

**Multicultural Outreach in Academic Libraries**  
**Presented by Isabel Espinal, for**  
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## **Multicultural Outreach & Defining the Underserved**

- Multiculturalism an important aspect of Outreach.
- Oftentimes "multicultural" is assumed in the word outreach.
- Other times outreach just means marketing in general.

## **What is multicultural outreach?**

- Activities or organizational efforts to reach out to distinct cultural groups on your campus who are not part of U.S. mainstream or dominant culture. May or may not be in the minority in terms of numbers on your campus.

## **Examples of Cultural Groups**

- At University of Massachusetts: ALANA -African, Latino, Asian, Native American
- But not limited to these groups

## **Why multicultural outreach? Why not just treat all students the same?**

- It's the country we're living in. In the United States, there is a history and a current reality of cultural and racial segregation that has resulted in individuals and groups who come to higher education with different experiences
- Demographics of the librarian profession especially in academic libraries
- Demographics of your campus

## **Avoid "Deficit" Model**

- The experiences of bicultural and multicultural communities are an enhancement, not a deterrent to a successful information-seeking experience & information literacy.
- An asset, not a deficit.
- Read about critical pedagogy, multicultural education.

## **Where to start? Assessment of the situation**

- How to assess? How to measure success later?
- Surveys, interviews
- Gathering Info on demographics of campus & organized cultural groups (e.g. Black Student union, Native American Student Association), and multicultural academic advising centers
- Watch what's happening in reference & instruction

## **Look at options**

- Read about what other libraries have done
- Make a plan
- Start *somewhere*

## **Examples of Successful Multicultural Outreach**

- Instruction
- Peer Advisory (Reference) Programs
- Programs and events
- Collections & Special Libraries
- Networking
- Minority Residency Programs
- Media
- Off campus outreach

- Multicultural Art in the Library
- Library and Room Names, e.g. W.E.B. DuBois Library

## **Instruction**

- UC Berkeley, Chicano College Experience class
- University of Massachusetts Amherst for credit course: Essentials of Library Research, through our Bilingual Collegiate Program, a multicultural academic support center on campus

## **Peer Advisory Programs**

- Student-to-student reference and instruction assistance
- Elaina Norlin - University of Arizona PIC (Peer Information Counseling) Promote librarianship and library services to minority and international students while diversifying its staff at the same time.

## **Programs & Events**

- Black History Month, Latino Heritage Month, etc.
- Organize conferences
- LSTA grant: Connecting Cultures in Massachusetts
- Tie events to issues of information access, knowledge Construction & culture. Provide related booklists and library resource lists
- What programs do multicultural groups want to do in or with the library?

## **Examples of Multicultural Events**

- *Telling Our Story: Oral History in the African American Community*, 1999 (With LSTA grant); PARTNERS: Departments of Afro American Studies, Black Student Union
- *Plenarios de la Salud*
- "Minority Journalist" Maria Hinojosa speaking on the Information Divide
- *ALANA Library Career Dinner*. Ultimate form of outreach: Come join us in our profession. Tie to Spectrum Initiative; PARTNERS: Office of ALANA Affairs, Pioneer Valley Association of Academic Librarians, REFORMA Northeast Chapter, Connecticut Chapter of the Black Caucus of ALA,

University of Rhode Island School of Library and Information Studies,  
Simmons Library School, Black Student Union

- Building community by inviting students of color to enter into the our professional community of librarians
- Importance of welcoming
- Academic libraries an ideal place for recruitment of librarians
- *Spoken Word* in the Library, featuring Asian American poets 2001, PARTNERS Asian American Studies and English Department
- *"I" is Not for Indian*: critique of the representation of Native Americans in mainstream books
- *Multilingual poetry Fest* with poet/translators Jack Agueros, Nguyen Ba Chung, and Kevin Bowen 2000, PARTNERS: Departments of East Asian Studies, English, Spanish; Translation Center; Center for Latin American, Caribbean & Latino Studies, Amherst Public Schools
- CAFE CON LULU: Children's author and illustrator Lulu Delacre 1999; PARTNERS: Springfield (MA) Public Library, Graduate Student Senate, Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies, University Child Care, Amherst Public Schools

## **Some practical tips on events**

- May be time consuming to plan at first.
- Form a library committee
- Get campus Co-sponsors co-planners
- Develop events related to information-seeking or collection strengths
- Create booklists/resource lists
- Tie each event to recruitment
- Advertise reference services
- Use evaluation forms to get immediate feedback
- Elicit long term feedback from campus multicultural leaders

## **Collections & Special Libraries**

- UC Berkeley Chicano Studies Library.

## **Networking**

- Attend meetings of multicultural advising centers & multicultural organizations
- Attend multicultural events on campus and in the community

## **Who are the underserved?**

- How do we know multicultural groups are underserved? My own approach is holistic & ethnographic.
- When I've asked members of these groups if they'd been well-served I received a negative response. Or, often even before I posed the question, they would volunteer this assessment.

## **Challenges of multicultural outreach**

- More than just "celebration" of cultural differences. Remember that not all cultures are on an equal footing politically
- The need to confront issues of racism directly can be uncomfortable for the majority librarians (although refreshing for multicultural communities)
- May be questioned as to why started with one particular group

Don't let multicultural outreach get lost in the anxiety and scramble over technology and general library marketing

*INTEGRATE into these efforts.*