- Constrain our professional activities or development
- Contain too many responsibilities for one person
- Conflict with our identities and goals, and/or
- Focus on work that doesn’t match our interests

All of these possibilities create discomfort and distraction, at the very least.

There are lots of reasons our positions might not fit:
- It never fit – and if your position has never fit, I see you.
- We’ve changed
- The position or organization has changed
- The specialty has changed
Writing Prompt 1

In what ways do you see the concept of fit impacting your current position?

Here is our first writing prompt. (Read the prompt)

This reflection could be within the scope of the past 18 months or within the scope of your employment in your position.

You’ll be writing for yourself alone, using pen and paper or keyboard – whatever works for you. I will keep time.
Fit is Systemic

Your body is perfect; it is the commercial and indie sewing patterns that aren’t.

(Dunham, 2021, p. 276)

Fit is also systemic.

Sewing patterns are not magical species – they exist and are informed by the same societal values that influence the ready-to-wear garment industry.

The reason that sewing and fit experts write books and sell classes on fit and fitting is that patterns reflect our cultural biases that privilege thin, white, cisgendered, hetero bodies.

It’s great that these books include quotes like the one on the screen – (read the quote) – but they don’t do anything address the systemic issues that make fit difficult to achieve.

So how do these systemic issues show up in a home sewist’s personal experience of sewing and pattern fitting?
Sewing’s Dirty Secret

“... It’s not you, it’s [pattern manufacturers]. What then are you to do? ... [B]uy a pattern that has only one of your actual body measurements printed on it, and learn how to adjust the rest.”

(Emodi, 2018, p. 64)

A pattern is usually a starting point. Unless your body matches the assumptions built into the pattern – which vary wildly by manufacturer – the garment you make is unlikely to fit “out of the box.”

Barbara Emodi has some advice for dealing with this problem (read the quote). This bootstrap approach guarantees that you will either learn more about pattern fitting than you thought possible, or that you will give up in frustration and despair.

The less like your body the pattern is, the more adjustments you will have to make to the pattern, which makes this advice really challenging for a novice whose body doesn’t match the assumptions in the pattern, even if the pattern is supposedly the right size.

With enough time, practice, support, and skill, your sewing can be unlimited by the constraints of a paper pattern that doesn’t match your body. But getting to that point is hard work.

Assuming that you:
- Want to sew or know how and have the time and equipment
- Want to make garments for yourself
You STILL have a lot of work to do:
- To assess and accept your body as it is right now
- To understand what you desire from a garment
- To find patterns that match those desires and express your sense of style
- To adapt those patterns to fit your body

This is part of the journey I’ve been working through during the past year.
As my sewing and fitting skills have developed, I’ve found myself increasingly intolerant of poor garment fit, especially from ready-to-wear, but also from patterns.

And for me – a novice at pattern fitting – the amount of work involved in adjusting a pattern raises some questions:

Why do patterns and ready-to-wear not fit me?
And
Why should I have to do all this work on my own to make up for manufacturers’ inability or unwillingness to design for my body?

I’m not the only one who has these questions, though.

Leila Kelleher, co-founder of pattern company Muna and Broad, studied patternmaking and garment construction, worked in a couture studio as well as film and theatre, and has a PhD in Biomechanics. She has ALL the skills, and still decided that it was easier to make her own patterns than put up with having to make so many adjustments to existing patterns that were not designed for her body. (Muna and Broad: About, n.d.)
I wondered how far I could go - personally subsuming my personality in pursuit of success. I felt like I was being asked to choose between being a three-dimensional authentic person and a two-dimensional cardboard cutout.

(Lin Hanick, 2018, p. 89, paraphrasing Yoshino & Smith, 2013)

This question – can I attain fit only through personal labor? – echoes, in a small way, what our BIPOC, queer, trans and gender non-conforming colleagues, and colleagues with disabilities have been telling us over and over, for years – that they have to do all the work of fitting themselves to positions and organizations.

The work of our marginalized colleagues to fit themselves into positions and organizations built on structures of White Supremacy (aka, libraries) requires violence and self-harm.

Sylvia Lin Hanick’s essay on her experiences as a second-generation Taiwanese-American woman in librarianship is called “The Shoe is Too Small and Not Made for You!” – a reference to the Brothers Grimm version of Cinderella, in which the stepsisters are willing to cut off their toes to fit into the all-important glass slipper. Lin Hanick builds her essay on the concept of racial covering developed by Kenji Yoshino.

She says about her first librarian position, (read the quote)

Hers is one of many writings about the violence of fit experienced by librarians holding marginalized identities. This talk includes quotes from some of them; I encourage you to read all of them and more.
Why don’t patterns fit?

Commercial sewing patterns and ready-to-wear garments are all based on industry standard measurements. These ‘averages’ are derived from thousands of different body types.

No body is standard … that doesn’t change as you go up and down in sizes.

(Deham, 2021, p. 36; Perry, 2019, January 29)

So why don’t patterns fit? What’s so hard?

I’ve already quoted from Gina Renee Dunham’s *The Fitting Book*; she includes a lot of information about how pattern and ready-to-wear sizing is determined. Unsurprisingly, a lot of personal data is involved. Most relevant for us today, she says, (read the quote)

The problem is, (click), that no body is standard, as Mary Danielson Perry pointed out in a discussion on the Curvy Sewing Collective.

Essentially, no matter your size, your body shape is unlikely to match the assumptions embedded in a given pattern.
Every pattern company has to choose a size range, so by definition every pattern company has to exclude many people and demographics. Due to the nature of our society, which privileges thinness, straightness, and cisgender, pattern companies are much more likely to exclude folks who are fat, queer, and trans or gender non-conforming.

(Flaherty, 2019, January 23)

But, because our society values some bodies more than others, the farther your body is from one or more of those preferred traits, the more difficult it is to find a pattern designed around assumptions that resemble your body and the more adjustments you will have to make yourself if you want to use an existing pattern.

Shannon Flaherty, a self-identified queer lady sewist, blogs at Rare Device and takes on this truth in a post called “What I want pattern companies to know about their fat, queer customers.” She says, (read the quote)

Thinking about which bodies can and can’t access most commercially-available patterns – and therefore have better or worse access to opportunities to find fit – is supposed to be priming you to think about the metaphor and the next slide:
Why don’t positions fit?

Fit does not begin or end with recruitment, selection, hiring, or evaluation; rather, forces that drive ‘who fits’ and ‘who does not fit’ … are embedded in every aspect of society.


The closer your proximity to straight, white, cisgender, middle/upper class, able-bodiedness gets, the better you fit.

Why don’t *positions* fit?

This is not going to be news to anyone in the room with one or more marginalized identities.

Libraries’ position descriptions take on some of the characteristics of “standard” pattern sizing. Often, when writing a PD we look to a combination of what work has been done in the past, how that work was done in the past, and how our peer organizations are characterizing approximately the same work – and this last is true of data work, as those positions have experienced steady scope creep, I think in part to keep up with or aspire to what peer institutions are doing. In essence, we are writing PDs for “average” or “standard” people who don’t exist.

And the biases that inform which bodies do and do not get patterns that fit also inform our assumptions about the “average” or “standard” people who might apply for a position posting.

As Tooms, Lugg, and Bogotch point out in a paper on educational leadership, these assumptions affect organizational fit. (read the quote).
And (click) as Jennifer Brown and Sofia Leung remind us, organizational and positional fit is privileged in the same way as pattern fit. (Read the quote)
...we can see that the cost of fitting in is not the same for everyone. After all, ... ‘the reason racial minorities are pressured to ‘act white’ is because of white supremacy. The reason women are told to downplay their childcare responsibilities in the workplace is because of patriarchy. And the reason gays are asked not to ‘flaunt’ is because of homophobia.’

Our organizations assume that fit is an individual, personal problem and ignore the systemic issues that affect fit and access to fit. For this reason, some folks never get the privilege of fit, because White, cisgendered, hetero, able bodies are the keys to this privilege.

In structures created and supported by White Supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and ableism – here, meaning libraries – BIPOC, queer, trans, gender non-conforming colleagues and colleagues with disabilities have to do all their fit at the personal level – to identities, bodies, and spirits, rather than to positions and organizations. And as we already witnessed when reading Sylvia Lin Hanick’s words on a previous slide, this is violence and oppression.

Relying solely on personal labor to find fit has high and unequal costs for the folks doing that labor. Here, Lin Hanick is quoting Kenji Yoshino on who bears the costs of fit. (read the quote)

Remember earlier, when we talked about fit for patterns and garments being privileged and expensive? Fit for organizations and positions is privileged and expensive, too, and isn’t shared equally.
Adjust Patterns

Our bodies are not problems; our bodies do not need forgiveness.

(Flaherty, 2019, January 23)

So what can we do to make space for bodies in garments and positions?

Well, to start with, we can learn whose job it is to adjust.

It is not the body’s job to adjust to the pattern.
It is the pattern’s job to adjust to the body.

This is not a thing I learned growing up. This is a thing I am learning now, as I sew and try to learn fitting techniques.

Shannon Flaherty at Rare Device says, (read the quote). She’s talking about sewing, but in this slide out of context, these words could just as easily be from a librarian holding one or more marginalized identities.

Whether it’s a garment pattern or a position pattern, fit the pattern to the person, not the person to the pattern.

In the view that fit is personal, a person learns to make their own adjustments or pays to have them made.
In the view that fit is systemic, an organization makes different assumptions about the bodies that will fill garments, or positions, made from the pattern.
Adjust Positions

Research indicates that applicants with marginalized identities are hesitant to apply for positions if they do not meet all of the qualifications. We want to emphasize that although experience in certain areas is desirable, candidates who meet the required qualifications or equivalencies, demonstrate excellent promise, and a passion for the field are encouraged to apply and will be given serious consideration. Opportunities for training, mentorship, and support from individuals with a variety of skill sets exist locally, regionally, and nationally.

(University of Texas Libraries Research Data Services Coordinator position posting, 2021)

When it comes to position descriptions and position postings, what might that look like?

One thing it doesn’t look like is the ubiquitous line, “Other duties as assigned.” That sneaky little phrase centers the organization’s needs, not the employee’s needs.

On Monday, Hannah Gunderman gave us a look at what it might look like for an existing employee to identify and negotiate for their own adjustments within their position. In Hannah’s case, her organization worked with her to make those changes.

Another way to approach this would be for organizations to build space for adjustments into new or existing position descriptions – basically, to change their assumptions about the “standard” or “average” person (who doesn’t exist) who is filling a position or could apply for a position.

Here, I’m highlighting elements of two recent postings that caught my eye amid the usual boilerplate of a position posting.

The first is (read the quote). I read this statement as an acknowledgement that the person taking the position will change it in ways that better fit their expertise and interests over time. And because this posting is for a librarian at the rank of Assistant, I see some understanding that the incumbent is not going to be able to do everything the organization
wants on Day 1.

The second is (read the quote). This statement is an acknowledgement that the posting’s long list of required and preferred qualifications is a deterrent to applicants holding one or more marginalized identities. The organization didn’t do the work of adjusting what it put on its posting instead of adding this statement, so the words may be meaningless.

It’s not clear from either of these snippets that there will be sufficient support for each position incumbent to attain a good fit without having to do all of their own fitting themselves. That question can only be answered with time and the experience of whoever takes the job, hopefully not at the expense of their own body.
Here is our second writing prompt. You’ll be writing for yourself alone, using pen and paper or keyboard – whatever works for you. I will keep time.

Thinking about this intersection of pattern fitting and position fitting under personal and systemic lenses, you have a choice of topics:
- Where can your organization adjust your position for a better fit?
- OR
- Where can you as a manager or administrator adjust employees’ positions for better fit.

And by “better” fit, I mean more comfortable, less restrictive, less voluminous, better matching the shape of your expertise, your interests, your life, your body – or those of your employees.
## Adjust the System

- **FreeSewing.org**  
  Open source patterns that blend code and software development with pattern design. Adjust each pattern to your own measurements before printing.

- **Cashmerette Patterns**  
  Multi-size printed and digital patterns for curvy bodies. Size calculator, measurement advice, and adjustment help available for all their patterns.

- **Muna and Broad**  
  Multi-size digital patterns for large bodies; sizes start where other pattern companies stop. Stated goal of sewists being able to get great fit from the pattern with no or minimal adjustments.


I told you we’d be blending back and forth between patterns and positions.

Before the writing prompt, we peeked at some very preliminary starting points for organizations to adjust their assumptions to create space for people in their employment or in their candidate pools.  
I want to reinforce here that systemic adjustments to fit can happen within organizations — that it doesn’t have to be the work of each individual. And some pattern designers are showing us how.

Size-inclusive pattern companies make different assumptions about body size, shape, and proportion. On this slide, three different pattern sources approach the systemic assumptions behind patterns in different ways.

FreeSewing.org, blends pattern design and code development to create open source patterns. Put in your measurements and get a version of the pattern already adjusted for your body. Make further tweaks to parts of the pattern to your preference before you print.

Cashmerette Patterns are transparent about the likelihood that the customer will need to do some adjustments to fit the pattern to their body. They begin their designs for curvy bodies, then includes all the sizes in a purchased pattern and provides tools and advice to
help determine sizing, grade between sizes, and adjust for the best fit.

Muna and Broad, is vocal and intentional about creating patterns specifically for sewists with large bodies. They begin their size range where many other pattern companies stop, and state that their goal is for sewists with large bodies to get a great fit from the pattern with no or minimal adjustments.

How can we bring these kinds of systemic adjustment to data librarian positions?
Radical Fit

“Radical Fit

To be authentic in our beliefs and passions is to cultivate a professional identity unique to ourselves; it’s akin to making ourselves visible within a profession that often values careful neutrality, devoid of the personal. (Brown & Leung, 2018, p. 340)

Our colleagues holding marginalized identities have been telling us how, for years and years. We white folks are not listening.

In their essay, “Authenticity vs. Professionalism: Being true to ourselves at work,” Jennifer Brown and Sofia Leung talk about the burden of being solely responsible for library diversity work because of their identities as “a black, bisexual, cisgendered, able-bodied woman of color and a Chinese American, heterosexual, cisgendered, able-bodied woman of color in academic librarianship” (2018, p. 330). They point out librarianship’s culture of valuing “professionalism” and “neutrality”, with those vague terms being codes for proximity to whiteness. They write of the costs of proximity to whiteness in their own experiences, showing that actual, comfortable fit – authenticity – for their bodies is never going to happen while the profession continues to build and renew itself on the privileged assumptions we’ve been talking about in relation to patterns. (Read the quote)

Achieving radical fit – authenticity and comfort for every body – means ditching “professionalism,” “neutrality,” and all the other assumptions our organizations use to draft position patterns. Those codes for proximity to whiteness are a way of saying, “one size fits all,” which we know is ridiculous and impossible.

Radical fit is couture, “…made for an individual client, tailored specifically for the wearer’s
measurements and body stance” (Haute couture, 2021, October 13). Radical fit is inherently personal.

At minimum, our organizations can be transparent about adjustments to positions up front and over time. But that’s a pretty low minimum. Let’s go further. Let’s take Muna and Broad as our inspiration and start designing positions where our organizations have stopped.

And because MDLS is where we practice, we’re going to practice.
Practice Adjustments

Breakout rooms, each with a shared document:

- Position description language from a 2019-2020 data-related job posting
- Considerations for positions and position descriptions from recent literature
- Additional considerations regarding personal labor(s) and space for bodies
- Space for your group to adjust the sample position

"...job postings tend to be very aspirational, meaning that a data professional's actual responsibilities could vary greatly from those listed in the job posting."

(Goben, A., personal communication, September 29, 2021; Thielen & Neeser, 2020, p. 121)

You’re going to go into breakout rooms for at least 10 minutes; I want to give you all the time we can in groups and still end on time. Your group number is your document number.

Your shared document has a bunch of stuff – it’s okay if your group doesn’t get through it all. The goal is to begin practicing making adjustments to a position description.
You have a de-identified position description for a data-related job posting from 2019-2020. I sourced this position description from Abigail Goben and her ongoing database of data librarian position descriptions. Thanks, Abigail!
There are also considerations for ways to adjust the PD from recent literature – both from within data librarianship and from the writings of librarians of color.
There is space for your group to start taking notes on what you would adjust and how and why.

Keep in mind this note from Joanna Thielen and Amy Neeser about data librarian job postings (read the quote). Let’s use that to our advantage in making radical adjustments. The difference is that Thielen and Neeser found aspiration on behalf of the organization, potentially at the expense of clarity for a candidate (and possibly even their supervisor). What if the position was very aspirational on behalf of the candidate?
Fitting is a Skill

Success requires:
- Learning to SEE before learning what to DO
- Accepting mistakes, learning, and trying again
- Listening to the body and the garment
- Practice (do it, even when you make mistakes and feel frustrated)

What was your experience like? Messy? Uncomfortable? Frustrating? If so, then you were doing it right.

Fitting is a skill, and mistakes are normal. Success requires (read the slide)

Mention difficulty of seeing signs of poor fit when you don’t know what to look for.

Barbara Emodi mentions that the sewist should expect 3 rounds of changes with the muslin method of fitting (which is making a prototype garment from the flat pattern using inexpensive fabric)
Personally, I’m up to about 5 on a garment I’ve been working on for nearly a year.

In a comment on the blog post I cited earlier, Shannon Flaherty paraphrases Jenny Rushmore’s (from Cashmerette) response to pattern manufacturers’ excuses for not designing for larger bodies:
“It’s not that it’s difficult, it’s that you’re (the general you) having difficulties. ... [I]t takes different skills that what you’re used to, so it seems harder than what you already know. (https://withararedevice.wordpress.com/2019/01/23/what-i-want-pattern-companies-to-know-about-their-fat-queer-customers/#comment-566)
This sounds to me so much like adjusting positions to make space for bodies. It takes different skills than what our organizations are used to (and maybe what we are used to), so it seems hard.

But.
We have to hold one another accountable to what we say we want to do, rather than allow institutions and organizations steeped in [racist, misogynistic, capitalist, colonialist] legac[ies] - that are reliant on exploitative relations and dehumanization to function - to continue functioning that way.

(Leung & López-McKnight, 2020, p. 22)

(Read the quote)

This quote is from the essay “Dreaming Revolutionary Futures: Critical Race’s Centrality to Ending White Supremacy.” In it, Sofia Leung and Jorge López-McKnight call out the continuing and unacknowledged presence of white supremacy in librarianship. Toward the end of the essay, they describe the kind of radical accountability we need to bring about actual change, even when (especially when) it seems hard.

Why? Why do we need Radical Fit, and Radical Accountability?
Fit is what you deserve

“Of course, fitting takes skill. It takes practice and patience. At times, it also takes perseverance and always requires optimism. But the process of learning to fit is worth it, because the product - a garment that fits - is what you deserve.”

(Emodi, 2018, p. 86)

Because fit is what you deserve.

(read the quote)

The process, in all its messiness and discomfort and frustration, is worth it, because the product is what you deserve.

Pattern fitting is all about acknowledging and respecting the body that will wear the garment. Holding our organizations accountable for adjusting positions to fit acknowledges and respects the bodies that fill those positions.

Every body deserves a good fit.
Every body can have a good fit.

The skills are there; we need to learn them and use them.

Thank you.
Resources: Positions


Resources: Sewing and Patterns

The pattern featured in these slides
- Freesewing.org Huey Hoodie: https://freesewing.org/designs/huey/

A few Black-owned or co-owned pattern companies:
- Style Sew Me: https://stylesewme.com
- Madeit Patterns (UK): https://www.madeit-patterns.com
- Kosedo Studio: https://kosedo.studio/collections/frontpage

A few size-inclusive pattern companies:
- Muna and Broad: https://www.munaandbroad.com
- Cashmerette: https://www.cashmerette.com
- 5 out of 4 Patterns: https://5outof4.com
  (also maternity and nursing inclusive)
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