

The Inquiry Ecosystem

2026 NYLA Developing Leaders Program
Capstone Project

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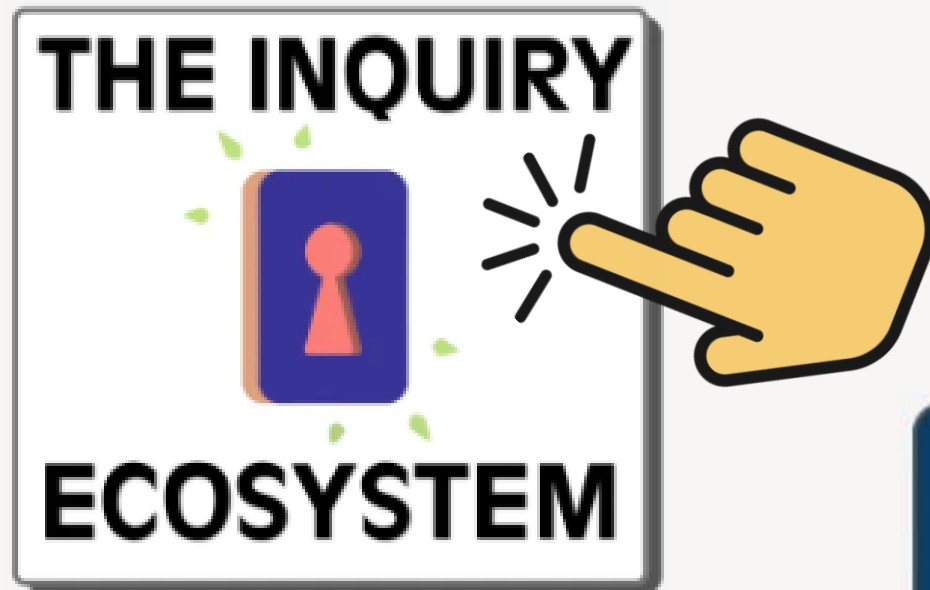
Sarah McLean-Plunkett



Today's Presentation



1. About Our Project
2. About Us
3. The Research
4. The Four Entry Points
5. Self-Assessment
(Handout)
6. Implementation
7. Final Thoughts &
Reflection



About Our Project

- Virtual Toolkit on Wordpress
- Library workers in all positions to access based on area of communication breakdown
- Why? Importance of communication and curiosity

**PSYCHOLOGICAL
SAFETY**

**QUESTION
MECHANICS**

**COMMUNICATING
INQUIRY**

**INQUIRY
REFLECTION**

“I don’t know” isn’t a weakness! A better way forward.

About Us

Jhenelle Robinson

- Assistant Director, *New Rochelle Public Library*
- Working in libraries since 2005

Emily Viscuso

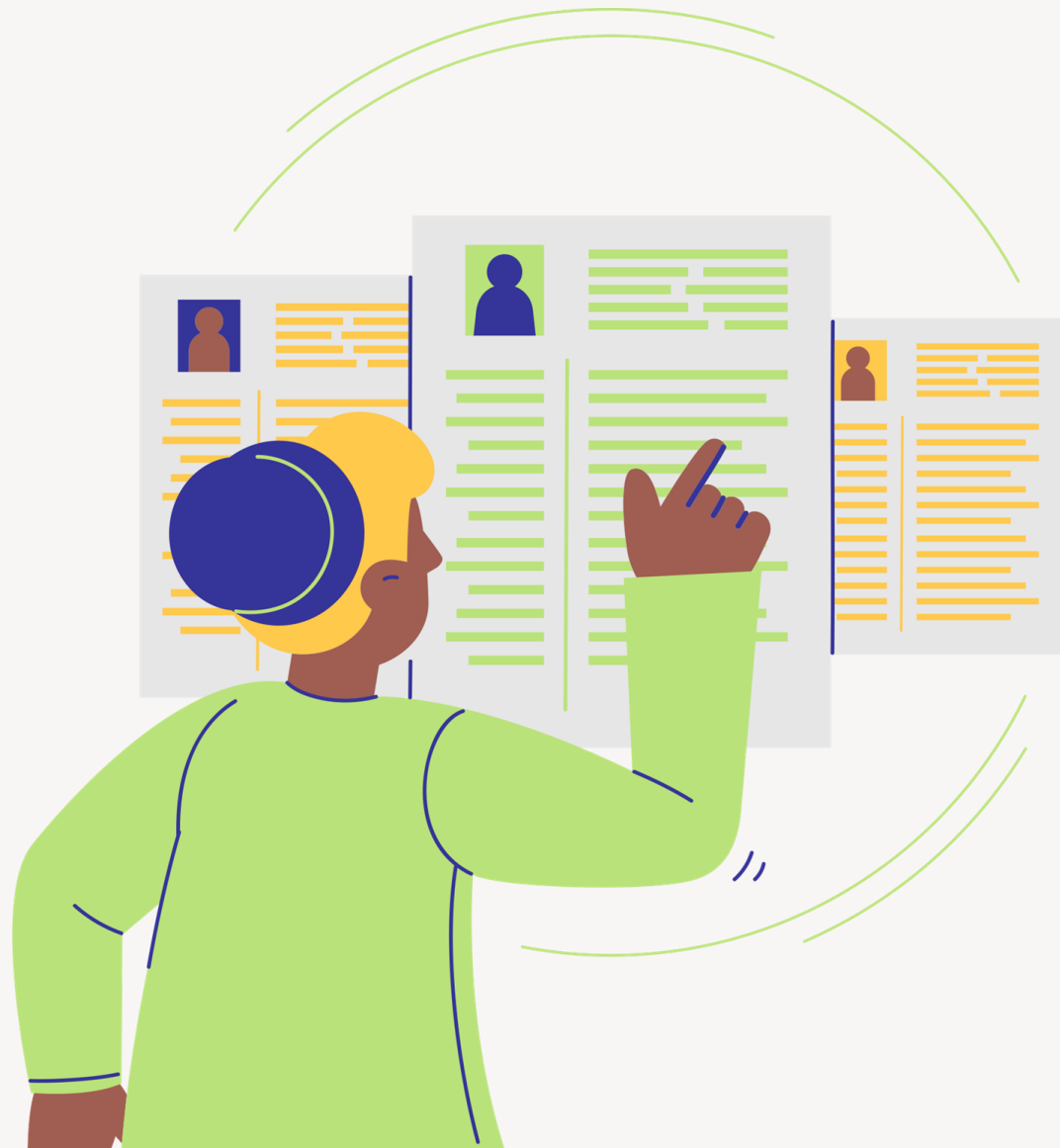
- Collection Development & Adult Services Librarian, *Guilderland Public Library*
- Working in libraries since 2015

Sarah McLean-Plunkett

- Librarian, *Clarence Public Library*
- Working in public libraries since 2015



The Research



1. Charles Duhigg's *Supercommunicators: How to Unlock the Secret Language of Connection* (2024) and other resources

2. Amy Edmondson's *Psychological Safety: Clear Blocks to Innovation, Collaboration, and Risk-Taking* (updated 2026)

3. Warren Berger's *A More Beautiful Question* (2024) and other resources

4. Kath Murdoch's Inquiry-Based Learning model

Four Entry Points

Non-linear areas of inquiry
& communication.



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Psychological Safety



Within this section, users can explore topics such as:

- Building a help-seeking culture
- Reducing fear of retaliation
- Creating inclusion and belonging
- Responding to staff concerns constructively
- Balancing accountability with support

Psychological Safety



One of the core ideas we emphasize is that psychological safety is not a "soft skill."

- It's an operational strategy.
- Safe teams identify problems earlier.
- Safe teams collaborate more effectively.
- Safe teams adapt more quickly during change.
- And ultimately, safe teams provide better service to patrons.

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Communicating Inquiry

Duhigg's Matching Principle

Practical: Problem-solving, planning, and exchanging information.

Emotional: Seeking empathy, venting, and processing feelings—without looking for solutions.

Social: Navigating identity, social standing, and how we relate to the world.

Extrapolated model from Duhigg, Berger and Murdoch

PAUSE · WONDER · QUESTION · ACT

PAUSE

Set aside first reaction · observe

WONDER

Attend without judgment · ask Why

QUESTION

Loop · use the question bank

ACT

Considered, human response

Core Concepts for Workshop

- Attentive Presence
- Inquiry Over Assumption
- Collaborative Wondering
- Inquiry to Action
- Framework introduced
- Ongoing utilization suggested

PAUSE – WONDER – QUESTION – ACT

INQUIRY-DRIVEN COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK · BERGER · MURDOCH · DUHIGG · ROAM

Stage	MURDOCH Wonder	BERGER Beautiful questioning	PRACTICE Staff action	DUHIGG Looping & communication	ROAM Visual thinking
PAUSE	Set aside your first reaction	Notice what you don't know	Breathe, observe, resist auto-pilot	Is this a practical, emotional, or social conversation?	Look before you interpret — what do you actually see?
WONDER	Attend to what's actually here	Ask "Why is this the way it is?"	Describe the situation without judgment	Listen fully before forming any response	Sketch the situation — draw what you see before you name it
QUESTION	Be curious about the other person	Ask "What if it were different?"	Use the question bank	Loop: reflect back, ask, confirm understanding	Use Roam's six questions: Who/What, How Much, Where, When, How, Why
ACT	Act from curiosity, not habit	Ask "How might we move forward?"	Make a considered, human response	Match your response to the conversation type	Draw the proposed solution — if you can't show it, you may not fully understand it yet

Four Movements

- **Movement 1** — Seeing Clearly (Attentive Presence + Conversation Types) Staff practice a simple observational exercise.
- **Movement 2** — Walk staff through Questioning Well Exercise
- **Movement 3** — Collaborative Dialogue (Question Bank + Full Cycle) Group asked questions answered collaboratively
- **Movement 4** – Formulate an actionable question utilizing the principles provided in Mechanics of a Question.

Four Entry Points

Inquiry is a muscle, let's build it together!

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The Question Builder



How to Build a Question & filter a thought through three layers:

1. Opening the Circuit (The Right Question Institute)
2. The “Why, What If, How” cycle (Warren Berger)
3. Reducing Friction (Charles Duhigg)

The Question Reframer



- Time to tackle institutional inertia!
- Learn to flip a fixed statement into a “how might we...” question
- Changes the energy of a project from a tense dead-end to an opportunity

The Question Repair Shop



**Despite our best efforts,
communication can still breakdown...**

- Diagnose why inquiry has stalled through library-related scenarios
- Identify the possible source of the friction and offer the “repair” syntax to get the conversation moving again

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Inquiry Reflection

Your Self-Assessment

- Self-assessment: essential mechanisms for creating benchmarks for improvement.
- Utilizing workshop format allows participants to evaluate performance and set actionable goals.
- These assessments can be utilized across context.

Inquiry Reflection Understanding Your Results

Practical communicator

Orients toward clarity, outcomes, and action.

Empathic communicator

Leads with empathy and genuine care.
Creates psychological safety naturally.

Social reader

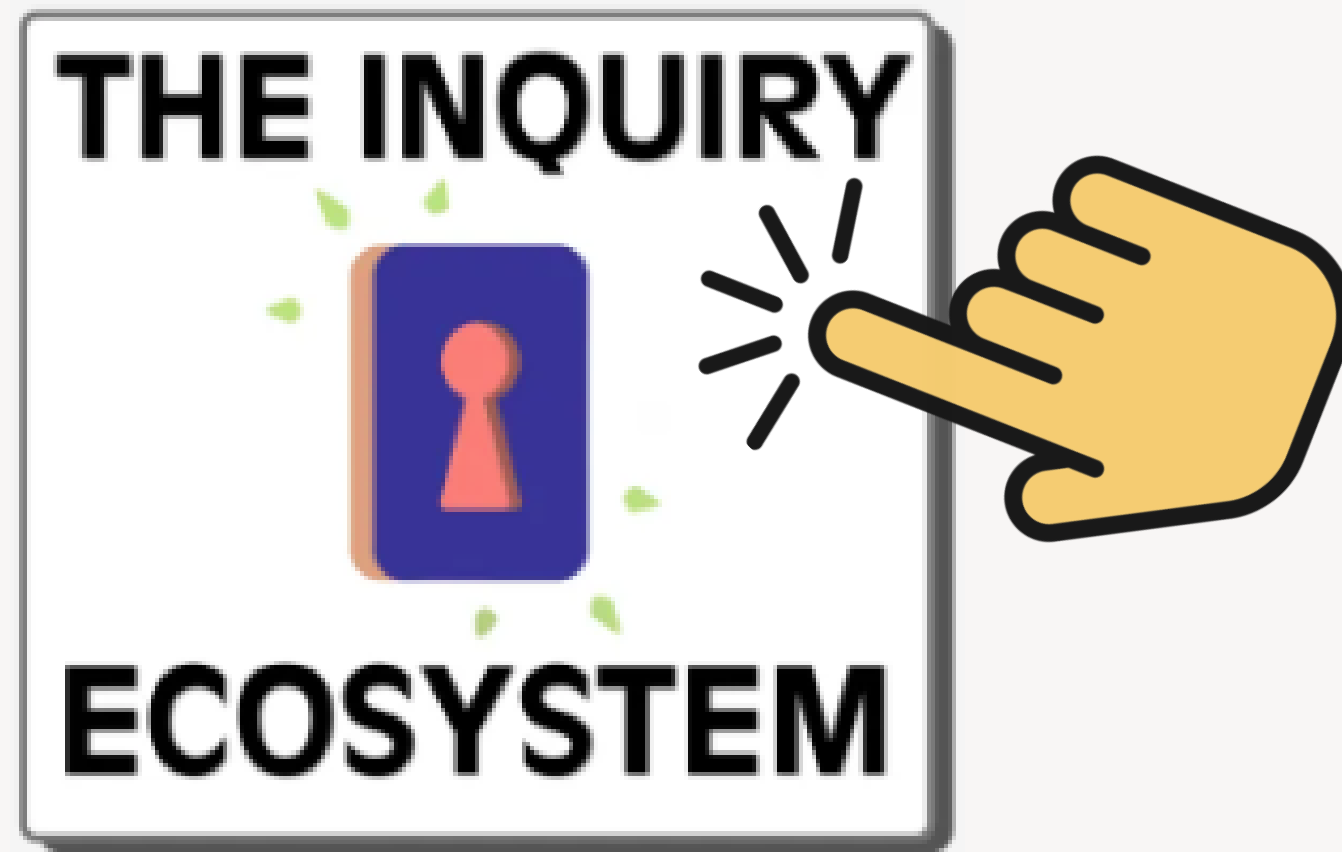
Perceptive about identity and relational layers others often miss.

Reflective listener

Slows down, checks understanding, and makes others feel genuinely heard.

Implementation

Let's tour the toolkit!



InquiryEcosystem.wordpress.com

Thank you for listening!

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