

# **Guidelines for Multilingual Materials Collection and Development and Library Services**

Prepared by the **Multilingual** Materials Subcommittee (ad hoc), Adult Library Materials Committee, Reference and Adult Services Division, American Library Association. Adopted by the Reference and Adult Services Division Board of Directors, June 1990

## **1.0 Introduction**

Traditionally, the United States has been a country that attracts large numbers of immigrants from all over the globe. While some libraries have established collections and programs to serve the needs of library-users whose native language is not English, nothing has been done on a national scale to systematically address these needs. In addition, the **multilingual** needs of library patrons who are language students, foreign students or bilingual citizens have been under-served by traditional library service.

The RASD **Multilingual** Materials Subcommittee (ad hoc) of the Adult Services Committee, in conjunction with the PLA **Multilingual** Material and Library Service Committee, has compiled these **guidelines** to promote the development and maintenance of **multilingual** library services and collections.

It is assumed that it is the responsibility of libraries to provide an equitable level of service to all members of their communities regardless of ethnic, cultural, or linguistic background. Access to library materials for ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups should not be seen as "additional" or "extra" services, but as an integral part of every library's services. The need for national **guidelines** is suggested by the adoption of **guidelines** by the RASD Committee on Library Services to the Spanish Speaking in 1988, by the IFLA in 1987 for library services to multicultural populations, and by the Canadian Library Association in 1986 for multicultural library services in public libraries.

In addition, these **guidelines** should serve as models against which the provision of services and materials can be assessed.

## **2.0 Collection and Selection of Materials**

Libraries should provide an effective, balanced, and substantial collection for each ethnic, cultural or linguistic group in the community.

In the case of small or widely scattered groups, a central or cooperative library effort is the best means to provide materials and services in order to maximize efficiency and reduce costs and still provide adequate materials and services.

### **2.1 Levels for Selection**

2.1.1 Provision of library materials should be related primarily to the size of the group in the community.

2.1.2 Demand and availability of materials are important factors to be considered in establishing a level of collection development.

The low volume of publishing in some languages or difficulty in obtaining what is published may make it impossible to provide the same amount of material in all languages.

Demand may not correspond to the population size of an ethnic, linguistic or cultural group in the community. Low demand could be the result of situations where inadequate or no service has been

previously provided, or, because of low expectations or unfamiliarity with library services on the part of some potential users. In addition demand may be affected by the educational level or reading interest level of the target community.

Therefore, the library must make every effort to determine the potential need for service as a preliminary step for collection development.

2.1.3 In general, the amount of materials provided should be at least the same as for the general population. However, it may be necessary in the case of smaller and widely scattered groups, to provide a proportionally higher level in order to establish a minimal effective collection.

## **2.2 Types of Formats of Materials**

2.2.1 Materials should be acquired in a variety of formats, including print, audio-visual, and computer software.

Where there is a shortage of materials in one format, the increased provision of circulating materials in another format should be considered as an alternative.

Where there is a lack of written materials in a language, libraries should encourage the recording of materials from the oral tradition in appropriate formats.

2.2.2 Libraries should acquire materials to service the diverse needs of the community including children, the physically challenged, and all educational and reading levels.

2.2.3 **Multilingual** collections should represent a cross-section of subjects, literary genres, and time periods.

This should specifically include materials by authors from each particular national and linguistic group, published within and without the country of origin.

Works of important world literature should be available in other languages in addition to the original language.

In order to provide information and to promote intercultural awareness and understanding, it is desirable that library materials reflecting the interests and experiences of the ethnic groups be available in English.

2.2.4 Libraries should provide language-learning materials to encourage heritage language retention and to provide Americans with an opportunity to learn or review other languages.

Libraries should provide materials to aid in learning English as a second language. English-learning materials oriented toward learners of specific language backgrounds should be available. In addition English-language learning materials suitable for all language backgrounds should be available.

2.2.5 Libraries should facilitate, encourage, and sponsor the preservation of original materials that relate to the heritage of local ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups.

## **2.3 Bibliographic Access**

2.3.1 Libraries should catalog all materials in the original language and script. They should provide subject access both in English and in the original language. Bibliographic information must be transliterated for staff use.

## **2.4 Physical Access**

2.4.1 **Multilingual** collections housed separately should be visible and accessible to the community.

2.4.2 Directional signage should be highly visible and in the languages of the major linguistic groups that use the library's **multilingual** collection.

2.4.3 Library registration forms, overdue notices, and other forms used by the library should be available in targeted languages.

## **2.5 Collection Maintenance**

2.5.1 Collections should be maintained so that they contain current and relevant materials as well as classic literature.

2.5.2 Out-of-date and worn-out materials should be evaluated, then discarded or offered to community organizations' archives or special collections, or other appropriate groups.

## **3.0 Programs, Services, and Community Relations**

Libraries should provide and actively promote **multilingual** services and provide programming for the various ethnic groups in the community.

Library **multilingual** services should be provided at the same levels according to the same standards as for the general public.

### **3.1 Cultural Diversity**

3.1.1 Because the population served comprises various cultures, each specific culture must be considered in the development of programming and services.

3.1.2 The degree of bilingualism and the retention of linguistic cultural identity by particular groups, as well as the level of social integration/assimilation will also be important in determining the level of service to a particular ethnic group. Some members of these groups may wish to be regarded as Americans only, rather than as members of an ethnic group.

### **3.2 Programming and Marketing**

3.2.1 Social and cultural community, activities organized by the library should be directed toward the targeted ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. Programs such as concerts of ethnic music, exhibitions, and demonstrations of traditional arts and crafts may be considered appropriate examples.

3.2.2 Programming and publicity should be in the preferred languages of the ethnic groups. Care also should be taken that the means of communication for publicity be appropriate for the sensibilities and expectations of the targeted group.

3.2.3 Libraries should provide facilities, promote, and offer English-as-a-second-language, literacy classes, and programs for English learners.

3.2.4 In addition to programs within the library, libraries and librarians should also participate in the life of the community by becoming involved with, initiating local events such as festivals, commemorations, and other cultural activities related to the various ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups in the area.

### **3.3 Outreach Services**

3.3.1 Libraries should provide **multilingual** services and materials to those patrons not able to use the library personally, including homebound, those in correctional institutions and hospitals.

3.3.2 Libraries should carry out outreach activities in nonlibrary, but familiar, alternative locations, such as factories, meeting rooms of ethnic organizations, churches, etc.

### **3.4 Information and Reference Services**

3.4.1 Libraries should provide reference and information services in the most commonly used languages. In addition, special effort must be made to provide service to recently arrived immigrant groups.

3.4.2 Libraries should provide the same level of service for interlibrary loan in all languages, by title or subject, as for the English-speaking patrons.

3.4.3 Libraries should provide reference and referral services about multicultural and **multilingual** local resources.

3.4.4 Libraries should provide bibliographic instruction in appropriate languages as necessary.

### **4.0 Staffing**

4.1 Library staff working with **multilingual** patrons should be **multilingual** in order to provide effective service. In addition, they should possess relevant cultural knowledge to ensure sensitivity to the community.

4.2 Libraries should offer continuing education or staff development programs that promote the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic awareness of the staff and enhance their abilities in dealing with ethnically different patrons.

4.3 Library staff with expertise in languages and cultures should share their expertise with other staff and other libraries and be recognized for these abilities.

4.4 Schools of library science should advertise the need for multicultural and **multilingual** librarians and actively recruit people of linguistic and ethnic minorities. They should offer courses that deal with the issues involved in serving an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse society.