The IFLA Multicultural Library Manifesto

The Multicultural Library - a gateway to a cultural diverse society in dialogue
All citizens live in an increasingly heterogeneous society. There are more than 6,000 different communities and languages in the world. The international migration rate is growing every year resulting in an increasing number of people with transnational identities. Globalization, increased migration, faster communication, ease of transportation and other 21st century forces have created cultural diversity in many nations, where it might not have previously existed or has augmented the existing multicultural makeup.

“Cultural Diversity” or “Multiculturalism” refer to the respectful co-existence and interaction of different cultures, where “culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature; lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001). Cultural diversity or multiculturalism is the foundation of our collective strength in local communities and in our global society.

Cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity is the common heritage of humankind and should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all. It is a source for the exchange, innovation, creativity, and peaceful coexistence among peoples. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001 affirms that “respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security”. Therefore, libraries of all types should reflect, support and promote cultural and linguistic diversity at the international, national, and local levels, and thus work for cross-cultural dialogue and active citizenship.

As libraries serve diverse communities, they function as learning, cultural, community and information centers. In addressing cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity, library services are driven by the commitment to the principles of fundamental freedoms, openness and equality of participation, dialogue to promote respect, recognizing cultural identity and values and equity of access to information and knowledge for all.

Principles
As stated in the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto and in the World Information Summit, every individual in our global society has the right to a full range of library and information services. In addressing cultural and linguistic diversity, libraries should:

- Serve all members of the community regardless of cultural, ethnic and linguistic heritage;
- Provide information in appropriate languages and scripts;
- Give access to a broad range of materials and services reflecting the community and needs;
- Employ a culturally diverse staff, trained in working with and serving diverse communities.

Library and information services in a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse context include both the provision of services to all types of library users and the provision of library services specifically targeted to underserved cultural and linguistic groups. Special attention should be paid to groups which are often marginalized in culturally diverse societies: ethnic and immigrant
minorities, asylum seekers and refugees, residents with a temporary residence permit, migrant workers and national minorities, including indigenous communities.

**Missions of multicultural library services**

In a culturally diverse society focus should be on the following key missions, which relate to information, literacy, education and culture:

- Promoting awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity and fostering cultural dialogue;
- Encouraging linguistic and cultural diversity and respect for the mother tongue;
- Facilitating the learning of several languages from an early age;
- Safeguarding the linguistic and cultural heritage and giving support to expression, creation and dissemination in all relevant languages;
- Supporting the preservation of oral tradition and intangible cultural heritage;
- Supporting inclusion and participation of persons and groups from all diverse cultural backgrounds;
- Encouraging “digital literacy”, and the mastering of information and communication technologies;
- Promoting linguistic diversity in cyberspace;
- Encouraging universal access to cyberspace;
- Supporting the exchange of knowledge and best practice in regard to cultural pluralism.

**Management and operation**

The multicultural library entails all types of libraries to adopt an integrated service approach. The core activities of library and information services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities are central and not “separate” or “additional”, and should always be designed to meet local or specific needs.

A policy and a strategic plan, defining its mission, objectives, priorities and services related to cultural diversity must be formulated. The plan should be based on thorough user needs analysis and should be followed up by an adequate budget allocation.

Activities must be developed in close cooperation with relevant bodies and sectors of society or institutions, such as user groups and other professionals at local, regional, national as well as international level.

**Core actions**

The multicultural library should:

- Develop culturally diverse, multilingual and multi-format collections and services, including information and communication technologies (ICT) resources;
- Allocate resources for the preservation of cultural expression and heritage, paying particular attention to oral, indigenous and intangible cultural heritages;
- Include programs supporting user education, multiple literacy skills, newcomer resources, cultural heritage and cross-cultural dialogue as integral part of the services;
- Develop information organisation and access systems in appropriate languages and scripts to ensure universal access to library resources;
- Develop marketing and outreach materials in appropriate media and languages to attract multicultural groups to the library.
Staff
The library staff is the active intermediary between users and resources. Professional education and continuing training focused on services to multicultural communities, cross-cultural communication and sensitivity, anti-discrimination, cultures and languages should be provided. The staff of a multicultural library should reflect the cultural, ethnic and linguistic characteristic of the community to ensure cultural awareness, reflect the community the library serves, and encourage communication.

Funding, legislation and networks
Governments and other relevant decision-making bodies are urged to establish and adequately fund libraries and library systems to offer free library and information services to culturally diverse communities.

Multicultural library services are in essence global. All libraries involved in activities in this field must participate in relevant local, regional, national or international networks in policy development. Research is needed to obtain the data necessary to make informed service decisions and secure appropriate funding. Research findings and best practices should be widely disseminated in order to guide effective multicultural library services.

Implementing the Manifesto
The international community must recognize and support libraries and information services in their role of promoting and preserving cultural and linguistic diversity.

Decision makers at all levels and the library community around the world are hereby requested to disseminate this Manifesto and to carry out the principles and actions expressed herein.

The Manifesto complements The Public Library Manifesto, The School Library Manifesto and The IFLA Internet Manifesto.
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