

## Commitment to Multicultural Library and Information Science Education: Part 1 - Current Status

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In her review of curriculum and teaching styles, Grotzinger (1986) noted that "curricula of library schools have always responded to the needs of society, whether it was in service to special groups, to its own constituency through continuing education, or at different levels of training such as undergraduate and advanced degree study" pp. 460-1). If this is the case, library and information pp. 460-1). If this is the case, library and information science (LIS) schools should be responding to the needs of our multicultural society. According to the 1990 census figures, approximately 25% of the American population (248.7 million) is either American Indian (0.7%), Asian and Pacific Islander (2.8%), Black (11.7%), Hispanic (9%), or Other (0.1%) (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1991). Although it is apparent that a multicultural approach to LIS education is essential, research has yet to show that LIS schools are responding sufficiently to this charge.

A review of the literature on multicultural library and information science (MLIS) education revealed that very little was written about MLIS educational issues prior to the 1970s, but the number of publications has since increased. Concern for multicultural library and information service, and therefore MLIS education, appears to be linked with socio-political circumstances. For example, national concern regarding multicultural librarianship surfaced in the literature following the civil rights movement; the availability of monies, beginning in 1966, for graduate fellowships and institutes under Title IIB of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) to train minority librarians (Vale 1971); and the American Library Association's charge to library schools in the United States in 1967 to change "the racial and ethnic composition of their student bodies to be more representative and responsive to the populations which their graduates serve" (Totten 1977, 19). Miles M. their graduates serve" (Totten 1977, 19). Miles M. Jackson, Dean at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, noted that the efforts to provide courses on service to ethnic groups in the 1960s and 1970s had, however, dissipated in the 1980s (Wynar 1991). Strong interest in multicultural library and information service and education has regenerated and is linked to a recognition of the changing demographics in the United States; the environment in which information professionals serve; greater ethnic representation in the profession and in LIS school faculties; a decrease in minority enrollment in the 1980s (Brown 1989); the challenges of addressing cultural diversity on American university campuses; and a rise in racism and hate crimes.

Information about the state of MLIS education has been acquired from surveys of MLIS course offerings at LIS schools. In 1971, Monroe (1971) surveyed library schools to discover their response to educating librarians for service to the disadvantaged. Seven schools reported nine courses which were designed specifically to prepare librarians for service to the disadvantaged. Some schools offered basic and elective courses which included relevant material. Over twenty years ago efforts to educate librarians to serve a diverse clientele were evident but much remained to be done. Knight Randall (1988) reported on Cunningham's (1987) survey on library science outreach courses, which found 75 courses in library schools that exclusively (33) or partially (42) addressed outreach. Racial and ethnic minorities were included as a topic in most courses. More specific information was not reported.

Dr. Rene Tjoumas's 1986 survey of L'S schools to determine the treatment of ethnicity in their programs reported that 29 of the 46 schools which responded treated ethnicity at the core course level, 25 treated ethnicity in elective courses, and 14 offered courses specifically on service to ethnic groups (The Library Education Task Force, EMIERT, 1989). Tjoumas found that "the treatment of ethnicity within the library school is usually dependent upon the commitment and interest of individual faculty members, rather than on formal administrative support" (p. 7). Robbins Carter (1978) made the same observation about a decade earlier.

Josey (1991) surveyed ALA-accredited LIS programs in 1989/90 to determine "the role of schools of library and information science in educating their students about library services to cultural minorities" (p. 16). "The statistics and the findings do not indicate that a vigorous or positive program has been undertaken in library and information science" (p. 20). He found that although the majority of the 46 responding schools agreed with statements in support of education for their students in areas pertinent to serving ethnic minorities and 52.2% of the schools had mission statements which reflected a concern for library service to multicultural populations, data on the schools curriculum, faculty composition, and student enrollment did not reflect the positive attitudes. Josey hoped that another survey would be conducted three to five years after the publication of his study to identify any changes in the education for multicultural librarianship.

The study<sup>1</sup> reported here was conducted two years (Summer/Fall 1991) after the administration of Josey's survey. Although this survey was conducted earlier than Josey had anticipated, it reveals any new developments and the rate of progress in L'S education in serving a culturally diverse society. A five-page questionnaire was mailed to all 72 ALISE institutional member schools (59 ALA-accredited and 13 non-accredited programs). The questionnaire surveyed the instruction library and information science schools offer on multicultural information services. The emphasis was on the courses the schools offered, their philosophy regarding a multicultural curriculum, their approach to a multicultural curriculum, and their future plans in the further development of a multicultural curriculum. "Multicultural curriculum" was broadly defined as such courses which focus on culture as a factor in the acquisition, organization, and access of information.

"Multiculturalism" is often equated with racial and ethnic pluralism; however, in this study the term encompasses racial and ethnic concerns as well as cultural ones.

The findings are revealing, marking the changing nature of LIS curricula and the slight progress toward a MLIS education. However, they need to be interpreted in context because examination of isolated variables, e.g., number of schools offering specialized courses on cultural diversity, show very little headway. This survey, unlike Josey's (1991), did not gather as many details on number Josey's (1991), did not gather as many details on number of courses, number of lectures, and number of independent study courses related to cultural minorities. Therefore, it does not fully concur with Josey's conclusion: "The statistics and the findings do not indicate that a vigorous or positive program has been undertaken in library and information science" (p. 20).

Forty-eight LIS schools participated in the study: 37 accredited American schools, 4 accredited Canadian schools, and 7 nonaccredited American schools. The response rate was 67% and is comparable to earlier studies. The participating schools offered a variety of degree programs ranging from undergraduate courses to doctoral programs. In addition to offering a master's degree, thirteen schools offered undergraduate courses, five offered a bachelor's degree, twenty-nine offered a post-master's degree/certificate, sixteen offered a doctorate and seven schools offered "other" degrees. Examples of "other" degrees are a MFA in book arts, a double MA in L'S and another field, Learning-Resources Certification, an Agricultural Information Specialist Certificate, a Community Information Management Certificate, etc.

The present study revealed that the commitment toward offering a MLIS education exists. The commitment is expressed in the philosophies held by the schools, the approaches implemented toward a model library school ethnic curricula,<sup>2</sup> and the future plans for further development of a multicultural curriculum. Thirty-four schools (85% of the participating schools which provided a response, eight gave no response) held a philosophy which was responsive to a multicultural curriculum, with many (13/34 = 38%) supporting a multicultural perspective integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. The schools' philosophies were illustrated in their

approaches to a library school ethnic curriculum. Thirty-nine schools (85% of the participating schools which provided an answer, two gave no response) were integrating cultural components into the core course 29 schools offered elective courses devoted to multicultural concerns, and nine offered a specialized program of courses to train multicultural information specialists. Only nine schools (nine others did not provide a response) reported no future plans for further development of a multicultural curriculum. Others were going to review their curriculum in order to integrate multiculturalism (16), had specific plans for making curricular changes (10), or expressed their ongoing commitment to multiculturalism at all levels of their program (4).

The positive commitment and basic efforts indicated by the schools were, however, not fully reflected in responses to specific questions about courses and programs. Only 24 schools offered courses on multicultural information services; only 22 schools offered multicultural programs (e.g., seminar, workshop, lecture, etc.); and only 4 schools offered a specialization on multicultural information services. For students in thirty-six schools the opportunity existed to take relevant courses outside of their department and receive credit toward their degree. As well 21 schools were situated in universities which had faculty members or librarians who were conducting research of relevance to multicultural information services and would benefit from the research.

These findings imply that LIS schools and the profession have much work to do in the future to strengthen our commitment to library and information science education in response to the needs of a culturally diverse society. In order to address this concern, the author will recommend a model for a MLIS education in the second of her two-part report on multicultural library and information science education to be published in the next *EMIE Bulletin*.

## NOTES

1. Based on Chu, Clara M. "Education for Multicultural Librarianship." In *Multiculturalism in Libraries*, by Rosemary Ruhig Dumont, Lois Buttlar & William Caynon, 127-156. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. Please refer to it for the complete literature review and results.
2. Cohen and Sherrill's model curriculum (1982) which incorporates ethnic components in achieving the educational objectives of learning service skills, acquiring knowledge and developing attitudes was expanded by using the term "cultural" instead of "ethnic" and including as educational objectives research and acquisition of knowledge from cognate fields.

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