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"You Don't Look Like a Librarian”:
Decoding Microaggressions in the Library Environment

Rachel A. McCaskill
Learning Technologies Librarian
Virginia Commonwealth University

Guidelines:

Listen for understanding
Speak Your Own Truth
Confidentiality
Honesty
Redefine Your Comfort Zone
Respect Others

Goals:

- Understand microaggressions
- Increase our awareness of microaggressions in the library environment
- Practice addressing microaggressions

So… what exactly IS a **microaggression?**

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microaggression
noun | mi·cro·ag·gres·sion | \ˌmī-krō-ə-ˈgre-shən\

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microaggression
noun | mi·cro·ag·gres·sion | \ˌmī-krō-ə-ˈgre-shən\
:a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)

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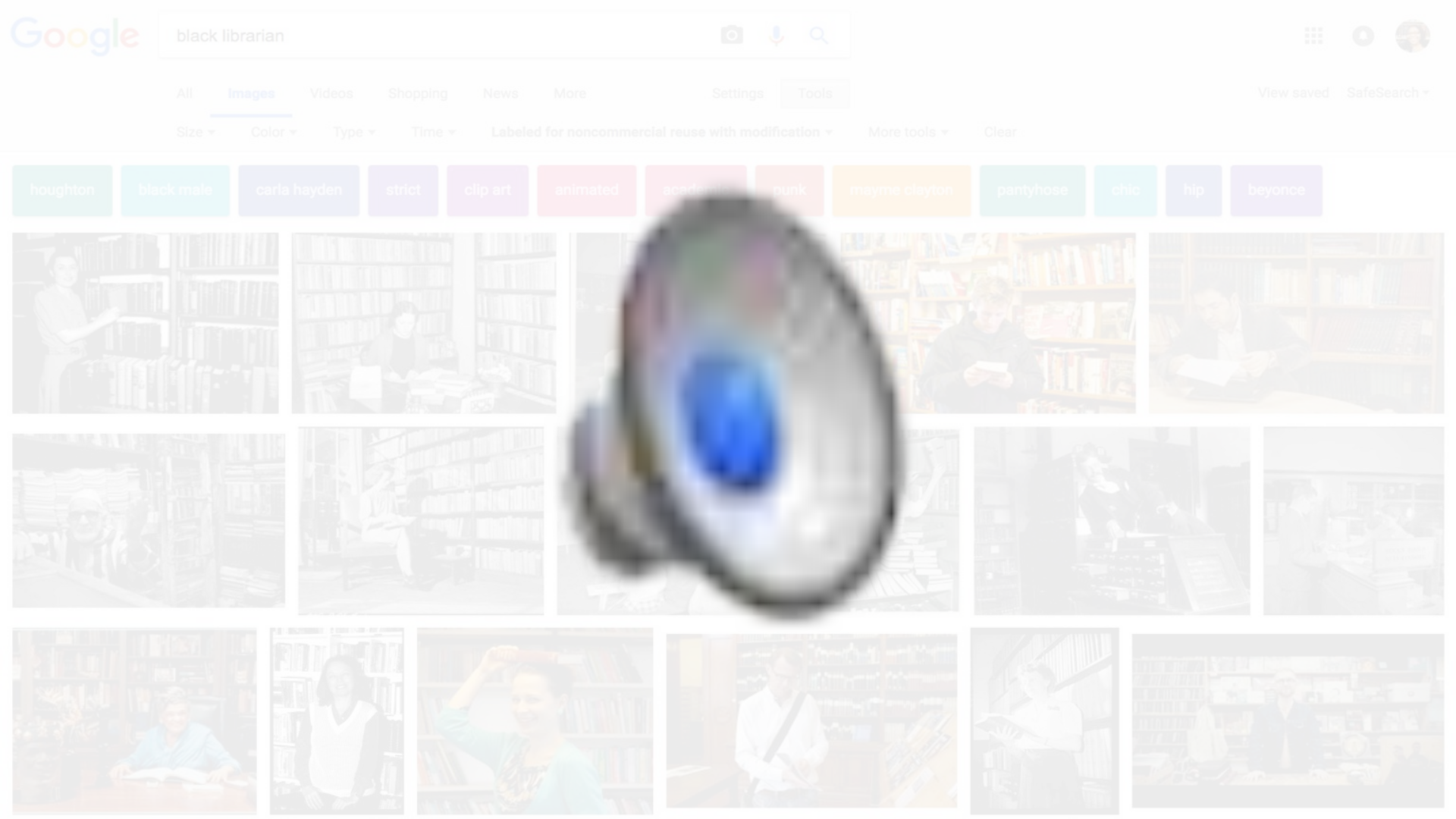
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Microaggressions in the Library Environment

Librarian suggestions and ideas being valued over staff/ non-librarian suggestions

"*You* should be good at this."

"You don't look like a librarian."

"She's a piece of work, isn't she?"

"You speak so *well*."

Microaggressions in the Library Environment

"Don't be shy. We all want to know what you think."

"Oh, I don't need a microphone."

"We value diversity": but an organization doesn't carry out equal and fair recruitment practices

Being called on to offer the "librarian of color perspective"

Microaggressions in the Library Environment

Continuing to mispronounce the names of coworkers or patrons after being corrected, or not bothering to pronounce names correctly in the first place

Making assumptions about students and their backgrounds

Talking over coworkers in meetings, students in classes

Hot Button Activity

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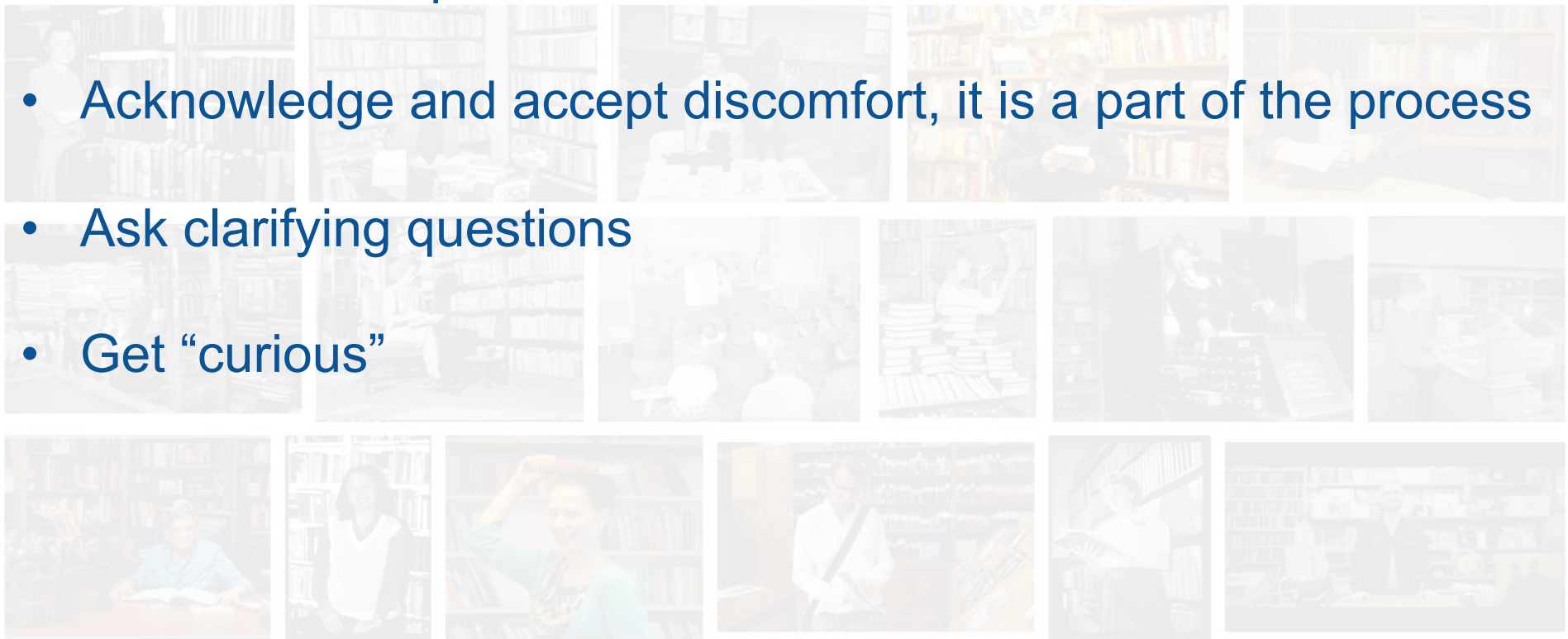
Recommendations for Interrupting Microaggressions

- Reflect back what we are hearing
- Say “I noticed that…”
- Be an ally
- Check in with person experiencing the microaggression

Recommendations for Interrupting Microaggressions

- Validate the experiences of others
- Acknowledge and accept discomfort, it is a part of the process
- Ask clarifying questions
- Get “curious”



Further Discussion / Questions

Rachel A. McCaskill

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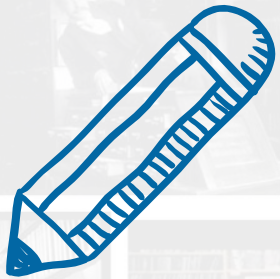

Session Evaluation Link:

tinyurl.com/th2017vla