We have an hour to engage with a big topic, one we hope you’ll think about for a while after this program!
In our brief time together...we want to change your mindset, to think of listening as a conscious professional practice.

To that end, we want to offer some perspective, call out roadblocks (that we know you can break through), and:

1. Offer Perspective
2. Call out roadblocks (earwax ahead!)
3. Provide tools for this work...ok, maybe not that one...

And in the end, we have a way you can remember what you ...heard!
Listening is how we learn...all the books in the world can give us insights, but it is listening to each other and seeing those truths play out in relationship that moves information into insight

Why are we here today? Because we learn in relationship!

Self-interest established, let’s look at why it is important for us as librarians

1, 2, Both of these statements are true!

And we work in libraries, institutions that are fundamental to a successful democracy, a place where people are exposed to ideas and each other.

It seems a function both of what we do and how we do it,

Today we’re talking about what you can influence moment to moment... the how
What is Listening?

What is listening.

It’s distinct from hearing. Hearing is a physical ability.

Listening is physical; it involves the mind. Let’s use this working definition: making meaning from sound.

Like the tree, it often can feel like you are making sound, but is it being heard? Are you being listened to?

In our work, we have an opportunity to be a place where people are heard.

Let’s see what that feels like.
Exercise: turn to the person next to you and share what is on your mind [could make this library related – share what your experience of this profession is...]. 2min each...just keep going; listener listens. Switch.

Reflect together:

What is it like to be listened to in this way?
How did you know you were being heard?

What was it like to listen; fighting any impulses?

When you stop for the encounter – you have the opportunity to be aware of what is present – in yourself and in to fully attend to what is being shared
Who would you rather approach? (Model welcoming vs inaccessible posture)

We have lots of ways of communicating without words, and we do read our environment, intuition in play.

Remember, before someone can talk to you, they have to APPROACH you.
• Your body language signals that you are APPROACHABLE and ACCESSIBLE!
• Make sure you are looking around the library often, even if you are working on something at the desk.
• Make eye contact.
• Smile.

These things set the stage for great listening... THEN:
• Be aware of your posture while someone is speaking to you.
• Make eye contact.
• Change your facial expression – smile often & use an expression of concentration during tough parts of the conversation.
• Nod occasionally.

These behaviors NOT ONLY give the impression that you are a great listener, they also IMPROVE the way you listen.

Cultural diversity, impact of disability...so many ways your interpretation can go wrong...and you will do these unconsciously...check them.
Here’s a fine model for thinking about listening skills (STOP HALF WAY)

Aside from a good laugh, the attributes demonstrated ...serene, empathetic, attentive.....

How did you know they were listening.....? Cow body language.

But do we really listen that way

YOUTUBE: https://youtu.be/IxKDu6cdXLI
Most people do not listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply.

They’re either speaking or preparing to speak. They’re filtering everything through their own paradigms, reading their autobiography in other people’s lives.

Stephen Covey

There’s a great quote that gets at this.....

And its even better when it is quoted completely....I’ve seen this everywhere, but without this next part....

We are always hearing through our own “autobiography”.....
What is this?

CLICK to red circle

YES AND...it is helpful to remembers that its not all about you
In addition to getting out of our own way so we can listen, we also are challenged to attend to the “messy” stuff of feelings...

**ACTIVITY:** Write down two words that describe how you feel

Ask a dozen people (+) to share / write on board

Reflect together: on what is in the room; is this new information?

How would you know unless you HALTED and inquired of yourself?

[EF to provide example from Chaplaincy.]

To know what is here, is really a two part question....listening to yourself to know what you are bringing to the moment...in so far as it affects your ability to listen
But, wait. What can’t you forget

(Hannah)

Nail video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg&feature=youtu.be

You can’t get to the facts unless you address the feelings
Our challenge in public service is to listen to understand

To listen to understand …you have to have a willful ignorance…and curiosity…so you have ask questions

Who is this?
Why might he be a model for a reference desk service
He asked seemingly DUMB questions, but they were really SMART questions that helped to weave a coherent narrative of the crime

Someone asks you something, say it back to them....
What does that do

….show you heard, allows them to correct and usually to expand…..
Show you heard, then you can show how smart you are...

What we do as a professional default is REFRAME – we are trained to apply knowledge, generate insight, cut to the chase, serve the next client.

Here’s a typical Medicare encounter. And a possible response.

I went to the office and they told me to come here. I had to park a block away from there and then walk in this cold and then go right back to my car to come here. I just got this letter and I want to know if I’ve done something wrong. My insurance was supposed to cover this. My husband is mad because now he thinks we to pay for this. I just don’t understand why I got this bill.

You have a bill you don’t understand. Show me, perhaps I can help.

⇒What doesn’t it do?

Parrot the factual and emotional content to affirm understanding...then reframe if you need to

⇒⇒Yikes. You had to go through a lot to get here. So there’s a bill that you don’t understand?

⇒⇒⇒ You had to do a lot of travel in this cold to get here. You have a letter and you’re concerned that you might have done something wrong. Your husband is mad at your because you might have to pay this bill.

⇒...No, he’s not mad at me. He’s just mad about doctor bills period. He has different insurance from the VA. He used to be an accountant so he always says they are...
Let’s take 15 seconds. It’s a safe space to close your eyes. Take a deep breath and as you exhale sink into your body. Sense how you are physically anchored in the moment Butt on chair. Feet on floor. Now just listen.

That pause is self-care
Not suggesting you close your eyes at the desk
But you can take a conscious breath.

Have you ever asked why we need instructions for this?

(Apple watch, phone calls, bathroom break....)

Not a “nice to do”, but essential tool for living with a busy mind
What’s the take away?

Change our posture / it’s not about you / Engage in a conscious practice of listening
A way to remember in the moment....

Halt whatever you are doing and offer your full attention.

Enjoy your breath as you choose to receive whatever is being communicated to you – wanted or unwanted. A breath anchors us into our body and gives us pause.

Ask yourself if you really know what they mean. If you don’t, ask for clarification instead of making assumptions or guessing. Just bring openness and curiosity to the interaction.

Reflect back to them what you heard. Use their words first, then, if needed, reframe to move towards a solution

Remember to genuinely HEAR
LISTEN & SILENT
are spelled with the
same letters
Think About It ⽇
WE HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO...

PAUSE  MARVEL

SMILE

A way to remember in the moment...
A majority of the so called listening books are about persuading, i.e., listening to advocate. They are misnamed!!!

Here is a short list of those that are about being present for other humans

Describe

- Being a Good Listener (Mental Floss Studios video) https://youtu.be/-BdbiZcNBXg
- Amy Cuddy TEDTalk on Body Language https://tinyurl.com/ya5ke4fb

- Seven Thousand Ways to Listen, Mark Nepo
- http://changingminds.org/techniques/listening/bad_listening.htm
- Power in the Helping Professions, Adolph Guggenbuhl
Listening Like a Librarian!
@ NYLA 2017!!!

Elena Falcone
elena@wlsmail.org

Hannah Ralston
hannah.ralston
@libraryweb.org