MULTICULTURALISM IN
SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by

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CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr L M Cloete

NOVEMBER 2005
DECLARATION

I, Antonio da Silva Rodrigues, declare that *Multiculturalism in South African Public Libraries* is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

_________________________      __________
Signature         Date
ABSTRACT

MULTICULTURALISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES:
Serving culturally diverse communities -
focus on the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services, Region 8

The multicultural nature of South Africa is recognised by our Constitution when it says that "the South African nation consists of a diversity of cultural, religious and linguistic communities." It also states that "everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice" (South Africa, 1996).

This supports the IFLA (1998: 6) *International Guidelines for Library Services to Multicultural Communities* which recommends that all ethnic, linguistic and other cultural groups be provided with library materials and services according to the same standards. It urges public libraries around the world to strive towards providing materials and services to all communities on an equitable basis - in their preferred languages and reflecting their own cultures. The LIASA policy supports this by recommending that libraries acquire, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials to reflect the plurality and diversity of South African society.

Providing equitable library collections and services for the culturally diverse population of the City of Johannesburg is also supported by policy. This includes the *Minimum Standards for the CJLIS* (2003-2006) which maintains that the library should reflect the variety of cultures represented in the community; support cultural traditions; and be provided in the languages spoken and read in the local community. It also includes the *Policy for the Selection of Materials for 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 purpose of this study is to investigate how the multicultural nature of South African communities - specifically that of Johannesburg - is reflected in the collections and services of public libraries. It also aims to identify suggestions on how these might be improved to ensure the representation of library collections and services to culturally diverse communities.

To achieve this, a local and international literature review was conducted and interviews were held with librarians from CJLIS, Region Eight.

It became evident from the investigation, that although policy documents that support the principle of providing equitable services and collections to culturally diverse communities exist, public libraries - such as the CJLIS, Region Eight, which operates within a culturally diverse environment - often do not provide these. The findings show that most of the collections and services are only offered in English and are not representative of the diverse communities. Reasons for this include the shortage of financial resources; non-availability of published materials in indigenous languages; and the lack of skills to offer these services. It is also evident from the study that multicultural services should be based on a thorough understanding of the composition and needs of each group in the community. This should be accomplished by means of user profiles and needs assessments.

Based on these findings, recommendations on the development of multicultural library services and collections were made which may be applied - not only to the CJLIS - but also to other public libraries in South Africa that are similarly confronted with serving culturally diverse communities.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALA</td>
<td>American Library Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALIA</td>
<td>Australian Library and Information Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Compact Disc</td>
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<tr>
<td>CJLIS</td>
<td>City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Digital Video Disc</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFLA</td>
<td>International Federation of Library Associations</td>
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<td>LIASA</td>
<td>Library and Information Association of South Africa</td>
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<td>LIS</td>
<td>Library and Information Science</td>
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<td>PANSALB</td>
<td>Pan South African Language Board</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNISA</td>
<td>University of South Africa</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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