



Serving Immigrant Populations

A Library Prototype for Diversity

Broadcast Date: Friday, April, 2006

Bill Erbes and a panel of experts look at the history of immigrants and libraries, examining how to assess the needs of your community's immigrant population, including English as a Second Language materials, legal issues, work issues, and bi-lingual library resources.

Program Overview

The Prototype

- I. (Bill Erbes) Together with staff, immigrants themselves, and local agencies interacting with immigrants, develop a definition of cultural negotiation.
- II. (Lester Park) Look to other libraries for direction, guidance, reassurance, and inspiration.
(Loida Garcia-Febo) The Queens, New York, Public Library is the most ethnically diverse in the United States and has been serving immigrants for over 100 years. The New Americans Program (<http://www.queenslibrary.org/programs/nap/>) is a model all libraries can emulate.
(Tammy Deboyne) Library size and location make absolutely no difference. What does make a difference is attitude, commitment, and collaboration with other agencies. Further, the easiest way into the immigrant community is through the children.
- III. (Marc Thomas) Use readily available census data to figure out whom the immigrants in your community are, where they came from, their ages, and anticipated future growth. Mr. Thomas' full PowerPoint presentation is available at: www.newamericansunited.net
- IV. (Jill Rodriguez/Loida Garcia-Febo) Work with what you have. Determine need, then resolve to meet that need. That's what librarians do, what they have always done, and what they must continue to do. Involve staff at every level of planning; exploit their talent; recognize them as the absolute best public relations tool available.
- V. (Rohini Bokka) Do not assume that purchasing foreign language materials is the first or the last step; it is neither. Cultural negotiation is critical. Learn who your immigrants are and work with them to assess needs. Recognize their hopes and fears and dreams; recognize their children; treat immigrants as you would any other element of your community – with tolerance, respect, and empathy.
- VI. (Vandella Brown) Recognize that diversity has always been a part of your library community. Be proactive. Understand cultural negotiation and provide programs and services to further the process of that negotiation throughout your community.
- VII. (Gary Sarpy) Understand that community agencies need to form alliances with the library every bit as much as the library needs to form those alliances with community agencies. Some agencies will proactively seek out the library; others will not. It is likely all will



respond whole-heartedly when approached. The use of volunteers is critical. Volunteers not only assist with programs, they also serve as conduits to the community.

VIII. (Randi Weiss) Do not perceive language as barrier. PolyTalk is a statewide program in Illinois, but it is absolutely replicable in any library in any state. The use of volunteers is critical.

IX. (Carolyn Walz) Any community can do it. Estherville, a small town in Iowa, is working it's way through the prototype by working to define what cultural negotiation means in Estherville; looking closely at what more experienced libraries are doing; targeting immigrant children as a primary focus; using all of the demographic data available from the federal, state, and local government, as well as social service agencies; involving staff every step of the way and actively seeking-out bi-lingual staff as openings arise; providing resources and programs for immigrants to become citizens, and providing the same for citizens to learn more about the immigrant community; forming alliances with every community agency that interacts with immigrants; making use of volunteers.

X. (Bill Erbes/Lester Park) Libraries represent the sum of all human knowledge, and they represent equal access to that knowledge. Libraries represent freedom of expression, celebration of diversity, a playing field that is level, preservation of heritage, and commitment to the future. We invite you to join us as we now become community centers of cultural negotiation.

Speakers

Bill Erbes

Bill Erbes is the Assistant director of the Bensenville Community Public Library District, Bensenville, Illinois. Very much interested in continuing education and staff development, Bill has authored and produced a very successful series of videotapes, including Web Searching: Jenny and Maxx Explain it All and Satisfy and Delight: Customer Service the Bensenville Way. A frequent guest on Soaring to Excellence, Bill has also been an adjunct faculty member of the College of DuPage and Dominican University. Bill may be reached at:
billerbes@yahoo.com
cleewalz@yahoo.com

Rohini Bokka

Rohini Bokka has been the Technical Services Manager at the Naperville (IL) Public Library for the past five years. Prior to that assignment, she was the Head of Technical Services at the Bensenville (IL) Community Public Library District. Rohini was born and raised in India where she attended American Missionary School from grade K-12. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts and a Master's Degree in World History from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India. She migrated to the United States in 1977 to join the Graduate School of Library Science at the University of Mississippi. During her graduate school years, she worked in the Periodicals and Reference Departments of the University Library. Since receiving her degree, Rohini has worked in Academic, Public, and Special Libraries in various departments. Rohini enjoys reading, spending time with her family, and volunteering at the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago Library.
cleewalz@yahoo.com



Archana Bokka

Archana Bokka is a junior at Waubonsie Valley High School. Although both of her parents migrated from India, Archana has lived in the United States her entire life. She has had the privilege of experiencing both the culture of the United States and the Hindu culture with which her parents were raised. Archana participates in her school's choirs and trains in classical Indian dance. Some of her hobbies include dancing, singing, playing the guitar, listening to music, and spending time with her friends and family. During the summer, Archana volunteers at the Bensenville (IL) Public Library and the Naperville (IL) Public Library. cleewalz@yahoo.com

Vandella Brown

Vandella Brown is the Illinois Library Diversity Program Director for the Illinois State Library, a division of the Office of Secretary of State Jesse White. Ms. Brown has twenty years of experience working with libraries and information technology. Her career has touched many phases of public libraries and marketing urban libraries. She has a Master's Degree in Library Science from the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa; a Doctoral Degree in Philosophy from the University of Berkley, Berkley, Michigan; and a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee. She has worked at leading libraries in the United States -- Memphis & Shelby Co. Public Library, Columbus Metropolitan Library; East St. Louis Public Library; and the OCLC Online Library Center Network. Ms. Brown is the author of several books, including *Celebrating the Family: Steps to Planning a Family Reunion*, and articles on library science, including "African-American Fiction: A Slamming Genre," *American Libraries*, October 1998. Vandella can be reached at: isldiversity@ilsos.net, cleewalz@yahoo.com

Tammy Dobonye

Tammy Dobonye is the Director of the Beardstown Houston Memorial Library, Beardstown, Illinois, and she has 20 years of library experience. Tammy participated in the Spanish Language Outreach and Technology Program, sponsored by Webjunction, OCLC, and funded through a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She has spoken throughout central and southern Illinois on the topic of Spanish language outreach, and recently she traveled to Seattle, Washington, to speak at the "Train the Trainer Institute for Spanish Language Outreach and Technology." Tammy is involved with several community outreach programs and she was recently appointed by the Mayor serve on the Commission of the Old Lincoln Courthouse and Museum, which is the original courthouse and site of Lincoln's Almanac Trial. Tammy is a strong advocate of community partnerships and she supports literacy programs in the area. Tammy can be reached at: beardstown13@yahoo.com, cleewalz@yahoo.com

Loida Garcia-Febo

Loida Garcia-Febo is the Assistant Coordinator of Special Services at Queens Library where she manages services to persons with disabilities, inmates, job seekers and seniors not only in English, but also in Spanish, the language of the largest minority in the county. Prior to that, for over five years Loida was the Spanish Language Collections / Cultural Arts Manager for Queens Library's New Americans Program (NAP). There she developed and managed Spanish language collections for the community libraries and coordinated programs celebrating Queens residents' diverse cultures. Queens is the most ethnically diverse county in the country with residents from



190 nations who speak 160 languages. Loida was recently selected to be part of Queens Library's new promotional campaign highlighting staff diversity and her picture is currently on buses and bus shelters around the borough in Spanish language ads. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, she earned her BA in Business Education and an MLS from the University of Puerto Rico. Loida is the current President of the Northeast Chapter of REFORMA, a member of the ALA/IRC/Americas Subcommittee, REFORMA representative to the ALA/Diversity Council, and a co-convenor of the IFLA/New Professionals Discussion Group, which she co-established. She is also a member of ACURIL, the Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries. She can be reached at: Loida.Garcia-Febo@queenslibrary.org, cleewalz@yahoo.com

Lester Park

Lester Park is the Community Services Librarian at the Bensenville Community Public Library District located in Bensenville, Illinois, just southwest of O'Hare International Airport. Les is a graduate of San Jose State University in San Jose, California, where he earned a BA in Political Science and a Master's Degree in Political Science and International Economics. Prior to joining the Bensenville Library, Les was the Chief Information Officer for the Chiron Corporation, a biotech company in Northern California where he was responsible for Commercial Information Technology and Information Services as well as the Corporate Library. In addition to his community outreach activities at the Library, Les serves on the Boards of the Bensenville Arts Council and the Bensenville Chamber of Commerce and Industry and supports Literacy Programs in the area. Lester may be reached at: livrophile@hotmail.com, cleewalz@yahoo.com

Jill Rodriguez

Jill Rodriguez is the Director of the Bensenville Community Public Library District, Bensenville, Illinois. Bensenville is a diverse community located twelve miles west of Chicago, directly adjacent to O'Hare International Airport. Ms. Rodriguez has written and administered numerous federal and state grants to serve immigrant populations, including ESL and Family Literacy Programs, and she has been recognized throughout Illinois for her unique approach to library service. She has a passion for exemplary customer service and a devotion to intergovernmental cooperation, and she frequently addresses these topics at conferences and workshops. Jill may be reached at: jillrod@comcast.net

Gary Sarpy

Gary Sarpy is a Chicago native, born on the north side. Gary has worked in the English education field since 2000 and in the Latino community since 2002. His past volunteerism includes the Chicago Leadership Cooperative, the Puerto Rican Arts Alliance, and Chicago University's Technology Camp for Children at Risk. Gary currently holds the position of Adult Education Coordinator at Gads Hill Center, a not-for-profit, community based organization located in the heart of Chicago's predominantly Hispanic Pilsen neighborhood in the Lower West Side community. Gary is responsible for designing ESL program (English as a Second Language) curriculum for over 150 adult learners annually. His Adult Volunteer Literacy program, as sponsored by the Secretary of the state of Illinois, Jesse White, Literacy Office, is exclusively staffed by volunteer ESL tutors. Gary is also currently completing his B.S. in English



Education at Chicago's Roosevelt University. Mr. Sarpy can be contacted by email at:
garysbox@hotmail.com
cleewalz@yahoo.com

Marc Thomas

Marc Thomas is the Information Services Manager at the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC), working in its Research and Forecasting Department. He provides data assistance and demographic trends analysis to local governments in the 6-county Northeastern Illinois region, to his co-workers, and to the public at large. He serves as his agency's point person for the collection and dissemination of census results to the data user community. He is also in charge of maintaining the data resources pages on the NIPC web site. After graduating from Indiana State University with a degree in history, Mr. Thomas worked for the State Employment Service in both Indiana and Illinois. He joined NIPC in 1986. An admitted chocoholic, Mr. Thomas currently lives on Chicago's west side, a mere block away from the Mars candy factory on Oak Park Avenue.

Carolyn Walz

Carolyn Walz has worked at the Estherville, IA, Public Library for forty-four years. For the past thirty-four years, she has been the Library Director. A community advocate, Carolyn has served on Boards of various community organizations, is active in her church, received the Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame Award for Emmet County in 1991, and was Estherville Citizen of the Year in 1995. In 1993 through 1995, Carolyn oversaw a successful referendum, capital fund-raising, the move out of an old Carnegie building, a library building project, and finally a move back into the newly renovated Carnegie building. As Library Director, Carolyn has hosted Hispanic Hospitality Night, cooperates with the local school in an Early Books program for young Hispanic children, and hosts a weekly Mixer Club social time for middle school students. Carolyn serves as "Team Mom" for the Iowa Lakes Community College Women's Basketball Team, and she and her husband John are both sports enthusiasts who frequently travel with the college teams. Each year on September 11, Carolyn keeps her library open for the entire 24-hours in recognition of the extraordinary power of libraries and as a symbol of everything antithetical to terrorism, hatred, bigotry, and fanaticism. Carolyn is thrilled to represent Iowa libraries in this Soaring to Excellence teleconference. She may be contacted at:
cleewalz@yahoo.com

Randi Weiss

Randi Weiss is the Project Coordinator for PolyTalk, an LSTA grant-funded project to help limited-English-proficient patrons make full use of the resources of Illinois libraries through an online network of volunteer interpreters. The goal of the project is to create a network of telephone-based, volunteer interpreters to assist non-English speaking library patrons in Illinois, which is one of the most linguistically diverse states in the country. Nearly one in five Illinois residents speaks a language other than English at home. PolyTalk has the potential to eliminate communication barriers and equalize access to public resources throughout the state. For more information, visit [PolyTalk](#).



Resources

From Vandella Brown

Arrien, Angeles. *Working Together: Diversity as Opportunity*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001. ISBN: 1576751562

Byrd, Susannah Mississippi. *Bienvenidos!: Welcome! A Handy Resource Guide for Marketing Your Library to Latinos*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2005. ISBN: 0838909027

Fraser, George C. *Success Runs in Our Race: The Complete Guide to Effective Networking in the African-American Community*. New York: William Morrow, 1994. ISBN: 0688129153

Novas, Himilce. *Everything You Need to Know about Latino History*, 2003 ed. New York: Penguin Group, 2003. ISBN: 0452284325

Robertson, Deborah. *Cultural Programming for Libraries: Linking Libraries, Communities, and Culture*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2005. ISBN: 0838935516

Thomas, R. Roosevelt. *Building on the Promise of Diversity: How We Can Move to the Next Level in Our Workplaces, Our Communities, and Our Society*. New York: AMACOM, 2005. ISBN: 0814408621

Web Junction

<http://www.webjunction.org/>

This site offers diversity workshops and Spanish Language Outreach materials. It's a website where "library staff can share ideas, solve problems, take online courses, and have fun."

From Bill Erbes

Jones, Jr., Plummer Alston. *Libraries, Immigrants, and the American Experience*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999.

"The purpose of this work is to document the history of American Public Library service to immigrants from the beginning of librarianship as a profession in 1876 through World War II. This history will focus on the interaction between American public libraries and the immigrant community. It will integrate the societal and political contexts of immigration as a national phenomenon with the history of library service to immigrants."

Pipher, Mary. *The Middle of Everywhere: the World's Refugees Come to Our Town*. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002.

"Lost Boys of Sierra Leone, Kosovo survivors, refugees from the Taliban, Vietnamese families: they come with nothing but the desire to fulfill the American dream. Their endurance in the face of tragedy and their ability to hold on to the virtues of family, love, and joy are a tonic for all Americans. Their stories will make you laugh and weep, and they will give you a deeper understanding of the wider world in which we live."



Other Books and Articles

Camarota, Steve A. *Immigrants at Mid-Decade: A Snapshot of America's Foreign-Born Population in 2005*. The Center for Immigration Studies, December 2005.

"Library Services to Immigrants and Non-Native Speakers of English: From Our Past to Our Present." *Bookmobiles and Outreach Services* 6, no.2, 21-34, 2003.

Novotny, Eric. "Library Services to Immigrants: the Debate in the Library Literature, 1900-1920, and a Chicago Case Study." *Reference and User Services Quarterly*, Summer 2003.

Plummer, Alston Jones, Jr. *Libraries, Immigrants, and the American Experience*. Greenwood Press, 1999.

Other Web Resources

ALA Diversity Council

<http://www.ala.org/ala/diversity/commondiversity/diversitycouncil/diversitycouncil.htm>

Bilingual Books for Kids

<http://www.bilingualbooks.com/>

The City of Austin - New Immigrants Center

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/library/newip.htm>

Continental Book Company

<http://www.continentalbook.com/>

The Diversity Leadership Academy

<http://www.dlaa.org/>

The Illinois New Americans Immigrant Policy

<http://www.icirr.org/exec/projectoverview.pdf>

New Americans United

<http://www.newamericansunited.net/>

The Queens Library New Americans' Project

<http://www.queenslibrary.org/programs/nap/>

The Resolution in Support of Immigrants' Right to Free Public Library Access (REFORMA and the American Library Association)

<http://www.reforma.org/realIDres.htm>

SBD Spanish Book Distributors

<http://www.sbdbooks.com/>

Spanish Multimedia

<http://www.spanishmultimedia.com/>

Also see the New American United site for additional information and resources.

<http://www.newamericansunited.net/index.html>



Discussion Questions

1. Take a close look at your library and identify five barriers to service for immigrants. Once you've identified them, offer a suggestion as to how each could be changed.
2. Following the model of Marc Thomas, identify the immigrant population of your community. Include as much information as you can to provide a basis upon which to begin serving that population.
3. Comment upon the Rodriguez/Garcia discussion. If you were challenged as to why time, energy, and dollars are being used to serve immigrants who may or may not even be legal citizens, how would you respond?
4. Identify at least three possible partnerships in your community that could assist in the library's service to immigrants. Who are they, what do they provide, how can they help you, and how can you help them?
5. Vandella Brown is an employee of the Illinois State Library charged with assisting Illinois libraries with diversity programs. Identify the individual at your state library who holds a similar position. What services does your state library offer toward immigrant services?
6. Take a close look at the REFORMA Web site (<http://www.reforma.org/>). Identify five specific resources from REFORMA that could be incorporated to immigrant services at your library and comment upon how you would use them.
7. How would you define the term "cultural negotiation?" Identify three possible ways to begin "cultural negotiation" in your library.
8. What is the makeup, in terms of diversity, of the group with whom you are watching the teleconference? If there really is no diversity, why is that? How can we achieve more diversity within our profession?

Notes
