

# Serving Culturally Diverse Communities in South African Public Libraries

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This article presents an overview of the multicultural nature of South Africa including the meaning of multiculturalism and multicultural public libraries in the South African environment. An empirical survey was conducted to determine the status quo of the collections and services being offered by South African public libraries to culturally diverse communities, and to determine if these are representative of

South Africa's culturally diverse communities. The findings suggest that public libraries in South Africa often do not recognise the diverse nature of the communities they serve. Causes for the current situation are identified. Finally, suggestions for the development of multicultural library services and collections are also given. The results show the importance of training in cultural diversity issues for libraries.

## Introduction

As a multicultural society, South Africa is often referred to as the Rainbow Nation. This is because South Africa consists of a diversity of linguistic, religious and cultural communities (South Africa 2002, 2).

The South African Constitution (South Africa 1996) and Act 19 of 2002 (2002, 2) recommend that:

- All communities should be treated equally in South Africa.
- The cultures, religions and languages of each community should be promoted and protected so as to promote peace, friendship, humanity and tolerance among all groups.
- The rights of these communities should be promoted and protected through the equal distribution of resources and an equitable rendering of concrete services to all communities.

To accomplish the above, public services – such as public libraries – need to support the above recommendations. The need for public libraries to comply with the Constitution and Commission is made clear in various library and information legislation and policies, both nationally and internationally. This includes the policies of the Li-

brary and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA Policy 2005) which point out that libraries "shall acquire, preserve and make available the widest range of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of society." This policy supports the view of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA 1998, 1), which states that "library services should be provided to all ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups at the same level, and according to the same standards."

## Aim of the research

The general aim of this article is to report on the status quo of multicultural public library services and collections, and to determine if these are representative of South Africa's culturally diverse communities. This is based on a literature review and an empirical survey conducted at the CJLIS (City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services).

## Research design and methodology

The research design chosen for this study is largely qualitative. Ely *et al.* (1991, 4) state that "qualitative researchers want those who are studied to

speak for themselves, to provide their perspectives in words and other actions." Therefore, in order to investigate the response of a specific group of public libraries to the multicultural nature of South Africa and to seek suggestions from them on how these might be improved, it was necessary to obtain the perspectives and opinions of librarians who work in public libraries and serve culturally diverse communities.

The methods that have been used to gather information pertaining to the state of multiculturalism in public libraries include the following:

- A local and international literature review
- Interviews with librarians from the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services (CJLIS)

The literature review for this project was carried out to provide information relating to the general background and context of the study. The international literature review focused specifically on literature available in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, as public libraries in these countries are also involved with culturally diverse communities and they have developed a range of multicultural services to cater for these communities. These countries have also published extensively on this topic. Publications include policies and guidelines for multicultural library services.

The South African literature review focused on literature that has a direct or indirect bearing on multicultural library services. It highlights South Africa's unique path of library development, especially in terms of the separate and unequal development of library services for different cultural communities in South Africa.

For the purposes of this study the one-on-one, semi-structured interview method was the main data collection instrument chosen. The main purpose of the interviews was that of finding answers to the main research question of this study: How are South African public libraries – specifically the CJLIS – responding to the multicultural nature of the communities they serve?

According to Busha and Harter (1980, 56), the concept of the population to be surveyed is fundamental to research and refers to the group of persons or objects from which the research plans to draw inferences. In this study the population interviewed is referred to as the respondents and is

defined as branch librarians working at the branch libraries of Region Eight of the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services (CJLIS) as well as the heads of the sections – identified at the Central Library of the CJLIS. The manager of the CJLIS, Region Eight, was also interviewed. This Region was selected as it constitutes the central part of the City of Johannesburg – or inner city – which is densely populated and is made up of diverse cultural communities, with a population of over 257 000 (Statistics South Africa 2001).

Altogether, fourteen librarians were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide:

- Hillbrow Branch Library
- Mayfair Branch Library
- Murray Park Branch Library
- Rhodes Park Branch Library
- Southdale Branch Library
- Yeoville Branch Library
- Central Lending Library
- Young Adult Library
- Children's Library
- Reference Department
- African Studies Library
- Music Library
- Art Library
- Multimedia Library

### *Background to the study*

#### *The multicultural nature of South Africa*

The latest national census, Census 2001, highlights the cultural diverse nature of South Africa. According to Census 2001, communities include not only the 11 official linguistic communities, but also a diversity of other ethnic, religious, linguistic communities and nationalities from rest of Africa, Europe and the rest of world.

According to the Census 2001, of the 44 819 778 people living in South Africa, 35 416 166 are Black (79%), 3 994 505 are Coloured (8.9%), 1 115 467 are Indian or Asian (2.5%), and 4 293 640 are White (9.6%). The distribution of the population, by language most often spoken in the home, is as follows:

isiZulu	23.8%
isiXhosa	17.6%
Afrikaans	13.3%
Sepedi	9.4%
English	8.2%
Setswana	8.2%
Sesotho	7.9%
Xitsonga	4.4%
siSwati	2.7%
Tshivenda	2.3%
isiNdebele	1.6%
Other	0.5%

The Census also indicates that 2.3% of people living in South Africa were not born in South Africa. They originate from SADC countries; the rest of Africa; Europe; Asia; North, Central and South America; Australia; and New Zealand. This census does not reflect links that people – born in South Africa – have with the heritages of other cultures, such as those of the Portuguese, Greeks, Indians, Chinese and other communities living in South Africa. Religions recorded in the census include Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and African traditional beliefs.

#### *Describing the unique meaning of multiculturalism for South Africa*

Lubisi (2001, 2) notes that because of the geographical location of leading authors on the subject of multiculturalism (Western Europe, Great Britain, Australia and North America), the dominant culture often corresponds to the culture of the majority of citizens, while the marginal cultures – which demand recognition – are often the cultures of minorities. Therefore, multiculturalism abroad usually refers to the rights of minority groups, especially immigrant groups.

In South Africa, on the other hand, while certain minority groups have been protected and promoted, the majority cultures have often been marginalised. This is pointed out by Beukman (2000, 138) who notes that the protection of minorities in an international context refers to environments where the majority discriminates against minorities. As a result, international perspectives are of limited value in South Africa. The difference

between the situation in South Africa and that in many countries abroad is that it is the majority in South Africa which has been disadvantaged. The author, therefore, argues that the notion of community rights (instead of minority rights) is preferred when discussing multiculturalism in South Africa.

Therefore, multiculturalism in South Africa should not be seen in terms of promoting and protecting disadvantaged minorities' rights – as is the case internationally. It should rather be seen as an equitable concern for every community living in South Africa, including both majority and minority communities. The diverse communities that should be included under the scope of multiculturalism in South Africa are:

- Religious communities (Christian, Muslim, Jewish, African traditional beliefs and other religions)
- Linguistic communities (11 official languages, such as English, Afrikaans and isiZulu, amongst other linguistic communities)
- Any other cultural communities, such as the diverse nationalities, ethnic and immigrant communities (South Africa, Act 19 of 2002).

#### *The development of public libraries and services to the culturally diverse communities of South Africa*

To understand the status quo regarding public library services to culturally diverse communities in South Africa today, it is important to firstly understand the context in which public libraries developed in this country. Kalley (2000, 1) shows that cultural separation in South Africa was reinforced by the Group Areas Act (41 of 1950) which enforced the racial zoning of land; the Separate Amenities Act (49 of 1953) by which the provision of separate buildings and services for people of different racial groups was legalised; and the Bantu Education Act (47 of 1953) which increased the differences in literacy levels between population groups. Public libraries in South Africa developed within this divisive cultural background and the legacy of segregation and apartheid policies.

Taylor (1967, 64) indicates that "the first library services in South Africa were initiated by whites for whites." This is supported by Mostert (1999, 1) who explains that following the founding of the South African Public Library – which opened its

doors to the public in 1820 – library development was concentrated in mainly European communities. However, Von Bech (1997, 154) – when referring to the development of public libraries in South Africa in the nineteenth century – notes that even in the white community there were unequal developments for different cultural communities as “public libraries were established mainly by the English-speaking (white) section of the population in South Africa.” The English speaking section of the population had a tradition of education, reading and writing and was mainly responsible for the establishment of the public library tradition in South Africa. Von Bech (1997, 163) suggests that amongst the Afrikaans-speaking population matters looked very different. Afrikaans had only been declared an official language in 1925. Many obstacles had to be overcome by the people whose home language was Afrikaans, such as the many different cultural backgrounds which made up the Afrikaner communities and which had to be assimilated.

However, it was especially in library services to non-white communities that unequal development was evident. Mostert (1999, 1) writes that

the separate development of libraries for whites, coloureds, blacks and Indians, had gained momentum since 1910 when provincial authorities took responsibility for the development of library services. However, inadequacies in the provision of library services seemed to have been the norm. These inadequacies were pointed out by Ferguson and Pitt, who were two librarians commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation to investigate the situation concerning South African provision. This resulted in the Bloemfontein Library Conference in 1928, where greater need was expressed for adequate development of library service to all race groups.

According to Taylor (1967, 64), only when the Carnegie commissioners visited South Africa in 1927 was the need for library services to non-white communities even recognised. Grants were then made to initiate such services in each province. The Carnegie Commission recommended that a free library system to serve all sections of the community be established and that library services to all other ethnic groups should be started (Von Bech 1997, 165).

Although some public library services started being developed for non-white communities from 1928, this was in an environment of segregation and inequality. In the years that followed, vari-

ous segregated “non-white” library services were established. These services were, however, inadequate and – as described by Von Beck (1997, 180) – their development was further slowed down by Apartheid legislation.

After the Nationalist Party came into power in 1948 the library system for Whites grew, but this growth took place at the expense of facilities accessible to Blacks (Von Beck 1997, 180). According to Mostert (1999, 1), after 1948 the policies enforced by the South African Government resulted in the development of an advanced system of library services for the privileged white minority, while those for Blacks were left largely underdeveloped.

The situation of segregated, unequal library services continued well into the 1970s and beyond. The first public libraries only started opening their doors to all races in the 1970s. Both the Johannesburg Public Library and the Natal Society Library in Pietermaritzburg opened their doors to all race groups in 1975 (Issak 2000). However, it was not until the end of Apartheid in 1994 that equal access to all public libraries by all populations was guaranteed by the Constitution.

The new laws guaranteed all persons equal, non-discriminatory access to public services, such as public libraries. However, it is important to mention the following statement made by Stilwell (1997, 27):

South African public libraries have been democratised in the sense that they are open to all races and this, in itself, gives communities the opportunity to make their needs known. Very little evidence is available, however, on systematic and continuous needs assessment by the public sector.

This remark is also relevant to multicultural services in South Africa. While multicultural library services emphasise equal access to all population groups, a multicultural approach in public libraries is about more than equal access. It requires the materials and services – offered by public libraries – to be representative and relevant to the needs of their diverse communities. Positive actions in the form of concrete services should be rendered to meet the specific needs of each group. These may include library services in the native language of the members of a group or – as Tinker suggests (1990, 40) – the provision of services and materials which reflect the multicultural nature of society.

This is supported by Walker (1994, 125) when referring to the challenges of providing information to all in South Africa. Walker maintains that as libraries have opened their services to black users, many librarians have been challenged by unfamiliar problems, including illiteracy or newly acquired adult literacy; the selection and acquisition of appropriate material for a multilingual, multicultural society; and cultural and language barriers in the communication between users and librarians.

Finally, it is important to describe the situation of public libraries in South Africa, in general, since 1994. Although public library services have become free to all and equal access is guaranteed for all communities by legislation, the Memorandum on the State of Libraries in South Africa (Lor 1998) reveals an alarming deterioration of library services in many parts of South Africa. Leach (1998, 18) agrees with this when referring to the public library sector post 1994 survey:

It is, however, clearly becoming increasingly difficult (if not impossible) to achieve redress let alone maintain existing services. The public library sector (amongst other sectors) is finding that it must continuously compete for increasingly limited funding at local and provincial level. This financial factor is impacting negatively on many other important aspects of LIS work.

It can be assumed that the present position in which public libraries find themselves in South Africa – in terms of the financial factor – will also impact on what libraries can achieve regarding an equitable offering of multicultural library services to culturally diverse communities.

### *Policy developments in a democratic South Africa*

Contrary to the Apartheid policies of the past, there are various policies in place in South Africa today which directly – or indirectly – support the principle of providing equitable public services, including library services, to the country's multicultural populations.

As mentioned earlier, the Constitution (South Africa 1996) promotes and protects the rights of the diverse communities in South Africa. Chapter 2, Section 30 of the Constitution, states that "everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice." Another part of the Constitution, Section 31, asserts

that "persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community

- to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language; and
- to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society."

Chapter One of the Constitution confirms that "the official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu." It recognises that with "the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages."

Furthermore, the Constitution specifies that conditions should be created for, "the development and use of

- all official languages;
- the Khoi, Nama and San languages; and
- sign language; and

promote and ensure respect for

- all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; and
- Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa."

Act No. 19 of 2002 (South Africa 2002) was proclaimed by the Constitution of South Africa to support constitutional democracy. The Act established the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities. Beukman (2000, 139), points out the various functions of the Commission. The functions that are considered most relevant to public services include:

- Resource allocation: promoting an equitable distribution of available resources among the cultural, religious and linguistic communities.
- Promoting multiculturalism and multilingualism: promoting the diversity of the nation through awareness campaigns concerning multiculturalism and multilingualism and celebrating our cultural heritage through joint projects

Another policy which focuses on an aspect of multiculturalism – that of multilingualism – is the Language policy of the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB). The Mission Statement of PANSALB (2005) declares that “the purpose of the Board is to promote multilingualism in South Africa by:

- creating the conditions for the development of, and the equal use of, all official languages;
- fostering respect for, and encouraging the use of, other languages in the country;
- encouraging the best use of the country’s linguistic resources.

The above general government policies indicate government’s recognition of the multicultural nature of South Africa. There are also various international and national library specific policies which directly – or indirectly – recognise and support the principle of providing equitable library services to the multicultural populations in South Africa. Internationally, the IFLA Multicultural Communities Guidelines (1998) apply. According to IFLA, although the ethnic, linguistic and cultural composition of the world varies greatly, “these guidelines are international” (1998, 5). The guidelines also point out that “they are meant to be used in conjunction with standards and guidelines for particular types of libraries in each country.”

Another international policy which applies to countries all over the world – including South Africa – is UNESCO’s Public Library Manifesto (1994). The Manifesto encourages national and local governments around the world to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries. It points out that the “services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status”. It goes on to suggest that one of the key missions of the public library is that of fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity.

South African library specific policies also exist which support diversity and multicultural library services directly or indirectly. In one of its general constitutional aims, the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA Constitution 2005) strives to “promote the transformation of the library and information services into equitable and accessible services for all the people in South

Africa.” In its specific Policies and Strategies (LIA-SA Policy 2005), the organisation states that

libraries have a responsibility both to guarantee and to facilitate access to expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity. To this end, libraries shall acquire, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of society, and libraries shall make materials, facilities and services equally accessible to all users.

Another document that touches on issues of diversity in library services indirectly is the National Council for Library and Information Services Act (6 of 2001). One of the functions of the Council mentioned in Section 4 (e) (2001, 3) is to advise the Minister on “existing adequacies and deficiencies of library and information resources, including literature in African languages, and services.”

Finally, the provision of equitable library services for its culturally diverse population is also even supported by internal library policies, such as those of the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services (CJLIS). This includes the Minimum Standards for the CJLIS (2003) which state that the Library should reflect the variety of cultures represented in the community; support cultural traditions; and provide resources and services in the languages spoken and read in the local community. Also included is the Policy for the Selection of Materials for the CJLIS (2002) which states that the library’s materials should reflect the cultural diversity of the City, especially materials in the languages of the indigenous communities.

The above policy framework allows for – and supports – the principles of multicultural public library services in South Africa. At public library level though, the actual implementation of these policy positions needs to be investigated. How public libraries have actually responded to these policies needs to be investigated. These issues were explored in the interviews held with the librarians from CJLIS, and are discussed in the following section.

### *Discussion of key findings*

Interviews were conducted with the branch librarians and heads of sections of the CJLIS, Region Eight to report on the status quo of multicultural library services and collections in that Region, and to determine if these are representative of South Africa’s culturally diverse communities.

The discussion of these results is based on the set objectives of this research.

These are:

- To determine the general understanding of the CJLIS, Region Eight, of multicultural library services or services to culturally diverse communities and the importance they place on these.
- To determine whether these librarians have conducted needs assessments and have user profiles – in terms of cultural diversity.
- To establish how these libraries have responded to the multicultural nature of the communities they serve – in the collections they offer.
- To establish how these libraries have responded to the multicultural nature of the communities they serve – in the services they offer.
- To obtain suggestions from the librarians of the CJLIS, Region Eight, on how services and materials may be improved to better meet the needs of the culturally diverse communities they serve.
- To make recommendations – based on the findings – that may be applied to all public libraries in South Africa that serve culturally diverse communities.

### *A general understanding of multicultural library services*

The first objective was to determine the *general* understanding the CJLIS, Region Eight, has of multicultural library services and how important they regard these. This entailed determining

- the respondents' understanding of library services to culturally diverse communities.
- whether responding librarians find such services important.
- whether respondents feel that cultural diversity has impacted on the services and products offered by their libraries.
- whether responding libraries are aware of any guidelines and/or policies relating to multicultural library services.

The first part of this objective aimed to find out if responding libraries have an understanding of multicultural library services and whether they deem these services to be important. The results reveal that all responding librarians have some understanding of what multiculturalism or services to culturally diverse communities entail, although most of the respondents (79%) only perceive these services as involving collections. Re-

spondents seem unaware that they might provide services – other than collections – to meet the needs of culturally diverse communities.

An analysis of the results, however, reveals that most responding librarians (93%) feel that such library services are important. Seventy-one percent of the respondents maintain that these services allow libraries to cater equally for the needs of all their communities – not just English speaking users. This supports the view of IFLA (1998, 6) that library services should be provided to all linguistic and cultural communities equally – i.e., at the same level and according to the same standards.

In terms of the impact of cultural diversity, specifically the impact of the eleven official languages on the libraries surveyed, the results reveal that most librarians (86%) feel it has impacted on the services and collections offered by their libraries. Sixty-four percent of respondents claim that the most obvious impact is that users now feel comfortable in using their own languages – something they did not feel in the past. According to the results, twenty-one percent of the respondents assert that since the adoption of the official languages, more books in these languages are being purchased. This is particularly true about indigenous folk-tale narratives.

The first objective further aimed to establish whether responding libraries are aware of any guidelines or policies relating to multicultural library services. It also sought to discover if – and why – such guidelines and/or policies are considered important by the respondents. The results show that only 29% of the responding libraries are aware of any such policies. However, 93% of the respondents consider that having such guidelines is important. The reason given most often by respondents (57%) is that it would act as a guideline for selecting materials for culturally diverse communities. It should be noted that respondents feel that these guidelines should give practical suggestions on how library collections and services can be changed to ensure that the needs of all community members within a multicultural society are catered for.

It is evident from the above results that the responding librarians have an understanding of the concept of multiculturalism or services to culturally diverse communities, especially in terms of collections, and that they perceive these to be important and to have an impact on their services.

### *User profile availability*

This objective attempted to determine whether librarians have conducted needs assessments and compiled user profiles in terms of cultural diversity. It entailed determining whether:

- the responding librarians have conducted any needs assessments in terms of the culturally diverse communities they serve.
- user profiles have been compiled for these libraries in terms of cultural diversity, such as the different languages spoken by their communities.
- the respondents from selected libraries have collected any other statistical data that might be relevant to the offering of multicultural services.
- the responding librarians consider it to be important to have this type of information on the communities they serve.

According to the most recent Australian multicultural library guidelines (2001, 15), when developing services for culturally diverse communities, the target market's needs should be defined and a profile of the community should be drawn up – using statistical results. These guidelines suggest that this is the first stage required in the development of multicultural services and that without these it would not be possible to develop a library service that is truly representative of a multicultural society. The Canadian guidelines (1994, 6) clearly support this by stating that each community has particular needs and wants. A multicultural service must, therefore, be based on a thorough understanding of the background, make-up, needs and wants of each group in the community; this includes examining statistics on these groups.

It is evident from the results obtained, that the majority (86%) of respondents think it is important to compile a user profile in terms of cultural diversity. A number of benefits for compiling such a user profile are suggested. For sixty-four percent of the respondents, the biggest benefit of having a user profile is that it would help with book selection. Forty-three percent of the respondents indicate that a user profile would give librarians a greater understanding of the needs of each user group.

Although responding librarians are aware that the community they serve is very diverse – and

they support the value of a user profile – none of the responding librarians have ever conducted any formal needs assessments or compiled a definite user profile according to any cultural diversity facet, for example, to determine which languages are most often spoken by their users. Information gathered during the interviews also reveals that the computerised membership system of the CJLIS does not allow for any language – other than English – to be selected. English acts as a default for all users. Responding librarians give reasons for not conducting needs assessments. Forty-three percent of the respondents maintain that it is due to a lack of human, financial and technological resources. It was mentioned that some of this information, specifically the linguistic profile for Region Eight, could be obtained from the CJLIS computer system – if this was allowed as an input field.

The study shows that although responding librarians perceive needs assessments and the compilation of user profiles as important to cater equally for the needs of all the diverse communities, they have not taken that first important step of obtaining accurate statistical information for the proper development of such services at their libraries. This is also pointed out by the manager of the CJLIS, Region Eight, who recommends that libraries in the region should improve their understanding of the needs of their diverse cultural communities. The manager suggests that an accurate profile of user needs, especially in terms of languages, should be made a priority.

### *Collection development and cultural diversity*

The objective – in this instance – was to determine how the CJLIS has responded to the multicultural nature of the communities they serve in the *collections* they offer. This objective included:

- Identifying what collections the CJLIS, Region Eight, offers to cater for the multicultural nature of the communities they serve.
- Determining whether the collections being offered are representative of the culturally diverse communities being served by the region.
- Establishing whether the circulation of these collections – according to language – is representative of the linguistic communities of the library.
- Identifying the causes for the current situation.

The IFLA guidelines (1998, 8) recommend that library collections should be provided for all in their preferred languages and relating to their own cultures. The guidelines further suggest that there should be a balance between the size of these collections and size of each community. Although the CJLIS, Region Eight, collects books in different languages for different linguistic communities, available book stock or collection statistics show that most books are in English: 119,061 (85%), followed by Afrikaans: 12,539 (9%). Indigenous books only total 4,532 (3%) which includes all 9 indigenous African languages. A breakdown according to each of the indigenous languages is not available. Foreign books – combined resources of Dutch, German, French and Portuguese books – which cater mostly for immigrant communities add up to 3,364 (3%). A breakdown for each individual foreign language is also not available.

Although a profile of users is not available from the CJLIS, Region Eight, Census 2001 gives an indication of the profile of people living in the area. According to the census, 18.5% of the population of Region Eight speak English, 3% speak Afrikaans, 5% speak foreign languages, while 73.5% speak indigenous languages, with isiZulu being the most widely spoken (37%).

If one compares the number of indigenous language resources available with the number of people in the region who speak those languages, it is evident that there is no balance between the size of collections and the size of the different communities at the CJLIS, Region Eight. The results from the study highlight the fact that book collections defined by language at the CJLIS, Region Eight, are not representative. As far as indigenous collections are concerned, this is in line with the findings of Fredericks and Mvunelo (2003, 133) who report that “books in indigenous languages made up less than 1% of the collections of most libraries.”

Librarians list a range of other types of multi-cultural sources – not defined by language – such as collections on the different religions, histories, cuisines, customs and traditions of diverse communities. Based on statistics, it is difficult to say whether these materials are representative or not. This is due to the fact that it was not possible to collect statistics on all the materials available and on all these topics for the different communities throughout all the libraries surveyed. Due to the fact that the selection of these materials is not based

on any needs assessments or cultural user profiles – as established in the first objective – if these are representative, it would be purely by chance.

The results also show that the CJLIS collects materials in other formats, such as music CDs, of a variety of cultures. However, access is limited as they are only available at the Central Library, and not at any of the branch libraries. Again, statistics on the languages of these materials are not kept and they are not selected on the basis of any type of needs assessments or user profiles. Therefore, whether these materials are representative of the communities living in the area, is again questionable.

As far as electronic information sources are concerned, the only source that the respondents think might have information that is relevant to their diverse cultural user groups is the Internet. It was, however, pointed out that there is very little on the Internet in indigenous languages. This might be a good source for immigrant communities living in the area because of foreign language resources available on the Internet from all over the world. It was also reported that the Homepage of the CJLIS is only available in English.

It is evident from the above results that the collections of the CJLIS are not representative of the communities they serve due to the fact that resources in the collections are predominantly in English. Some collections might be representative of certain communities, but this would be by chance as the selection of materials is not based on proper needs assessments or cultural/linguistic profiles. This supports the view of the manager of Region Eight, who maintains that the CJLIS libraries still have the same collections that were serving community needs of the past in that “our collections are Euro-centric, so they do not necessarily meet the needs of our City today that speak a variety of African languages.”

It is also evident from the analysis of the data that circulation of book stock for languages other than English is very low. Books being issued are predominantly in English. For example, the issue statistics – at the time the survey for Region Eight was conducted (July 2005) – were:

- English: 16 694 (87%),
- Afrikaans: 2 279 (11%),
- isiZulu: 36 (0.2%),

- isiXhosa: 10 (0.05%),
- Tshivenda: 3 (0.02%),
- Setswana: 11 (0.06%),
- Xitsonga: 11 (0.06%),
- seSwati: 4 (0.02%),
- South Sotho: 19 (0.1%),
- Sepedi: 15 (0.08%),
- isiNdebele: 1 (0.01%).

The total issues for all indigenous languages for July 2005 was 110 (0.6%). For foreign languages it was 19 (0.1%). These figures reveal that circulation statistics of collections according to language are not representative of linguistic communities being served by the region.

Part of this objective was to identify the causes of the current situation, or reasons why libraries may be having problems with the development of collections that are representative of their culturally diverse communities. Respondents reported a number of challenges or obstacles. The main reasons are the lack of published materials in indigenous languages, especially reference materials in indigenous languages, and limited financial resources to buy materials. Also linked to financial problems, is the way in which the budget is allocated. According to respondents a book vote for the selection of materials determines how much will be spent for each category of materials and non-English materials do not often feature.

Respondents also reported the following obstacles in building a collection that is representative of a multicultural society:

- Lack of awareness from staff, management and users regarding the provision of these materials: The opinions of the respondents show that staff members are not aware that the library should be collecting materials that reflect the cultures of its communities – in their languages. The responses of the librarians also show that the communities being served might be unaware that the library should be collecting materials in their languages that reflect their cultures.
- Lack of training: Librarians and library workers lack the skills to develop appropriate multicultural collections. For example, respondents indicated that they lack skills in the selection of relevant materials.
- A lack of practical guidelines: Respondents stated that although the CJILS (2003) guidelines mention the importance of having collections that are representative of culturally diverse communities, they do not provide

any practical suggestions on how this should be accomplished.

- Lack of guidance from management: Responding librarians feel that there is a lack of guidance from management who have not identified this as a priority.
- Ungrounded perceptions: The study reveals that there is a perception by library staff that users only want materials in English.
- Involving communities in collection development: Librarians reported that their communities are not consulted or involved in the selection of materials, making it difficult to build a collection that is representative without the communities' inputs.
- Difficulty in selecting and building a collection that is representative of diverse communities without definite user profiles or needs assessments.

The results also show that librarians do not consider alternative sources of information, especially in those languages where there is a lack of published materials – for example, tracing unpublished materials produced by the actual communities and community organisations. The recording of oral stories and oral information from indigenous groups, especially of communities from a non-reading background or communities with high levels of illiteracy, was not being considered.

Possible reasons for circulation statistics being low, and not representative of the communities living in the region, were also identified. These were interpreted as follows:

- Respondents suggest that low issue statistics may be the result of the relatively small sizes of these collections and are, therefore, proportional to them.
- The collections of the library are not promoted in the appropriate media and/or in the appropriate languages. Possible users of these materials might, therefore, not be reached. This may impact on the circulation of these materials.
- Respondents expressed the opinion that there might be a lack of interest in indigenous language materials by indigenous language speakers. Their opinions suggest that users prefer English materials because of the importance given to English in South African society.
- Respondents indicated that certain multicultural communities may come from a non-reading and/or a non-public library culture and, therefore, do not use the library frequently.
- It was also suggested that some people from certain communities might not feel comfortable coming to the library, or that they may feel intimidated by the library, because the library is seen as 'English friendly only' – i.e., signage, orientation brochures, etc. are all in English.

It should also be noted that these low circulation statistics may, in turn, have a negative impact on the building of multicultural collections as libraries may deem some of these collections as unnecessary.

### *Services*

The study further aimed to determine how the CJLIS has responded to the multicultural nature of their communities – in the *services* they offer. Here, it is important to emphasise the statement made by the Australian multicultural guidelines (2001, 2) that “having a multicultural collection does not in itself constitute a multicultural service.” The fourth objective set out to determine how the CJLIS has responded to the multicultural nature of their communities in the services they offer – other than collections. This involved:

- identifying the different services being offered that are relevant.
- determining whether these are representative of the culturally diverse communities being served by the library.
- identifying the causes for the current situation.

The analysis highlighted the following results regarding services.

The CJLIS, Region Eight, is providing some services – other than collections – to cater for the needs of their culturally diverse communities. The results obtained from a list of services that respondents had respond to, show that the services offered most often are library orientation sessions in community languages (64%) and reference and information services in those languages most commonly spoken by the communities (79%). These findings suggest that multilingual services are more representative than the collections. The manager of the CJLIS, Region Eight, provided an explanation for this occurrence when he said that »our staff are multilingual and that is largely due to a natural process of affirmative action and transformation in LIS.

It should, however, be pointed out that according to the results obtained, the above services are often unplanned and, as with collections, they are not based on any needs assessments; user profiles; or on any cultural diversity facet. These are presented informally. When a user comes into the

library and speaks to the librarian in an official language other than English – and the librarian happens to also speak that language – an orientation session or reference interview may take place in that language. The offering of these services are, therefore, largely dependent on the staff that happen to be employed at each service point. It is important to note that the staff and the languages they speak are not placed in terms of any needs assessments or user profiles. If the librarian happens to speak the language of the user, this happens purely by chance.

Twenty-nine percent of the responding librarians maintain that they provide translation and interpretation services for users that find it difficult to speak English. It was, however, again shown in the discussions held with the respondents that this is done informally. When a user comes into the library and battles to speak English, a librarian who is familiar with the language of the user may assist him/her.

Other services offered to multicultural communities that were identified during the interviews include the following:

- Library participation in cultural events and activities: the respondents indicated that the Music Library holds musical concerts. The artists involved represent a cultural cross-section of South African musicians.
- Multicultural art exhibitions: Only seven percent of the respondents reported that multicultural art exhibitions are held. The Art librarian noted that ongoing Art exhibitions are held on the premises of the library. The artists that participate represent a cross-section of South African cultural groups.
- Book exhibitions: Twenty-one percent of the respondents indicated that book exhibitions reflecting diverse cultures are held at their libraries.
- Cultural displays: Only fourteen percent of the respondents explained that cultural displays, such as an exhibition of Zulu artefacts, are held at their libraries

It is important to point out that promotional activities, such as advertising in the media, appropriate signage and orientation brochures, are also considered not to be representative as they are only offered in English. The importance of these services is emphasised by the Canadian (1994, 22) and IFLA (1998, 10) guidelines. They state that librarians should take steps to make their libraries a welcoming place for members of all communities by offering promotional flyers, directional signs,

and brochures in the languages most commonly spoken in the community and that reflect the interests of members of their culturally diverse user groups.

It is evident from the above results that although the CJILS does offer some services that cater for culturally diverse users, these are not representative, as they are not based on any user profiles or needs assessments. The results also show that the services that are being offered are mostly by chance and are not based on a conscious, planned effort. One can also conclude that these services do not coincide with the sizes of the populations being served in the area. For example, although 37% of the population (Census 2001) is isiZulu speaking and 18.5% are English-speaking, story-time sessions are held only in English.

Part of the fourth objective, also attempted to identify the causes of the current situation and reasons why libraries might have problems with offering services that are representative of their culturally diverse communities. Respondents reported a number of challenges or obstacles.

Seventy-one percent of the respondents feel that the main reason why it is difficult to provide representative services is due to the lack of financial resources to develop such services. Other reasons were similar to those difficulties reported for providing representative collections. Additional reasons, however, included:

- Librarians reported that they already have too many responsibilities and would find it difficult to offer any additional services.
- An inability to communicate in some of the languages spoken by community members.
- A lack of knowledge of other cultures.
- Staff not being culturally sensitive.

### *Recommendations*

The aim of the fifth objective of this research was to identify how services and materials may be improved to better meet the needs of the culturally diverse communities the library serves.

An analysis of the results shows that responding librarians feel that a larger budget allocation is important for the development of collections and services of culturally diverse communities. This suggestion was mentioned by 71% of the respondents. The importance of funding is supported by

IFLA (1998, 7) which recommends that a detailed budget for multicultural library services needs to be compiled. IFLA also points out that the funding of multicultural library services is the responsibility of all library authorities, both central and local.

It is interesting to note that only fourteen percent of the respondents suggest that many of the services mentioned as being important in a multicultural library service may be offered with little additional financial resources. By involving volunteers from the actual communities to offer specific services – for example, story-time in indigenous languages – funds for multicultural services can be minimised. Respondents did note that building a more representative collection need not always imply additional financial resources. If donations are sought from communities, or unpublished materials are collected from communities, then certain collections may be built with minimal additional funds.

A number of other recommendations that arose from the analysis of the interviews that are important include the following:

- Involving communities in multicultural library services, such as identifying community members to help with multilingual book selection.
- The library should assist users in more of the languages spoken in their communities.
- Creating awareness amongst library staff about multicultural library services.
- Reallocating funds for these materials and services – for example, channelling the library's book vote towards non-English materials.
- Tracing materials in the indigenous languages from publishers and authors that are involved in the publication of these materials.
- Compiling internal, practical policies and guidelines for the offering of these services.
- Making multicultural materials available through cooperation and networking with other libraries.
- Forming partnerships with key role players, such as community organisations, authors and publishers.
- Tracing unpublished materials in communities, especially where there is a lack of published materials.
- Getting volunteers from the communities involved in offering some of these services.
- Promoting services in appropriate media and languages to create awareness in different communities, especially communities that are not proficient in English.

- Providing welcoming signage in more languages of the communities, not only in English.
- Meeting with representatives of under-represented communities to make them aware of the library and to identify their needs.
- Identifying community leaders and community structures, such as churches, and schools, and getting them involved in the promotion, development and offering of these services.
- Promoting cultural diversity through events, exhibitions and festivals.

The results also show the importance of training in cultural diversity issues for libraries. Suggestions made by the responding librarians, in terms of training, are that in-house workshops for practical hands-on skills should be offered and that LIS education should introduce training in cultural diversity or multicultural library services to create awareness within the LIS profession.

### Conclusion

It is evident from the literature and the above findings that public libraries in South Africa often do not recognise the diverse nature of the communities they serve. For South African public libraries to continue playing a significant role in their communities, it will be essential that they become more relevant and representative of all the communities they serve. A suitable way for public libraries to achieve this will be to adopt a multicultural approach to the services they offer, whereby the cultural and linguistic needs of all South African communities are taken into consideration.

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