

MULTICULTURALISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by

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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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BRIEF TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page number
Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Brief table of contents	v
Detailed table of contents	vi
List of tables	xii
List of acronyms and abbreviations	xiv
Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	16
Chapter Three	45
Chapter Four	74
Chapter Five	99
Chapter Six	111
Chapter Seven	149
Chapter Eight	168
List of references	182
Appendices	

DETAILED TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page number
Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Brief table of contents	v
Detailed table of contents	vi
List of tables	xii
List of acronyms and abbreviations	xiv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
2.1 Existing literature	3
3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	4
3.1 Background to the significance of the problem	4
3.2 Significance of the problem	5
3.3 Problem formulation	7
4. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES	7
4.1 Aim of the research	7
4.2 Research objectives	7
4.3 Scope, limitations and exclusions	8
4.4 Significance of the study	10
5. KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS	10
5.1 Multiculturalism and the multicultural society	10
5.2 Public libraries	11
5.3 The multicultural public library	11
6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	12
7. ORGANISATION OF CHAPTERS	13
8. CONCLUSION	15

CHAPTER 2: MULTICULTURALISM AND THE MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY: CLARIFICATION AND SCOPE	16
1. INTRODUCTION	16
2. EXPLAINING THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURALISM	16
3. DEFINING RELATED CONCEPTS	20
3.1 Culture	20
3.2 Communities	21
3.3 Cultural diversity	22
3.4 Ethnicity	22
3.5 Minorities	22
3.6 Multilingualism	23
4. DESCRIBING THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA	23
5. DESCRIBING THE TERM MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY	26
6. MULTICULTURALISM IN PUBIC LIBRARIES: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE	28
6.1 The United States of America	29
6.2 The United Kingdom	32
6.3 Australia	35
6.4 Canada	38
6.5 Other countries	41
6.6 International library organizations concerned with multiculturalism: IFLA	42
7. CONCLUSION	43

CHAPTER 3: GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY SERVICES	45
1. INTRODUCTION	45
2. GUIDELINES FOR MULTICULTURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES	46
2.1 Standards for Multicultural Public Library Services, 1982	47
2.2 Guidelines for Multilingual Materials and Collection Development and Library Services, 1990	51
2.3 A World of Information: creating multicultural collections and programmes in Canadian public libraries, 1994	53
2.4 Multicultural Communities: guidelines for library services, 1998	55
2.5 Responding to our diversity: multicultural service guidelines for Victoria public libraries, 2001	59
3. COMPARISON MATRIX OF THE DIFFERENT GUIDELINES	63
4. A CHECKLIST OF NECESSARY COLLECTIONS AND SERVICES FOR A MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY	65
4.1 Planning	66
4.2 Responsibility of provision	66
4.3 Needs assessment/profiling the community	66
4.4 Multicultural library committee	67
4.5 Multicultural library collections	67
4.6 Cross cultural materials	68
4.7 Other multicultural library programmes and services	68
4.8 Archival/heritage collections	69
4.9 Information and reference services	70
4.10 Staff and staff training	70
4.11 User education	71
4.12 Technical services/cataloguing	71
4.13 Physical access	71
4.14 Collaboration and networking	71
4.15 Extension services and outreach	72

4.16 Technology	72
4.17 Promotion of multicultural materials and services	72
4.18 Evaluation and feedback	73
5. CONCLUSION	73
 CHAPTER 4: MULTICULTURALISM AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH AFRICA	 74
1. INTRODUCTION	74
2. THE MULTICULTURAL NATURE OF SOUTH AFRICA	74
3. STATISTICAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA	76
4. BACKGROUND TO CULTURALLY DIVERSE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES	77
4.1 Historical context	77
4.2 Policy context	77
5. A REVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE ON MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY SERVICES	88
6. FOCUS ON JOHANNESBURG AND THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES – CJLIS, REGION EIGHT	94
7. CONCLUSION	98
 CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODS	 99
1. INTRODUCTION	99
2. RESEARCH METHODS	99
2.1 The literature review	100
2.2 Conducting of interviews	102
2.2.1 <i>Respondents to the interviews</i>	104
2.2.2 <i>Interview guide</i>	105

2.2.3 Unstructured interview with the Manager of CJLIS - Region Eight	107
2.3 Data collection of statistical information	108
3. SUMMARISING AND DATA ANALYSIS	109
4. CONCLUSION	110
 CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION OF DATA	 111
1. INTRODUCTION	111
2. RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BRANCH LIBRARIANS AND HEADS OF SECTIONS	111
2.1 Category: General	112
2.2 Category: Needs assessment and user profile in terms of cultural diversity	119
2.3 Category: Collections	126
2.4 Category: Services	137
3. RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEW WITH THE MANAGER OF CJLIS – REGION EIGHT	147
4. CONCLUSION	148
 CHAPTER 7: INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS	 149
1. INTRODUCTION	149
2. A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY SERVICES	150
3. USER PROFILE AVAILABILITY	152
4. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY	154
5. MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY SERVICES	161
6. IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES AND COLLECTIONS TO CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES	165
7. CONCLUSION	167

CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	168
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1. INTRODUCTION	168
2. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY	168
3. CONCLUSIONS REACHED	170
4. RECOMMENDATIONS	174
5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	180
6. CONCLUSION	181

LIST OF REFERENCES	182
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APPENDICES:

Appendix 1:	Interview guide
Appendix 2:	Census 2001: Languages spoken for Region Eight
Appendix 3:	Census 2001: Statistics for the City of Johannesburg
Appendix 4:	Census 2001: Statistics for South Africa
Appendix 5:	Book stock according to language for CJLIS - Region Eight
Appendix 6:	Circulation of book stock according to language for the CJLIS - Region Eight

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1:	Standards for multicultural public library services, 1982
Table 3.2:	Guidelines for multilingual materials collection and development and library services, 1990
Table 3.3:	A world of information: creating multicultural collections and programmes in Canadian public libraries, 1994
Table 3.4:	Multicultural communities: guidelines for library services – IFLA, 1998
Table 3.5:	Responding to our diversity: multicultural service guidelines for Victoria public libraries, 2001
Table 3.6:	Comparison matrix of the five sets of guidelines
Table 6.1:	Importance of having services and collections which are representative
Table 6.2:	Impact of cultural diversity on the Library
Table 6.3:	Awareness of policies
Table 6.4:	The importance of policies
Table 6.5:	Languages of users
Table 6.6:	Other (foreign) languages
Table 6.7:	Nationalities of users
Table 6.8:	Usefulness of cultural diversity profile
Table 6.9:	Suggestions for obtaining data on profile of communities
Table 6.10:	Reasons for conducting such needs assessment
Table 6.11:	Benefits of needs assessment, focusing on cultural diversity
Table 6.12:	Statistics of collections according to language
Table 6.13:	Other types of multicultural collections
Table 6.14:	Circulation statistics
Table 6.15:	Difficulties in building a multicultural collection
Table 6.16:	Reasons why the circulation of these collections may be considered low

Table 6.17: Suggestions on how to improve collections

Table 6.18: Services

Table 6.19: Languages spoken by staff

Table 6.20: Difficulties in providing multicultural services

Table 6.21: Suggestions to improve on multicultural services

Table 6.22: The importance of cultural diversity training for library services

Table 6.23: Additional comments

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALA	American Library Association
ALIA	Australian Library and Information Association
CD	Compact Disc
CJLIS	City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services
DVD	Digital Video Disc
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations
LIASA	Library and Information Association of South Africa
LIS	Library and Information Science
PANSALB	Pan South African Language Board
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
WWW	World Wide Web