

Job Title: Research Assistant

AIDE Canada Library Research Assistant

POSITION SUMMARY

The student will work with faculty from the School of Information and staff from the Autism and/or Intellectual Disability Knowledge Exchange Network (AIDE Canada) as part of a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded partnership development project, “Developing a community for community-centered vocabulary work.” This position contributes to AIDE Canada, a federally-funded project dedicated to developing and providing free access to high quality, evidence-based resources on autism and related disabilities. AIDE Canada was created in response to an identified need for credible, evidence-based information tailored to the needs of the Canadian autism community.

AIDE Canada is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and administered by the Pacific Autism Family Network (PAFN). AIDE develops original resources including videos, articles, online courses, and clear language research summaries to address identified community needs. There are approximately 500 unique resources on the AIDE Canada website (aidecanada.ca), all available in both English and French. Additionally, AIDE operates the AIDE Canada Library (library.aidecanada.ca), a publicly accessible lending library with 6000+ items dedicated to autism and related disabilities. The Library is located at the Pacific Autism Family Network in Richmond and operates a free Canada-wide borrow-by-mail service. Membership is free and open to anyone in Canada.

The AIDE Canada Library collection includes books, DVDs, educational resources, occupational therapy tools, and an OverDrive collection of 500+ ebooks and audiobooks. The Library’s primary focus is on providing practical information for autistic people and their families and caregivers, as well as resources for educators, service providers, clinicians and other professionals.

The AIDE Canada Library collection is classified and indexed with the AIDE Canada Taxonomy, a custom controlled vocabulary developed to describe the Library’s unique collection using terminology that is accessible to a diverse user base. A major challenge in selecting terms for the taxonomy is the need to select community-preferred terms that do not reinforce stigma or stereotypes, while also being findable via keyword searches for common terms, some of which may be considered outdated or offensive in some contexts. In addition, the metadata must be flexible and responsive to rapidly changing terminology and social norms related to autism and neurodiversity. There is a need for sensitivity and sound judgment in creating descriptive terms for topics related to ideological conflicts and controversies within the autism community.

Separate from the library collection, AIDE Canada publishes original content at aidecanada.ca. These resources are developed by autistic self-advocates, researchers, practitioners and other experts. They are tagged with keywords from three sources: the AIDE Canada Library Taxonomy, a separate set of categories designed for web navigation, and free text tags assigned by non-library staff.

Work Performed

- With guidance from supervisors, determine ways to obtain input from community members and other stakeholders to identify community-preferred terminology for describing information resources (e.g., library resources and online articles)

- With guidance from supervisors, identify strategies for conducting web usability research with diverse stakeholder groups (e.g., autistic self-advocates, parents, educators, service providers)
- With guidance from supervisors, develop strategies for presenting the AIDE Canada Taxonomy to community members and other stakeholder groups for feedback and usability research sessions
 - Analyze the AIDE Canada Taxonomy to identify priorities for community consultation
 - Summarize and visualize key aspects of the AIDE Canada's indexing vocabularies in ways that are accessible to diverse audiences
 - Develop strategies for communicating the fundamentals of indexing and information retrieval to diverse audiences
- Explore ways to support community engagement around the development of the AIDE Canada Library's metadata and the addition of new items, such as through Metadata-a-thons (like Hack-a-thons)
- Create instructional materials and guidelines for non-library staff to support the effective indexing of AIDE Canada's original web resources
- Model best information management and record keeping practices
- Develop and maintain project documentation

HOURS OF WORK:

This position will be from September 1 – December 31, 2024. It is anticipated the GAA will work an average of 10 hours per week. The rate of pay is \$28/hour + benefits. The earliest start date would be September 1, 2024.

Qualifications

- An iSchool graduate student who has completed LIBR 509;
- Other recommended coursework includes LIBR 514/ARST556 (Metadata), LIBR 579J (Community-led Libraries);
- Excellent oral and written communication skills;
- Knowledge of autism and related disabilities;
- Familiarity with the neurodiversity framework and the social model of disability;
- Ability to work independently, take initiative in appropriate ways, and use good judgement;
- Organizational and project management skills, including the ability to prioritize tasks and manage timelines;
- Passion for community access to knowledge and interest in the community-led library philosophy;
- Accuracy and attention to detail;
- Plain language, communicating technical concepts to non-specialist audiences
- A curious, flexible, and asset-based approach to community development;
- Experience working with people with developmental disabilities in a paid or volunteer position is an asset.

To apply send your cover letter and resume to Julia Bullard (julia.bullard@ubc.ca) and Allison Hill (ahill@aidecanada.ca) by **August 15, 2024**. The co-supervisors will contact short-listed candidates the week of August 19 to schedule interviews.

Contribution to the University Community

The work is invested in making autism information resources, such as books and online articles, more accessible to the Canadian autism community through the development and maintenance of a taxonomy of community-preferred subject terms. Through their involvement in the project, the student will be supported to strengthen their understanding and application of asset-based community engagement principles and practices. They will gain experience translating complex concepts into clear and accessible formats to facilitate communication with diverse audiences. The work supports information professionals as integral actors in public health communication.

Student Learning Components:

Supervision and Training

- Introduction to the direct supervisor, iSchool co-supervisor, and other team members;
- An orientation to submitting timesheets and setting up payroll;
- Completion of UBC mandatory training modules (<https://wpl.ubc.ca/>);
- Introduction to the AIDE Canada Taxonomy and the Koha Integrated Library System;
- Introduction to AIDE Canada and the AIDE Canada Library, including a specialized collection of print and digital library resources dedicated to autism and related disabilities as well as original toolkits, research summaries, videos, and online courses developed by AIDE Canada.

Connections and Professional Development

- Regular meetings with AIDE Canada Library supervisor, iSchool co-supervisor, and weekly peer-to-peer support;
- Participation in project workshops connecting the AIDE Canada Library project to other local library, archive, and museum initiatives, including peer student workers and their supervisors;
- Ongoing communication via email, and sharing of work for feedback using online tools, e.g., Microsoft Teams;
- Reporting of project progress at team meetings to gain feedback and confidence communicating work with others and exchanging ideas;
- Attendance at events hosted by the grant, project partners or with the UBC or external community about knowledge exchange, community engagement, scholarly communication, community-centered librarianship, or metadata work.

Career Exploration

- Direct experience in a nontraditional library role supporting a Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)-funded public health initiative
- Direct experience developing strategies to facilitate meaningful engagement with diverse stakeholder groups on topics related to information management and access
- Direct experience communicating information management concepts to non-specialist audiences
- Developing parts of a custom thesaurus and creating workflows to support metadata creation and management to gain a deeper understanding of metadata creation and management;
- Enhance project and time management skills;

- Establish connections with supervisors, grant collaborators, partners, and other student research assistants to enrich teamwork and networking skills;
- Benefit from increased understanding of the need for sharing information in clear and meaningful ways to benefit society.