Intercultural Communication Competences for Access Services Staff in a Diverse and Inclusive Environment

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Outline

• Definition and Discussion of Multicultural Competency
• Diversity and Its Causes
• Diversity in Higher Education
• The Library Challenge
• Cultural Competency Model
• Multicultural Communication Skills
What is Intercultural Competency?

It is the ability to communicate and relate appropriately and effectively with people of other cultures, social groups, in a way that valued norms, rules and expectations are not violated.

What it involves:

• Knowledge
• Attitude
• Skills
Ethnic and Racial Diversity

• One size no longer fits all;
• Appropriately to the preferences of patrons from varying ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds.
Globalization
- Increased human mobility
- Increased capital and knowledge
- Increased interconnectedness,
- Increased cultural and linguistic diversity.
- “Our world, and our lives, are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization and identity.” Manuel Castels

The knowledge Society
- Receptiveness of new ideas
- Shift from close to self disclosure
- Unveiling of social & Psychological orientation
- Increased demand for equity and equality.

Changing Immigration Patterns
B4 1970—largely from Europe
After 1970—Latin America
Increase people of color

Changing US Demographics
By 2050:
- Hispanics—30% popln (3x)
- Asian American popln (2x)
- African American popln at 13%
- Whites will gradually become a smaller majority as minority popln increase in number
HE Student Enrolment by Race/Ethnicity, 1990-2013 (IPEDS Statistics)
Why Multicultural Competency Skills?

- The world is getting smaller;
- diversity is proliferating
- Nations and communities are becoming more diverse
- One size no long fits all.
- diversified cross-border higher education landscape
- Student/staff/faculty mobility continues to grow apace, and this is creating a need for cross-cultural competences
Library Literature Focus on Diversity

Past
- Race
- gender
- Geographical diversity

Present
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic Xterstics
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Cultural background
- Race
- Religion
- Disability.
Diversity Factors Expanded.

Personality (traits, skills and abilities).

Internal Characteristics (gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, intelligence, sexual orientation, dis/ability).

External Characteristics (culture, nationality, age, religion, marital or parental status).
Library Challenge

- Patron characteristics more varied, complex;
- Customized and personalized service required;
- Demand-driven model;
- Highly changing demographic trends;
- Need for increased competency in serving diverse multicultural groups as the US population becomes more diverse.
Circulation Desk

- Connects patron to library
- Increased multicultural encounters with patrons
- 1st & most direct contact with patrons
- The most frequent contact with patrons
- Patron’s first impression about the library

1st PR and outreach desk
What is diversity?

Acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing any significant difference that distinguishes one individual from another.

Educational level, life/work experience, socio-economic background, personality, abilities/disabilities

“Diversity is the mix. Inclusion is making the mix work,” Andrés Tapia

www.RedShoeMovement.com

Managing and integrating varied lifestyles
How Do We Make Diversity Work?

The AACU (2007) aptly described inclusivity as “the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, ethno-cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase one’s awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.”
**Inter-cultural Communication Goals**

- Ensure equal treatment and equal opportunities for all irrespective of differences.
- Remove uncertainties; engage in effective communication.
- Improve staff’s multicultural skill sets for effective functioning in a diverse & inclusive environment.
- Create a receptive & positive environment for patrons irrespective of their types.
Cultural Competence Model: Bridging Strategies

**Level 1 (Library-wide level - Input)**

**ORGANIZATIONAL**
- Mission & vision of multicultural diversity
- Promote awareness
- Action plans
- Skills development
  -- Cognitive
  -- Behavioral (skill-based cultural competences)
- Reinforce the importance of patron diversity

**Level 2 (Cognitive)**
- Critical -- awareness, knowledge
- Training
- Behavioral – skill-based
- Service design to promote inclusivity

**Level 3 (Behavioral)**

**Staff Output**
- Policies & procedure
- Service designs for delivery of culturally appropriate services.
- Identify stereotypes, biases, misconceptions
- Show genuine sense of fairness
- Have a diverse staff
- Share experiences professionally

Adapted from Balcazar and Deardorff’s Multicultural Training Model
Outcomes

Internal Outcomes
- flexible
- adaptable
- empathetic
- ethno-relative

External Outcomes
- observable evidence
- 3rd cultured

Quality User Experience
Mostly:
We communicate with ppl like us;
Can predict communication behavior because we think alike.

Intercultural encounter;
There is a lack of similar range of knowledge and experience to draw.

Beware of cultural differences and communication styles.
Vocabulary
-Speak slowly using accurate standard pronunciation (going, gonna).
-Pause more frequently
-Avoid library jargons (citation, abstract, article).
-Avoid slangs, metaphors, jokes & unfamiliar terms.

Idioms
Exprs with separate meanings of their own.
-Acting up; throw in the towel
-heads up
Avoid idioms bc of cultural differences

Use of Words.
Language reflect culture “Checkout” (examining or checking, paying for books).

Cultural Barriers
Eye contact.
Space.
Directness
Head nod/Affirmative nod
Appointment time
Gestures
Social class
Avoid negative attitude – Be open.
Maintain eye contact and ask questions for clarification.

Focus on meaning and not individual sound
Identify the general topic of the communication.

Repeat important words and concepts. Use synonyms for difficult words to help explain meaning.

Avoid showing personal discomfort.

Be tolerant of ambiguity
Use Top-down Strategy

Tolerate ambiguity
Communicating with Older Patrons

Older people have unique personalities

- Quiet and easy going
- Loud, assertive, easily irritated
- Some listen and nod
- Not receptive to change; Talk a lot
Barriers to Effective Communication with older patrons:

- Inability to understand or read
- Declining vision
- Declining memory
- Personal style (tone or choice of words)
- The environment
- Hearing impairment

Communication breakdown in older patrons.
Communicating with Visually Impaired Patrons

- Identify yourself
- Use your normal speaking voice
- Don’t make references to visual clues
- Speak slowly and clearly
Communicating with Patrons of Different Sexual Orientation

• Avoid displaying any negative attitude to patrons of different sexual orientation than yours. Such impedes communication.

• Sensitive to issues and attitudes of sexual orientation.

• Avoid biased expressions that degrade someone’s sexual orientation.
Behavior to Avoid

**Rumination.** Talking about a negative exp. patrons

**Storytelling.** Neg. narrative of patron differences

**Categorizing.** Neg. Grouping of patrons by race or ethnicity

**Ethnocentrism.** Feeling of cultural superiority

**Profiling.** This never promotes inclusivity

**Ethnic Ref.** Identifying patrons by race/ethnic/social groupings

**Accents.** Do not ask about their accents.
Behavior to Embrace

- Develop a third culture
- Embrace openness
- Focus on what defines your patrons – talents & skills
- Avoid the use of labels as identification
- Cultural relativism. Understand ppl from their point of view.
- Create anti-discrimination policy
- Share experiences with colleagues
- Recruit a diverse workforce

Cultural relativism.
Understand ppl from their point of view.
Hey! Welcome! We’re very glad you’re here!

Openness

Network Culture

Trust

Transparency

Diversity

Openness

enables

reinforces

fosters
Thank you
1. ACRL Access Services IG : how patron bashing is killing our spirit – Webinar, April, 2017


4. de Saint Exupery, Anthoine. *Interpersonal communication and diversity : adapting to others*.


