

CHAPTER SEVEN

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The discussion of the results of this study is based on the set objectives outlined in Chapter 1. In the first chapter the objectives to be investigated *via* the literature review are given. The discussion in this chapter is based on the results of the interviews presented in Chapter 6 and is pertinent to those objectives. The objectives 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 CJLS, 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.

In this chapter these objectives are discussed in terms of the results obtained from the semi-structured interviews with the librarians and the unstructured interview with the manager of the CJLIS, Region Eight.

2. A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY SERVICES

The first objective is 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 aims to find out if responding libraries have an understanding of multicultural library services and whether they deem these services to be important. The results presented in Chapter 6, Section 2.1.1, reveal that all responding librarians have some understanding of what multiculturalism or services to culturally diverse communities are, although most of the respondents (79%) only perceive these services as involving collections. Respondents seem unaware that they might provide services - other than collections - to meet the needs of culturally diverse communities.

An analysis of the results also reveals that most responding librarians (93%) feel that such library services are important (see Section 2.1.2). 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 (see Chapter 6, Table 6.1). 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 (see Table 6.2). 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 aims to establish whether responding libraries are aware of any guidelines or policies relating to multicultural library services. It also seeks 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 (see Table 6.3). However, 93% of the respondents consider these to be important (see Table 6.4). The reason given most often by respondents (57%) is that it would act as a guideline for selecting materials for culturally diverse communities (see Table 6.4). 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 have an impact on their services.

3. USER PROFILE AVAILABILITY

This objective attempts to determine whether librarians have conducted needs assessments and compiled user profiles in terms of cultural diversity. It entails 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 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 presented in Chapter 6, Sections 2.2.5 and 2.2.8, 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 in Table 6.8. 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 (see Tables 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7) - 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 (see Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.7). 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 (see Table 6.10). 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 CJILS, 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.

4. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The objective - in this instance - is to determine how the CJLIS has responded to the multicultural nature of the communities they serve in the *collections* they offer.

This objective includes:

- 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 results reveal the following as far as collections are concerned.

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.

The CJLIS, Region Eight, collects **books in different languages** for different linguistic communities (see Table 6.12). 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 not available.

Although a profile of users is not available from the CJILS, Region Eight, Census 2001 gives an indication of the profile of people living in the area (see Appendix 2). 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 it, it is evident that there is no balance between the size of collections and the size of the different communities at the CJILS, Region Eight. The results from the study highlight the fact that **book collections defined by language** at the CJILS, 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 multicultural sources - not defined by language** - such as collections on the different religions, histories, cuisines, customs and traditions of diverse communities (see Table 6.13). Based on statistics, it is difficult to say whether these materials are representative or not. This is due to the fact that it was impossible to collect statistics on all the materials available and on all these topics for all the different communities throughout all the libraries surveyed. A list of topics of materials is given in Chapter 6, Table 6.13. 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 and confirmed in Sections 2.3.6 and 2.3.7 - if these are representative, it would be purely by chance.

The results also show that the CJILS collects **materials in other formats**, such as music CDs that represent a variety of cultures (see Section 2.3.3). However, access is limited as they are only available centrally. 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 (see Section 2.3.6). Therefore, whether these materials are representative of the communities living in the area, is again questionable.

All the libraries surveyed report that the **newspapers and magazines** that they collect are mostly in English (see Section 2.3.4). Although these are in English, respondents feel that they cater for a variety of South African communities as they collect publications for 'White and Black target markets'. According to the respondents, materials for these broad racial groups are representative, ignoring the fact that there are various communities within these broad categories with specific needs, such as the need for materials that speak of their own cultures and are written in their home languages. Again, the selection of these publications is not based on any needs assessments or user profiles (see Section 2.3.6) which questions the representivity of the publications.

As far as **electronic information sources** are concerned (see Section 2.3.5), the only source that the respondents think might have information that is relevant to their diverse cultural user groups is the Internet. It is, 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 CJILS 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 evident from the analysis of the data that **circulation of book stock for languages other than English** is very low (see Section 2.3.8, Table 6.14). 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 is 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 (see Section 2.3.9). Respondents reported a number of challenges or obstacles that are summarised in Table 6.15. The main reasons are the lack of published materials in indigenous languages (64%), especially reference materials in indigenous languages, and limited financial resources to buy materials (79%). 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 in staff, management and users regarding the provision of these materials (14%):** 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, fourteen percent of the respondents indicated that they lack skills in the selection of relevant materials.
- **A lack of practical internal guidelines for the CJLIS:** 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 - i.e., they rarely ask for materials in other languages.
- **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:** This is another major obstacle in the development of a representative collection which is identified by the respondents - discussed in Section 2.2 of this chapter. The librarians have not conducted any needs assessments or user profiles based on accurate statistical information.

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.

Circulation statistics of the collections are shown to be low and they are not representative of the communities living in the region (see Section 2.3.8). Possible reasons for this are described in Table 6.14 and are interpreted as follows:

- Seventy-one percent of the respondents suggest that low issue statistics may be the result of the relatively small sizes of these collections and are, therefore, proportional to them.
- Thirty six percent of the respondents suggest that 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.
- Fourteen percent of the respondents express 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 our society.
- Seven percent of the respondents indicate that some people from multicultural communities may come from a non-reading and/or a non-public library culture and, therefore, do not use the library frequently.
- Another seven percent suggest that some people from certain communities might not feel comfortable coming to the library, or that they may feel intimidated by the library. This may be because the library is seen as 'English friendly only' - i.e., signage, orientation brochures, etc. are all in English.

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.

5. MULTICULTURAL LIBRARY SERVICES

The study further aims 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 Guidelines (2001:2) that “having a multicultural collection does not in itself constitute a multicultural service.” The fourth objective is to determine how the CJLIS has responded to the multicultural nature of their communities in the services they offer - other than collections. This means

- 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 highlights 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 (see Section 2.4.1). The results obtained from the list of services that respondents had to tick - given in Table 6.18 - 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 transformation in LIS.”

It should, however, be pointed out that according to the results obtained in Section 2.4.2 of Chapter 6, 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. They 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 is, 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:** Fourteen percent of the respondents indicated that the Music Library holds musical concerts. The artists involved represent a cross-section of South African musicians.

- **Story-time sessions:** Seven percent of the respondents reported that story-time sessions for children are held in languages other than English. These are held at the Central Children's Library on occasion.
- **Multicultural art exhibitions:** Another 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.
- **English literacy classes:** Thirty-six percent of the respondents hold these classes for communities that are not English speaking.
- **Book exhibitions:** Twenty-one percent of the respondents indicated that book exhibitions reflecting diverse cultures are held at their libraries.
- **Cultural displays:** Fourteen percent of the respondents explained that cultural displays, such as an exhibition of Zulu artifacts, are held at their libraries

It is important to point out that promotional activities (see Section 2.4.4), such as advertising in the media, appropriate signage and orientation brochures (see Table 6.18), are not 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 the diverse cultural 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 of Region Eight (see Census 2001) is isiZulu speaking and 18.5% are English speaking, story-time sessions are held mostly in English.

Part of the fourth objective, also attempts 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 (see Section 4.4.5). 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 (see Table 6.20). Other reasons are the same as those difficulties reported for providing representative collections, including:

- The way in which the budget is allocated.
- The absence of needs assessments and user profiles.
- A lack of awareness regarding the provision of these services.
- A lack of skills to offer these services.
- The perception that users prefer English.
- Support from management.
- Users from certain communities may come from a non-public library culture.

Additional reasons - that were not mentioned as obstacles to collections - are:

- 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.
- Cultural sensitivity.

6. IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES AND COLLECTIONS TO CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

The aim of the fifth objective is to obtain suggestions from the libraries of the CJILS, Region Eight, on how services and materials may be improved to better meet the needs of the culturally diverse communities they serve.

Suggestions given were mostly taken from the results presented in Tables 6.17, 6.21 and 6.23. 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 without using additional funds.

A number of other suggestions that arise 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 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, schools and stokvels, and getting them involved in the promotion, development and offering of these services.
- Celebrating cultural diversity through events, exhibitions and festivals.

The results also show the importance of training in cultural diversity issues for libraries (see Table 6.22). 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.

The study also reveals that sixty-four percent of the respondents feel that the recommendations of this study would be an important tool to create awareness regarding library services to culturally diverse communities (see Table 6.22). They suggest that - on completion - these should be circulated amongst Library staff, especially top management.

7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the results of the study which are based on the objectives set in Chapter One. The next chapter presents a brief overview of the study; the conclusions reached; and recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.