

UNISA

SERVING CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES: FOCUS ON THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH QUESTIONS FOR LIBRARIANS FROM REGION EIGHT

1. INTRODUCTION

As an M Tech student in the Department of Information Science at Unisa. I am pursuing a research project on an aspect of library services referred to as 'Multicultural Library Services'. In order to do this study I have focused my survey on the City of Johannesburg Library and Information Services (CJLIS), Region Eight.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The term, 'multiculturalism', is used in this study as a description of the state of cultural diversity in a society - in this case the cultural diversity in which South Africa, and specifically Johannesburg, finds itself. A multicultural library is seen as a library that includes the provision of services and materials which reflect the multicultural nature of its society, one in which the diversity of cultures is recognised and represented throughout the library's materials and services.

In their international guidelines for library services to multicultural communities, IFLA (1998: 6) recommends that all ethnic, linguistic and other cultural groups be provided with materials and services at the same level and according to the same standards. They urge libraries around the world to strive towards providing materials and services to all communities in their preferred languages and

reflecting their own cultures - on an equitable basis. They note that this may not always be possible. However, they strongly recommend that this principle be maintained as a primary goal in all libraries. The LIASA policy supports this by recommending that "libraries shall acquire, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of society."

Providing equitable materials and services for its culturally diverse population is supported by actual the policies of the CJLIS, including the *Minimum Standards for the CJLIS* (2003-2006) which state that the library should reflect the variety of cultures represented in the community; support cultural traditions; and provide for the languages spoken and read in the local community. It also includes the *Policy for the Selection of Materials for the 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 multicultural nature of South Africa is supported by the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) which states that "the South African nation consists of a diversity of cultural, religious and linguistic communities [and that] everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice." A local literature review conducted for the purposes of this study, including statistical data, also found that Johannesburg is a diverse multicultural society. Johannesburg includes a diversity of linguistic groups that speak the 11 official languages of South Africa as well as other languages, such as Portuguese and Gujarati. Other than that there are various religious communities, such as the Christian, Jewish, Islam, Hindu and African traditional beliefs. There are also communities - not defined by language or religion - that identify themselves as cultural communities.

Therefore, the purpose of this interview is to establish how public libraries are considering or responding to the multicultural nature of the communities they

serve in the materials and services they offer and to seek suggestions on how these might be improved.

3. QUESTIONNAIRE

Please assist me by responding orally to the following questions. Your answers will be recorded and they will be treated confidentially. They will only be used for the purposes of this study. To facilitate the recording of your responses, it would be appreciated if you would fill in/tick off information where indicated on this questionnaire.

The questions are divided into four broad categories:

- General
- Needs assessments and user profile statistics
- Collections
- Services

PART 1: General

Name of library: _____

1.1 What do you understand by the terms, 'multicultural library services' or 'services for culturally diverse communities'?

1.2 In your opinion, is it important to have collections and offer services that are representative of the culturally diverse communities you serve? Please explain why.

1.3 How has cultural diversity - especially the adoption of 11 eleven official languages - impacted on your library?

1.4 Are you aware of any library policies that deal with multiculturalism or diversity - national or international?

☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NOT SURE

If yes, which policy/policies?

1.4.1 Are you familiar with IFLA's *International Guidelines for Library Services to Multicultural Communities* (1998)?

☐ YES ☐ NO

1.4.2 Are you familiar with the LIASA Policy statement which suggests that "libraries shall acquire, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials reflecting the plurality and diversity of society"?

☐ YES ☐ NO

1.4.3 Are you aware of the provision made in the CJLIS policy document, *Minimum Standards for the CJLIS* (2003-2006), for services to culturally diverse communities. If you are, how does your library follow the recommendations that each library should reflect the variety of cultures represented in the community; support cultural traditions; and provide services in the languages spoken and read in the local community?

1.4.4 Are you aware of the provision made by the CJLIS document, *Policy for the Selection of Materials for CJLIS* (2002), in terms of building collections for culturally diverse communities. If you are, how does your library follow the recommendations made that library materials should reflect the cultural diversity of the City - especially materials in the languages of the indigenous communities?

1.5 Is it important to have a policy document for your library dealing with cultural diversity/multicultural services? Please explain.

PART 2: Needs assessments and user profiles in terms of cultural diversity

2.1 Do you have profiles of your community - based on statistical data or any other information obtained at local level - regarding any of the following? (Please tick the appropriate options.)

- ☐ Home languages
- ☐ Nationalities
- ☐ Religions
- ☐ Other cultural groups, please specify.

2.1.2 Do you collect membership data of the mother-tongue language(s) spoken by your users?

- ☐ NO ☐ YES

2.1.3 Do you collect data in preferred languages for library material?

- ☐ NO ☐ YES

2.2 Your library includes users who speak (Please tick all the languages spoken by your users that you are aware of.)

- ☐ Afrikaans
- ☐ English
- ☐ isiNdebele
- ☐ North Sotho
- ☐ South Sotho
- ☐ seSwati
- ☐ Xitsonga
- ☐ Setswana
- ☐ Tshivenda
- ☐ isiXhosa
- ☐ isiZulu
- ☐ Other. Please specify which other language/s: _____

2.3 Other than South African, which nationalities are your users?

- ☐ Nationalities from the rest of Africa
- ☐ European
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ North, Central and South American
- ☐ Australian and New Zealander
- ☐ Not sure

2.4 Are you aware of any other cultural groups in your constituency - not defined by language or nationality - that make up your community, such as religious communities?

- ☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please specify.

2.5 In your opinion, would it be useful to have a profile of your community's cultural diversity in areas, such as languages spoken, religions, and other cultural groups? Please explain why.

2.6 Do you have any suggestions on how your library might obtain information – profiles - on the cultural diversity of your users?

2.7 Do you assess the specific needs of your users according to cultural diversity, such as preferred language of materials?

If you do not, explain why.

If you do, explain how.

2.8 Do you think it would be beneficial to your library if needs assessments of your users in terms of cultural diversity were conducted? Explain why.

(If you do have a profile for any of the above - i.e., language, nationality or any other cultural communities, please provide me with a statistical breakdown. I will come back and collect it from you).

PART 3: Collections

According to the IFLA guidelines (1998), library materials should be provided for all in their preferred languages and relating to their own cultures.

3.1 Can you provide a statistical breakdown of your collection according to language?

☐ YES ☐ NO

3.1.1 For the libraries that cannot provide a statistical breakdown according to language, answer the following question: Based on your knowledge of your collection, which of the following **materials** does your library currently provide? (Tick all that apply.)

- ☐ Library materials in Afrikaans
- ☐ Library materials in English
- ☐ Library materials in isiNdebele
- ☐ Library materials in North Sotho
- ☐ Library materials in South Sotho
- ☐ Library materials in seSwati
- ☐ Library materials in Xitsonga
- ☐ Library materials in Setswana
- ☐ Library materials in Tshivenda
- ☐ Library materials in isiXhosa
- ☐ Library materials in isiZulu
- ☐ Library materials in any other language/s. Please specify.

3.2 Do you have materials - not defined by language - that cover topics, such as the different histories, religions cuisines, music, arts, and customs of the various cultural communities that live within your service area?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please specify.

3.2.1 Do you provide any alternative information sources, such as unpublished materials from your communities or oral information sources/oral histories of your communities? Please elaborate.

3.3 Do you stock materials in other formats that are of interest to your diverse communities, such as videos, CDs, DVDs, sound recordings - for example, Indian music CDs and videos?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please specify.

3.4 Do you keep newspapers, magazines and other serial publications relevant to specific cultural, religious and linguistic communities?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please specify.

3.5 Do you provide electronic information resources that are representative of your diverse populations?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please specify.

3.6 Do you select materials based on the linguistic or any other cultural profiles of your users?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If you do, explain how you do this.

3.7 Do representatives of your diverse communities participate in the development of the collection at your library?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If they do, explain how they participate.

3.8 Do you collect circulation data of collections for languages used?

☐ YES ☐ NO

3.9 In your opinion, are there any reasons why your library might find it difficult to build a collection that is representative of the culturally diverse communities you serve - obstacles and challenges? Please explain.

3.9.1 In your opinion, are there any reasons why the circulation of collections, other than in English, may be low? Please explain.

3.10 Do you have any suggestions on how to improve collections so that they are more representative of the diverse communities you serve? Please elaborate.

PART 4: Services

The latest multicultural library guidelines from Australia (Library Board of Victoria, 2001) emphasise the basic - but important - concept that having a multicultural collection does not, in itself, constitute a multicultural service. These guidelines note that other services to culturally diverse communities are also necessary.

4.1 Which of the following services does your library currently provide? (Tick all that apply.)

☐ Library participation in cultural events, celebrations and activities of specific communities, such as national days, religious holidays, fêtes, festivals, dances, and musical events

- () Story-time sessions for children in appropriate languages, held either in the library and/or out in the community - for example, story-telling in African languages told by members of community or by library staff
- () Multicultural/culturally diverse arts programmes and exhibitions
- () User education/library orientation sessions in community languages
- () Basic introduction to computers in community languages
- () Internet and e-mail classes in community languages
- () Talks on basic community information needs, such as health issues and employment - in community languages
- () Family and local history programmes in community languages
- () Launches of new books of interest to culturally diverse communities
- () Book exhibitions and displays reflecting diverse cultures
- () Film festivals for culturally diverse communities
- () Storage facilities for local, culturally diverse heritages/archives
- () Appropriate signage to facilities, resources and services to suit specific community needs - for example, directional signage in relevant languages
- () Outreach programmes directed at a specific community in your area
- () English literacy classes for communities that are not English speaking
- () Language courses
- () Talks and seminars on the cultures of different communities that live in your service area
- () Cultural, diversity awareness workshops
- () Local information of interest to specific communities, such as details of cultural events and festivals; details of local community churches; doctors that speak community languages; sangomas; schools; etc.
- () Translation/interpretation services for users that battle to speak English
- () Reference and information services in those languages most commonly spoken by your community
- () Programmes that celebrate the heritages and customs of the cultural groups present in your constituency

- () Library brochures, handouts and pamphlets that take cultural diversity into account, such as handouts that describe your library services in those languages most commonly spoken by your community
- () Internet facilities that take into account the different cultural backgrounds of users - for example, library homepage in those languages most commonly spoken by your community
- () Links to Internet Web sites of interest to specific communities in the languages of those communities
- () Programmes that are specifically directed at your different cultural, linguistic and/or religious communities
- () Displays, exhibitions, festivals, events, etc. of interest to specific communities - for example, an exhibition of Zulu artefacts or a film festival representative of a specific cultural community
- () Any other services of interest to culturally diverse communities. Please specify: _____

4.2 Are the services you offer based on needs assessments or cultural/linguistic profiles of the communities living in your area?

- () YES () NO

4.3 Do any of your staff members speak/understand a language - other than English - that is spoken in your community?

- () YES () NO

If yes, please specify.

4.4 Do you promote your services by targeting specific communities - for example, promotional activities to bring specific communities to the library?

- () YES () NO

4.4.1 If yes, are these promotional activities in the preferred language of a community? Please elaborate.

4.4.2 Do you promote your services in community newspapers and on radio stations - for example, a local radio station that targets a specific community, such as an isiZulu broadcasting station?

() YES () NO

If you do, please elaborate.

4.5 Are there any reasons why your library finds it, or may find it, difficult to provide services that are representative of the culturally diverse communities you serve - obstacles or challenges? Please explain.

4.6 Do you have any suggestions on how to improve services so that they are more representative of the diverse communities you serve? Please elaborate.

4.7 Have your library staff members attended any cultural diversity awareness workshops or training?

() YES () NO

If yes, please specify.

4.7.1 In your opinion, is training in this field necessary? Please elaborate.

4.7.2 Would you be interested in attending training in cultural diversity/multicultural library services issues?

() YES () NO

4.7.3 In your opinion, should cultural diversity issues be part of library and information education and training programmes?

() YES () NO

Explain why.

4.8 Any other comments or suggestions.