

HARMONY IN DIVERSITY

Recommendations For Effective Library Service To Asian Language Speakers

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About the Authors

Patricia M. Y. Wong is Supervising Librarian at the Berkeley Public Library's South Branch and Tool Lending Library. She was a participant in the California State Library's Partnerships for Change Program and the Convocation on Providing Public Library Service to California's 21st Century Population. Ms. Wong's career has included service as: Children's Librarian at Berkeley Public Library's North Branch, Oakland Public Library's Main Library and other branches; Cataloger at Oakland Unified School District; Information Specialist at California Capital Exports in Oakland; and Student Supervisor of ASUC General Books in Berkeley. Her professional activities include: Chair of the Task Force Goal 2000 of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) and the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA); Nominating Committee Member of the American Library Association; Pura Belpré Award Committee of the American Library Association's Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC); Member-at-Large of the American Library Association's Council; Co-chair of APALA's Bylaws Committee; Member of ALA's Booklinks Advisory Board and John Newbery Award Committee; APALA Executive Board; APALA Vice-President/President-Elect; California State Library Minority Scholarship Committee; CALA Board of Directors; ALA's and ALSC's Preconference Planning Committee, and Book Review Chair of the Association of Children's Librarians. She is also a member of Bibliotecas Para La Gente, Black Caucus, REFORMA, United States Board on Books for Young People, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Ms. Wong has been a speaker and guest lecturer at conferences of ALA, APALA, CLA, and at University of California, Berkeley and San Jose State University. She also co-authored a section of *Equal Voices: Ethnic Organizations Respond to Goal 2000* for ALA, edited *WLW: Women Library Workers Journal*, and was a reviewer for the Association of Children's Librarians' *Bayviews*.

Kathleen Low is Principal Librarian and Human Resources Development Consultant for the California State Library. She earned her B.A. in Spanish from the University of California, Davis and her M.L.S. from San Jose State University. Previously, as Outreach Services Manager, she managed the library's Capitol Branch which provides reference services to the State Legislature. Ms. Low has written a number of articles for professional journals and has spoken at various meetings and conferences.

Shelly G. Keller, President of Keller Marketing and Communications, has been a public relations consultant to the California State Library since 1988. She has written and edited dozens of publications for the California State Library and was head writer and editor of *Harmony in Diversity*, as well as *Keeping the Promise: Recommendations for Effective Library Service to African Americans*, and *Adelante: Recommendations for Effective Library Service to the Spanish-speaking*. Keller edited the American Library Association's *Celebrate America's Diversity* manual, and has authored several articles for ALA's "PR Activity Report" and *The Reference Librarian*. Ms. Keller is a member of the California Library Association's Public Relations Committee and the American Library Association, and has spoken at several ALA and CLA conferences. She earned her B.S. from the University of Maryland.

Jaе Min Roh is Senior Librarian and Branch Manager at Los Angeles Public Library's Pio Pico Koreatown Branch. Mr. Roh was a participant in the California State Library's Partnerships for Change Program and the Convocation on Providing Public Library Service to California's 21st Century Population. His career also includes service as: Senior Librarian of Los Angeles Public Library's Inner-City Bookmobile; Young Adult Librarian at Junipero Serra Branch of Los Angeles Public Library where he was the library's first Korean-speaking librarian; and Librarian Trainee at Cypress Park Branch

of Los Angeles Public Library. He also taught English, English Grammar, British Drama and Shakespeare at Kyung Kee University in Seoul. Mr. Roh earned his B.A. at Seoul National University, his M.L.S. and M.A. at the University of Southern California.

Miki Myungcha Lim is Young Adult Librarian at the Pio Pico Koreatown Branch of Los Angeles Public Library. She has also served as Children's Librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library's Benjamin Franklin Branch, Washington Irving Branch, and the Inner City Bookmobile. Ms. Lim also taught at Thomas Starr King Junior High School. She received her B.A. from Korea University in Seoul and her M.L.S. from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

Suzanne Lo is Manager of the Fairfax Branch of Marin County Free Library. Her library career includes positions at San Francisco Public Library, Oakland Public Library's Asian Branch, and Hayward Public Library. Ms. Lo has served as Vice-president/President Elect for the California Chapter of the Chinese American Librarians Association and on the General Assembly Council for California Library Association. She received a California State Library fellowship for their "Transition Into Management" Program and participated in the California State Library's Convocation on Providing Public Library Service to California's 21st Century Population. She is listed in *Who's Who Among Asian Americans* and has contributed articles and bibliographies to *Our Family, Our Friends, Our World* (Bowker, 1992) and *Global Voices and Global Visions* (Bowker, 1995).

Marina Claudio-Perez is Librarian III and Young Adult Librarian at the San Diego Public Library's Central Library. She is also a professional translator and editor of various publications in Tagalog/Pilipino and other Philippine languages. She is a member of the Cultural Diversity Committee of the California Library Association as well as the American Library Association, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (Executive Board), Serra Cooperative Library System Young Adult Advisory Committee, San Diego Young Adult Reviewers Committee, and the City of San Diego Filipino-American

Employee Association. Ms. Claudio-Perez earned her B.A. from the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines and her M.L.I.S. from San Jose State University with a scholarship from the California State Library's Multiethnic Recruitment Program. She also attended San Jose State University's Summer Institute of Ethnographic Research and the University of California, Berkeley's Information Futures Institute.

Sonoe Jitodai recently retired from her position as Bilingual Librarian in charge of the Japanese Collection at the Western Addition Branch of the San Francisco Public Library. Her career has included teaching positions with the Nishimachi International School in Tokyo, the Japanese Language School in Seattle, Oakland Buddhist Church Japanese Language School, and Nomura School in Richmond, California. Ms. Jitodai's library career includes: University of Washington Far Eastern Library; Acquisition Librarian of Japanese Research Materials at the University of Iowa Library; Art/Music and Reference Librarian at the San Francisco Public Library; Catalog Librarian of Japanese materials at the East Asiatic Library of the University of California, Berkeley; and Librarian of Japanese Buddhist materials at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley. She also teaches Japanese music (koto and sangen) and has lectured at the Music Department of the University of California, Berkeley. Ms. Jitodai earned her B.A. from Rikkyo University in Tokyo, her M.A. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and her M.L.S. from the University of Washington.

Angie Nguyen is Senior Library Technician in Youth Services at Santa Ana Public Library, where she coordinates the Central Library Learning Center, providing tutoring, computer and Internet instruction to students in grades one through twelve. Ms. Nguyen is also subject specialist for the library's Vietnamese collection. She earned her B.A. from California State University, Long Beach and is currently working on her M.L.I.S. at San Jose State University.



“F

rom the youngest age, I was a denizen of the local public library. I loved to sit there all day, and read, read, read and when I left, I dragged huge garbage bags full of books home so I could continue reading into the night. The library is the first and last refuge of the sensitive, the socially inept, the future reader and writer, and not a few scoundrels (sometimes all the same person!). Librarians have profound influence on their lives.”

Marie G. Lee, Author

This publication was created to provide guidance to library directors, administrators, public service librarians, and staff on how to improve service to Asian-language speakers and readers throughout California. California is a highly diverse state and everyone in the library community faces the on-going challenge of providing effective library service to an ever-changing population.

In the last 20 years, California has been the primary preferred destination of new Asian immigrants to the United States. As a result, California public libraries are now serving larger numbers of Asian-language-speaking and -reading patrons than ever before. According to recently released data from the Commerce Department's Census Bureau, 3.8 million Asian and Pacific Islanders were residing in California in 1997. Los Angeles County continues to be the county in the United States with the highest number of Asians and Pacific Islanders with 1.2 million.

Being a non-English speaker or reader is perhaps the greatest barrier to library service, limiting access to hundreds of thousands of Californians. The two major non-English languages spoken in California are Spanish and various Asian languages. According to California's Rural Health Policy Council, the 1990 Census counted 665,444 Asians and Pacific Islanders who do not speak any English and are "Population Linguistically Isolated." Because of their linguistic isolation, these limited- or non-English-speaking individuals have not enjoyed the same level of library access and service as California's English-speaking population. This publication provides recommendations on how to provide more effective library service to this underserved population.

Harmony in Diversity was written by the Task Force

on Service to Asian-language speakers, a group appointed by the California State Library and composed of public library staff from around the state. While the U.S. Census has identified 19 separate Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups, many with more than one language or dialect, this publication focuses on serving the groups which public libraries have traditionally asked the California State Library for assistance in serving. They include: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

In preparing this publication, the task force identified several goals: They include:

- Helping librarians understand the differences within Asian and Pacific Islander cultures, and that even within each culture, people are unique;

- Dispelling myths and misconceptions about Asian-language speakers;
- Creating a clear, concise tool to guide library directors, administrators, librarians and library staff at all levels to providing service, access and materials to Asian-language speakers and readers; and
- Providing information on how to connect with Asian-language speakers.

A wide variety of topics is covered in this publication: challenges and opportunities for directors and administrators; managing administrative change; funding; political concerns; practical advice on customer service; personnel and staff development; staff recruitment and selection; recruiting for entry level positions; commonalities and differences of Asian cultures; diversity with each Asian culture; misconceptions about Asian cultures; communicating with Asian-language speakers; needs assessment and community analysis; community connec-

tions; access; cataloging; translations; materials and collection development; resource sharing; marketing and awareness; public relations; media relations; evaluation; technology in libraries; services; programs; and future implications.

In addition, the Supplemental Materials document to this publication provides general information on the five cultures, as well as information on holidays and celebrations, popular authors, translations of library terminology and phrases, collection development and vendor lists, ethnic media resources, web sites, and contact persons.

In developing these recommendations, one goal remains paramount: promoting equal library access for all Californians regardless of the language they read or speak. We hope you will find *Harmony in Diversity* to be a useful tool for enhancing your library's service and value to its community.

“When we read, we can travel the whole world in our imagination. We can be heroes or monsters. I used to go to the library often and each book I picked up was a new adventure.”

Dr. Sammy Lee, Olympic Gold Medalist, High Diving, 1948 and 1952

Challenges/Opportunities for Directors and Administrators

Asian Americans make up one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in California. It benefits the library to provide effective library service to Asian-language speakers in the library’s jurisdiction because this rapidly growing population includes not just new library users, but also new neighbors, taxpayers and potential library supporters. This goal provides numerous challenges as well as opportunities. Library directors and administrators should play a central role in setting the tone and direction of a library’s efforts to serve Asian-language speakers.

The following recommendations are provided to help open doors to new library patrons, create new library supporters, and remove barriers to library usage that may exist in many communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Library directors and administrators should increase their awareness of the inadequacy of services for Asian-language speakers and readers in public libraries (relative to the Asian population in their service areas) and provide more effective and equitable library services to speakers of Asian languages by:
 - Creating a library climate and ambiance that welcomes Asian-language-speaking patrons;
 - Hiring Asian-language-speaking staff (select which Asian language according to community needs) in both professional and paraprofessional classifications at libraries where needed;
 - Providing adequate funding to start or strengthen Asian-language collections to meet the needs of the Asian population in the library’s service area.
2. Sponsor library programs that reach out to the Asian-language-speaking community by involving

community groups and inviting them to help plan, promote, and participate in the event, making it a celebration of Asian culture that the entire community can enjoy.

3. Establish a multilingual services section in a large library system with at least one Asian-language-speaking staff person assigned to public service.
4. Directors and administrators can play a central role in establishing the networks that allow resource sharing to occur. Promoting and fostering active communication among libraries and librarians serving similar populations is also important. Experience, knowledge and simple communication can be as important as resource-sharing.
5. Be alert to the need for future library services for the rapidly growing Asian population in the United States. The Asian population in the United States will grow to 11 million by the turn of the century with 40 percent residing in California, according to the “Census Facts about Asian Americans.”¹

Managing Administrative Change

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identify library policies and mission statements that must be created or changed to better serve Asian-language speakers.
2. Initiate changes needed to make the library more responsive and relevant to the needs of Asian-language-speaking patrons.
3. Provide the staff with adequate support, training and resources to implement changes in their libraries through systemwide staff development.
4. Assist the staff at central, branch libraries, and bookmobiles in overcoming cultural and language barriers so they can become more responsive to their changing communities, with central libraries serving as the immediate connections.

5. Allocate adequate resources to serve Asian-language-speaking patrons, particularly new immigrants, who reside in the library's service area.
6. Form an advisory committee on Asian-language services within the library system to work with the administration to promote better library service for Asian-language-speaking customers.
7. Although library staff members need not be Asian-language speakers to be sensitive to the needs of the Asian community, it is still important to fill supervisory and management positions with librarians who are skilled in serving Asians whose first language is not English. It is also highly desirable for bilingual librarians to head a culture- or language-focused branch library.
8. Provide culturally specific seminars and training to the staff to increase awareness and understanding.
9. Make implemented changes pervasive and durable.

Funding

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide adequate funding to purchase Asian-language materials, hire bilingual staff members, and produce programming to meet the needs of the growing Asian population in the library jurisdiction.
2. Enlist the financial support of local community organizations and businesses to help provide adequate library services and materials for Asian-language-speaking groups. To enhance the budget for Asian-language materials, work with Asian authors and publishers to encourage them to donate books and audiovisual materials as well as funds to promote library services to Asians.
3. Work with Friends of the Library groups and library foundations to raise funds for Asian-language materials. Or, establish an Asian Friends group to help raise money for additional library materials and programs.

4. To enhance the library's development program, identify possible corporate and individual donors to support more effective library service for Asian-language speakers.



It is also highly desirable for bilingual librarians to head a culture- or language-focused branch library.

5. Establish a matching fund so that the library can match funds raised by community groups to create or expand Asian-language collections at branches. Such monies should augment, not replace, regular funding.
6. Seek grant funding, or funding from other government sources, to enhance library service to Asian-language speakers.

Political Concerns

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance community awareness of the value of libraries and the roles they play for Asian Americans, especially new immigrants. The library could help form an active committee to discuss the information needs of the Asian-language-speaking community and invite elected officials to attend.
2. Educate government leaders about how the public library helps Asian-language-speaking immigrants acclimate to their new country. Ask Asian commu-

“Libraries and books are the heart and heartbeat of life. They provide each of us a glimpse into worlds beyond our own.”

Gail Tsukiyama, Author

nity organizations to work with local government officials to gain support for the expansion of services to Asian-language speakers.

3. Encourage library support groups to express support for Asian-language library services at various community and government meetings. Be prepared to provide a list of desired services, materials, furnishings, software and programming.

Practical Advice on Customer Service

In order to survive in the 21st century, libraries must be customer-centered and community-oriented. They must now strive to meet the information needs of every customer, including people from other cultures who do not speak English and who are unfamiliar with American public libraries.

Good customer service is a value all staff members should embrace because good customer service results in the public supporting the library, contributing private dollars, and volunteering. Good customer service pays. And a library that provides good customer service is a fun place in which to work.²

Library service involves human interaction. The goal of good customer service is to fulfill human needs for information. Good customer service is friendly and welcoming and requires positive interpersonal communication skills. Most people are not inherently skilled at customer service. It takes training and support to become customer-service oriented.³

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Encourage all staff members to meet the needs of all patrons no matter what languages they speak.
2. Set high standards of customer service. Libraries must strive to meet the information needs of every customer in a kind, friendly manner. This includes educating Asian-language-speaking patrons about library rules and regulations before checking out materials.

3. Remove barriers to good customer service to become a user-centered library. Libraries must look at every transaction and every encounter from the customer's point of view, not just from the staff's perspective.
4. How library service is delivered to each individual affects the community's perception of the library, the library's value to the community, and the opportunities it offers. Each staff person – from public service desk to security, from janitorial employees to trustees, commissioners and volunteers – has a responsibility to help customers get what they need. This requires a staff that feels secure, is well trained and well informed, and is supported by managers and administration.
5. Explain library procedures clearly to make sure Asian-language-speaking customers understand them. Many new immigrants have limited English skills.
6. Provide staff with opportunities to learn a few expressions in the languages of the Asian groups that the library serves. Asian immigrants and Asian-language speakers support libraries where their languages are spoken, especially by the library staff. Reward staff members who learn a few, useful Asian language expressions (see Supplemental Materials for the appropriate languages).

Personnel and Staff Development

Today, more than ever, people of various ethnic backgrounds are entering library careers as professionals and paraprofessionals. It is to the library's benefit to have staff members who reflect the community's diversity so they can effectively reach out to and serve the community, and, in turn, get support from the community to sustain the library's survival. Training, professional development, and education also enable library staff to respond to service needs and a changing environment.

Staff Recruitment and Selection

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To deliver effective library service to Asian-language-speaking patrons, libraries must recruit staff who:
 - believe in the value of a library to the community;
 - can read and write in English and an Asian language;
 - have subject expertise;
 - value diversity and are culturally aware and sensitive;
 - have an interest and commitment to serving diverse communities;
 - pursue opportunities for personal growth and professional development;
 - are flexible in embracing change; and
 - seek opportunities to develop relationships in the community as well as community experience.
2. As communities change, so does the face of the community. Staff selection should be based upon changing community needs, rather than just perceived needs. Libraries can identify prospective bilingual staff members by creating a local advisory group. Advisory members often volunteer their time to assist the staff in serving Asian-language speakers, and they can help to recruit Asian-language-speaking staff members.
3. Library directors and administrators can promote and recognize the importance of service to Asian-language speakers by establishing an appropriate reward or recognition structure.
4. Assist civil service commissions and personnel departments in identifying and promoting job openings in the community in nontraditional ways and in community-based media and organizations. Help them focus on local recruitment, encouraging and coaching interested library supporters in how to be competitive applicants.

5. Help civil service commissions and personnel departments define nontraditional job qualifications. Balance selection criteria to include traditional qualifications, such as years of service, with nontraditional criteria such as community knowledge and experience, community connections, language skills, cultural knowledge and cultural affinity.

6. Help the personnel departments identify bilingual Asian-language-speaking volunteers, student workers, interns and pages who are qualified and likely candidates for

future openings. Libraries and administrators can encourage Asian-language-speaking paraprofessionals and volunteers to pursue careers in librarianship. Some library systems have established scholarship and training programs to develop in-house personnel. This increases the pool of librarians who have the bilingual skills and knowledge to serve the changing populations in California's communities.

7. Develop standardized oral and written language tests when recruiting for bilingual positions.
8. Make the applicant screening process culturally relevant by creating a review panel that reflects the diversity of the community and the community's interests.

It is to the library's benefit to have staff members who reflect the community's diversity so they can effectively reach out to and serve the community . . .

“The library is my meditative space where I can attain a level of peace five layers deep. Only then can I hear the music and meaning of other minds.”

Belle Yang, Artist and Author

Recruiting for Entry Level Positions

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Look for prospective Asian-language-speaking employees among patrons, community-based organizations, local schools, volunteers, summer youth workers, Friends groups, churches and temples.
2. Place job applications and announcements at public service desk counters of the branch or location where positions are open.
3. Post recruitment fliers at ethnic and community grocery stores, in churches and temples, on bulletin boards at community centers and other gathering places, in ethnic and mainstream media, at local fairs and festivals, at job and career fairs. Advertise with high school and college career counselors, in community college student unions, at service club meetings, on the Internet, in community newsletters and in other city departments.
4. Advertise job openings in Asian-language or bilingual newspapers and on Asian-language radio and TV stations in the community.

Staff Development

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following process facilitates developing library staff who value diversity:

1. Administration commits to valuing diversity as a library goal, demonstrating on-going support with action, dollars and resources.
2. Administration and staff survey all library employees to establish the level of their cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural understanding of the changing community.
3. Administration and staff identify training needs.

4. Administration provides adequate cultural awareness training, using a variety of trainers, for staff and topics while striving to reach all staff members.
5. When training is complete, administration and staff members reassess attitudes through surveys, observations, and changes in behavior.
6. Administration and staff reaffirm their commitments to valuing diversity by planning social activities that promote personal interaction, cultural awareness and sensitivity among the staff.
7. Administration provides financial support for language and culture classes for the staff. Instruction can sometimes be provided by qualified library volunteers.
8. The library uses cross-cultural mentoring and cross-cultural training to build awareness and sensitivity.
9. Administration builds awareness of cultural resources by creating on-the-job opportunities such as on-site orientations and tours of all other library sites. The library could also create a profile of each location and highlight the staff's strengths, noting language skills as well as American Sign Language, CPR, first-aid, computer and other skills.
10. The library uses its culture- and language-focused branches to host or provide cross-cultural training to all library staff. Bilingual staff members are compensated for their language skills used on the job.
11. The library works with other city/county departments to identify staff members who can help with translation or interpreting, and uses these employees as resource people.
12. Administration solicits and encourages diverse representation on the library board or commission.

Commonalities and Differences of Asian Cultures

As human beings, we share many commonalities, and yet we live in different ways. Among Asian cultures, there are also many commonalities as well as differences. One of the goals of this publication is to help libraries and their staff members understand the differences between and similarities across Asian cultures. All of us have the ability to live in any culture, but most of us live our lives knowing only one.

Culture is, by and large, a survival mechanism, consisting of plans and recipes for handling the world. Culture can guide how we see and think, how we relate, what makes us laugh or cry, how we eat and dress, as well as how we are born and how we die. Culture allows the individual to survive within the strength of the group with whom he or she shares a homeland, ancestry and environment.

In presenting information specific to cultural groups, there is great concern about the potential for stereotyping. In learning about Asian cultures, it is important to remember that each individual is unique, and that there is enormous diversity and complexity in humans, regardless of their cultures.

In learning about the commonalities and differences among Asian cultures, there are several influences which should be recognized. They include:

- Historical and cultural backgrounds;
- Generations, immigration, and length of U.S. residency;
- Social class structure and region of original or ancestral country;
- Family and children;
- Language;

- Religion and spirituality;
- Manners, customs, etiquette, gestures, and taboos;
- Cultural ideals; and
- Social interaction and relationships.

The Supplemental Materials to this publication provide details on how these influences reveal themselves in individual Asian

cultures. Each section was written by a member of the Task Force which authored this publication. In addition to covering the topics listed above, each section also discusses the role of the library in helping people bridge cultures.

Diversity Within Each Asian Culture

While many Asian cultures value family, education, cultural and linguistic retention, most Asian cultures express those hopes and expectations in different ways. And while some Asian cultures share a common language and culture that crosses geographic boundaries, one's homeland or

nation is equally important. The homeland and its political history also contribute to the uniqueness and distinct differences from culture to culture. Each Asian culture is distinct, unique and should be valued and recognized as such.

With regard to Asian languages, Chinese is to Asian languages what Latin is to the Romance languages (Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, and Romanian). Japanese and Korean languages, for example, are so deeply indebted to Chinese that the two languages still use many Chinese characters in writing along with their own alphabets or vernacular scripts. The Chinese characters often retain the same or similar meanings, although they are pronounced differently.



Vietnamese written language was originally based on Chinese characters, but the influence of the French during their occupation of Vietnam resulted in the language being Romanized as it is today. Publications from mainland China are often written in the “simplified” Chinese characters, a shorthand that was promulgated during Communist rule to expand literacy in the



When serving Asian-language speakers, the staff must be flexible.

Chinese population. These “simplified Chinese characters” and other intricacies of Asian languages can pose problems for Chinese-language collection development.

The spoken language – dialects and word order – also differ greatly from one Asian culture to another. Influences of other cultures are also reflected in interpretation and meaning in each Asian language. Within Asian cultures, there are not only different languages, but different dialects within each language. Such language regionalisms can make it difficult for people from the same culture to understand other dialects, as is the case with the Chinese language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. When developing a collection of video and audio resources, try to balance the collection to meet the specific language needs of the library’s service area population. When you have patrons who speak different dialects (for example, Mandarin and Cantonese), try to provide resources for each.
2. Expect a wide range in paper and binding quality when purchasing Asian-language materials because place of publication often impacts both language and production quality. For example, Chinese-language resources published in Hong Kong will have a decidedly British influence in terms of product quality (binding, paper, etc.), while resources published in Taiwan will deliver high quality in both language and product. Publications and resources from mainland China, at this time, tend to be of lower quality in terms of binding, paper, and printing. As for Korean-language materials, almost all now available are published in South Korea. However, publications from North Korea may eventually appear in American public libraries, given the current (late 1990s) reconciliatory movements between the United States and North Korea. Presently, publications from South Korea far exceed those from North Korea in paper quality, printing, and binding.
3. The belief that all Asian cultures are the same can interfere with the library’s ability to provide effective service to individuals. Asian cultures are distinct and unique. To provide effective library service, it is helpful when the staff members attempt to understand the differences between Asian cultures and are respectful of those differences.
4. When serving Asian-language speakers, the staff must be flexible. Ask tactful questions. Learn the distinctions between cultures. Do not insist on applying English, American or Western cultural standards when serving Asian-language-speaking patrons. For example, inserting Asian-language magazines into plastic magazine covers so that the back cover is displayed demonstrates the library’s disregard for the fact that many Asian-language publications are read from right to left, with the binding on the right, not the left.

“Libraries in Asian American communities have provided me with research materials while librarians helped me to understand them. Libraries have also introduced me to new audiences, helping me reach the very people I’m writing for.” *Lisa See, Author*

5. Remember, no culture is monolithic with everyone in that culture behaving in exactly the same way or believing exactly the same thing. The best approach is to deliver library service with the individual in mind. Try to understand that people within each Asian culture have many different views, experiences, values, feelings, and beliefs regardless of sharing a common culture or language.
6. It is best not to make assumptions. Do not assume someone is of a particular culture. It is better to ascertain the person’s language preferences. For example, a Korean raised in Japan, or in Korea before the end of World War II when Korea was under Japanese rule, can speak Japanese and may enjoy Japanese-language materials.
7. Keep in mind the political, economic and social differences within the homeland region of an Asian-language speaker. People of all cultures bring those political, economic and social differences – and their feelings about them – with them when they emigrate to another country.
8. Be sensitive to political issues when planning programs, outreach activities and collection development. Avoid cultural symbols, such as flags, which can carry “too much” political meaning for some people. Instead, consider using maps of the Asian countries which are the “homelands” of the Asian-language-speaking groups the library serves.
9. Learn to rely on the library’s cultural community to verify the accuracy and appropriateness of language use or other cultural issues. When you act without help from someone in the key culture, you can make mistakes.
10. Videos on learning Chinese refer to learning Mandarin unless they specify Cantonese. One must determine whether the patron wants Mandarin, Cantonese or another dialect when helping them to check out videos.

11. Many Asians are family oriented, so library programs designed for parents and children are likely to attract more participants than programs designed just for children or just for adults. Consider providing programs both inside the library and in locations convenient to the targeted audience.
12. Many Asians are highly motivated about obtaining a high quality education for their children. Enhance their awareness of the public library as an educational institution where children can develop reading skills at an early age.

Misconceptions About Asian Cultures

When trust has been established between a library staff person and an Asian patron, the patron develops the expectation of having a “face-saving” experience. This trust requires that management empower library staff to be flexible regarding library rules and policies, such as how overdue fines are charged. Remember that once an Asian patron loses “face” or reputation, that patron may never return to that library or any other.

Library service to all patrons should be fair and equitable, but it also should be delivered within the patron’s own cultural context. California’s public libraries serve people of many cultures. Staff members need flexibility to serve diverse patrons with equanimity without pitting people of different cultures against one another. Keep this in mind when resolving problems between patrons of different cultures over issues that may arise in the library setting.

Some misconceptions about Asians include:

1. “Asians are the ‘model minority.’” This implies Asians are without problems. This belief can detract staff members from providing the type and level of library service to Asian-language-speaking individuals that would be most effective.

2. “Asians are shy, quiet and not expressive.” This misconception affects how service is provided and can cause the level of service to decline. When an Asian person is outgoing or assertive, some people misinterpret those actions as “misbehavior.” In many Asian families, children are raised to be respectful, modest and humble, with the purpose of creating a “harmonious” or cooperative relationship within the family and community. Because Western culture values individuality and competitiveness, this modesty and humility can be viewed as weakness or as being submissive.
3. Asians are often stereotyped as having a high socioeconomic status, especially when they have large, extended families. Asian merchants and retailers are also perceived as being more affluent than other immigrants, bringing more money with them, having better access to funds to start businesses, making more money than other immigrants, excelling in both education and work. These are stereotypes, and are not true of all Asians.
4. Additional misconceptions about Asians include the belief that all Asians are: smart; wealthy; hard-working; frugal; highly educated; highly technically skilled; good at science and math; successful. While these qualities may be highly desirable, they are not always accurately applied. Many Asian immigrants, like immigrants from other countries, are frugal and hard-working in order to survive in their new country.

Communicating with Asian-language Speakers

While there are many shared linguistic characteristics among Asian-language speakers, there are many differences. Depending on the country or nation of origin, an Asian-language speaker’s pronunciation may be nasal or clipped, linguistic mannerisms may appear blunt, or gestures animated. Each cultural linguistics specialization

reveals a combination of cultural influences, including the importance of the homeland. Other factors stem from influences of other groups such as the French in Southeast Asia, the Japanese in Korea and mainland China, the British in India, and the Spanish in the Philippines.

Of primary importance to providing good customer-centered library service is a staff which responds to the linguistic and cultural needs of the community. To that end, the staff should be trained in cultural and linguistic expectations and patron preferences. Staff members can learn common everyday phrases to make patrons feel welcome and open to learning about the library.

Recruitment, mentoring and retention of a multilingual staff at all levels for public service work are all factors essential to delivering effective library service to Asian-language speakers. This approach to hiring also helps the library build a

network of informed, concerned library staff members who exhibit behavior culturally appropriate to the outreach needs of the community. A multicultural staff can help colleagues understand cultural specifics, traditions, and taboos.

Often, library policies are in conflict with the expectations of many Asian cultures. These policies can include: overdue books and subsequent fines or fees; and censorship of materials available to minors. To deliver effective service, the library must work with Asian-language-speaking patrons within their limits of understanding, respecting individual values while maintaining the library’s professional standards. Flexibility in reaching a common understanding is the key to good communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The concept of the public library in America is new to many Asian-language-speaking immigrants. This is important when communicating with new patrons of Asian descent. To help them become familiar with the public library, translate all library brochures into

A multicultural staff can help colleagues understand cultural specifics, traditions, and taboos.

“All my life, I have loved books. Books are friends, beloved flesh-and-blood beings. It is only natural that I love and respect libraries which truly are homes for books – homes that are always expecting you, always ready to warmly welcome you.” *Vo-Dinh Mai, Artist and Author*

the appropriate Asian languages to help them become acquainted with how library service works. Be sure to include information about loan period, fees, fines, any Interlibrary Loan charges, etc.

2. Promote the library’s Asian-language collection by distributing brochures in Asian communities where people gather. Make sure the library staff is available to help Asian-language speakers become acquainted with the concept of the public library.
3. Give patrons the benefit of the doubt when dealing with problems. A patron can be wrong without being dishonest. There can never be too much understanding in providing service to people of other cultures.
4. While it is important to help people of other cultures understand the library’s rules and policies, staff members should avoid reprimanding Asian-language-speaking patrons publicly.
5. Many behaviors are culturally based. Making eye contact and smiling are two examples of how culture affects behavior. Some Asians do not make eye contact because in their culture it is disrespectful. When Asian patrons smile and nod their heads, it is usually done to be polite, and does not necessarily mean they are agreeing with you or understand what you are saying.
Smiling does not come easily to some Asians. For example, in the deeply embedded Confucian values of Korean culture, a serious dignified look is more acceptable than a smile. On the other hand, a Vietnamese patron might smile for any number of reasons, i.e., lack of understanding, agreeing, or disagreeing but being polite. The staff should not conclude that an unsmiling patron is unhappy or disapproving.
6. Staff members can learn a few simple words and phrases to facilitate service. These can include welcoming phrases, common library terms, terms of

respect, and library classification numbers (see Supplemental Materials).

7. There is one simple, surefire way to get the names of Asian-language speakers correctly: ask them about their personal preferences. This is especially important with new immigrants, because some may still list their names in the style of their homelands (often with the family name listed first), while others may have already adopted American usages (family name listed last). Most Asian-Pacific Americans who have been in this country for a while will list their names in the American style – but it is important to always ask about preferences (see Supplemental Materials for NAMES: Getting them right).
8. Physical contact is perceived differently from culture to culture. Physical contact is not necessarily a form of affection, endearment, or familiarity in Asian cultures. Initiating physical contact with a patron is sometimes inappropriate. A nod or a smile goes further than a handshake or a pat on the back. Learn what is acceptable before making physical contact.
9. Taking photographs of someone from an Asian culture can be misconstrued because some cultures or individuals view photographs as too intrusive or as undesirable exposure. When taking photos to document programming and services, be sure to ask permission.
10. When a library staff person who speaks an Asian language is not available, library staff may ask a patron who speaks the same Asian language to help translate.
11. When the staff members cannot communicate in the spoken language, they can sometimes communicate through the written word. Try using the “Translations of Common Library Terms” in the Supplemental Materials to this document.
12. Libraries can create a welcoming environment and enhance communication with non-English-speaking

“Every book I read takes me on a journey that affects and sometimes dramatically alters the course of my life. Libraries are like the depots where these journeys begin, where the world’s possibilities, mysteries, and wonders unfold before my eyes.” *Aimee Liu, Author*

patrons by providing appropriately translated signage, pathfinders, fliers, forms and instructional materials. It is also helpful to create a “community information center” by providing translations of voter registration and other information as well as information on community-based organizations.

13. Hiring bilingual staff members is the ultimate commitment a library can make to serving Asian-language speakers. Providing even a little language training to staff members willing to learn can also have a tremendous impact on how well a library serves its Asian-language-speaking patrons.

Needs Assessment and Community Analysis

Needs assessment is central to a library director’s understanding of a community because it can help the director make appropriate resource allocations to establish or continue services. Needs assessment also gives every library staff person a chance to observe and participate in the community, while helping the library become a true community center. The needs assessment process also helps the library distinguish between “perceived” needs and “expressed” needs, enabling the library to let go of “perceived” needs that have not been validated by the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The U.S. Census is the best place to start needs assessment. Providing the most reliable and readily available source of key information about a library’s service area, U.S. Census data is now available on the Internet with data broken down by city or town and zip code. The U.S. Census Summary Tape File 3 provides comprehensive data on cultural, linguistic and ethnic demographics, including income levels, number of years in the United States, number and age of children, and other key information.

- 2.** Use a combination of methodologies to solicit information and data from the community: surveys, questionnaires, coalitions, forums, personal interviews, and focus groups. This creates a clearer profile of the population. When the same data or information is gathered via different means, it reinforces and validates the information.
- 3.** Focus groups held with community leaders can help identify issues and create a harmonious environment for a public forum. These “gatekeepers” can help promote the forum to other people in the community.
- 4.** Translating library user and nonuser surveys into the language of the key cultural group can help broaden the reach. This will ensure the greatest response and accuracy of information while establishing two-way communication between the library and the community.
- 5.** Ask community-based organizations and gatekeepers for help in distributing and collecting surveys. Maximize distribution and collection by enlisting the help of as many community organizations as possible. Surveys can also be distributed door-to-door with the help of a social club or youth group, or at schools and in English-as-a-second-language classes. The library can also distribute surveys at community fairs, festivals, and events. Surveys of entire communities are often conducted on an annual basis to provide local government with a sense of how willing people are to support a variety of services. Such surveys can combine questions about library use with questions on health services, fire and safety.
- 6.** When a library conducts a community forum, it gives community gatekeepers an opportunity to provide input about information needs. For best results, it is important to conduct the forums in the appropriate languages via translators. Separate

forums or focus groups for children and adults may result in contradictory information, but they also give children their own “voice.” Public forums can generate substantial community interest in the library if they are widely publicized in local ethnic media.

7. Building a community coalition can provide ongoing input to the library as well as opportunities for the library to provide information to the community. The coalition can include various community organizations and agencies as well as community leaders. Invite coalition members to the library’s programs, events, and activities to keep interest in the library active.
8. Include additional sources of library-service-area population statistics, including: planning and zoning department documents; school district information (by law, school districts must annually track Limited English Proficiency data for each school); ethnic and mass media surveys, especially those conducted by the print media; other community-based organizations’ survey results and data; and studies by local universities, chambers of commerce, and other city or county departments or agencies. Much of this information can be found on-line and each new source will provide the library with a more comprehensive picture of the community’s makeup and needs.
9. Conduct needs assessments regularly (at least every two to three years) and be sure to include needs assessments of both library users and nonusers. Repeating the needs-assessment process provides an opportunity to reevaluate community needs while also assessing what worked and what did not. Library staff can then plan to repeat the programming, services, and promotions which worked while eliminating activities which did not.
10. Inquire at academic institutions about help from interns and students. Many colleges and universities offer distance education and independent study classes that require completion of outside projects by students.
11. Make results of the needs assessment public. Share results with the local media and other local officials

in city or county departments. Post the results on the library’s web site. Keep circulating needs assessment information and use it in new-employee and volunteer orientations.

12. Analyze the results to determine what library services, programming, staffing, and collection development are necessary to effectively serve the entire community.
13. Encourage staff members to get out into the community to witness the changes taking place – new

businesses, new homes and apartments, street repairs, and enhancements. Staff members who wish to learn about the community should try to eat lunch, shop, and buy gas in the

library’s service area on a regular basis. This is especially important for staff members who work, but do not live, in the library’s community.

Outreach should take library staff and services beyond the library’s physical boundaries.

Community Connections

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Outreach should take library staff and services beyond the library’s physical boundaries. Story hours in the library and school visits are not outreach activities. These are traditional library programs and services. Bookmobiles began as outreach activities and evolved into standard library service.

Outreach activities include:

- Participation in community fairs and festivals;
- Hosting, attending and participating in community meetings and forums;
- Participating on community boards and commissions;
- Serving on task forces and boards of other agencies or nonprofit organizations;
- Attending important or commemorative events and special occasions;
- Speaking to community groups, social, and professional organizations;

- Programming at community sites, such as story time at a homeless shelter , parenting workshops in churches or temples, or book talks to youth group meetings.
- 2. Take a systemwide approach to community outreach, committing staff and resources to outreach programs on an on-going basis.
- 3. Develop programming and outreach opportunities by forming partnerships with Friends or community groups.
- 4. Distribute outreach opportunities among staff members, rather than designating responsibility for outreach to a single staff person.
- 5. Community collaboration can lead to partnerships which enlarge the library's community network, widen its sphere of influence, and build library advocates.
- 6. Collaborate with community groups and coalitions to become more aware of community issues and opportunities for the library to be involved. Strive for reciprocal partnerships with community organizations which are "kindred spirits," sharing goals, resources and outcomes.
- 7. Make the library's facilities (meeting rooms, outdoor areas, display units, and bulletin boards) available to community groups for meetings, programming, events and information sharing.
- 8. Collaborate with a local adult school to provide or host citizenship classes and English-as-a-second-language classes in the library.
- 9. Recruit community volunteers to serve on the library commission or board, to join or establish Friends groups, and to strengthen the library's community connections.
- 10. Use volunteers to help connect to the community. The roles of volunteers may vary from library to library, but remember: volunteers are essential to maintain community connections.
- 11. Making community connections and establishing partnerships is a long-term, on-going process. The community is even more fluid than the library. Community involvement goes well beyond just making initial contact. When there is no continued

contact and nurturing, the library loses the community's trust, confidence and credibility.

- 12. Begin making community connections with language schools, churches and temples, ethnic markets, ethnic media, community-based organizations, consulates and cultural centers. Communicate with local schools, PTAs, principals, teachers, and newcomer programs. The school district population generally reflects the local population in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and languages spoken. Community contacts are great information sources on community needs and nonuser perceptions. Share information with community contacts, and ask questions in terms relative to their vocabularies and experience.



- 13. Communicate and collaborate with other county/city departments and agencies on programming and staff training. Exchange lists of community contact people.
- 14. Collaborate with Asian sister cities on programming, community activities, cultural and people exchanges.
- 15. Partner with local businesses and chambers of commerce to share information, showcase the library, share resources, create programming opportunities, and do fund raising.
- 16. Work with literacy staff members to cosponsor programs and reach out to that built-in audience for ideas and support.

Access

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Signage in the appropriate language should be displayed with the collection. Translate exterior and interior signage as well as street directional signage.
2. Translate library card applications, brochures (“How to Use this Library”), fliers and surveys in the appropriate languages, listing a contact person who speaks that language. Distribute these materials widely throughout the library system, and be sure the quality of these translated materials is the same as that of the library’s English-language signage and marketing materials.
3. Keep the Asian-language collection current with recent titles to entice patrons to return. Display new releases prominently in a highly trafficked location. New immigrants are impressed with a public library which carries materials in their languages. Such materials draw new library users into the library and encourage patrons to return, especially given the high price of vernacular books sold at local book stores.
4. Locate the collection visibly in the library. Provide adequate shelving and room for growth for Asian-language materials so that shelf space does not inhibit or limit collection development over time.
5. Provide bilingual instructions about those to contact for assistance (i.e., information desk, circulation, reference desk, etc.) at the on-line public access catalog.
6. Create a bibliography/pathfinder of popular materials and new releases in the vernacular language.
7. Provide library tours and orientations in other languages on a regular basis. Or create an audio or video “library orientation tour” in the appropriate languages.
8. Establish a vertical file or picture file on Asian cultures. For example, include photos or drawings on costumes, customs, holidays, festivals, celebrations, traditional games, Olympics, and other timely topics.
9. Schedule bilingual staff members at the public desks. Add name tags or signage to indicate which languages are spoken by on-duty staff.
10. Review policies and procedures to identify, modify, and eliminate institutional barriers such as limits on the number of items which may be checked out.
11. Translate the Dewey classification table into appropriate languages (see Supplemental Materials for translations).
12. Make sure the library is listed in the Asian-language Yellow Pages and community directories.
13. Be sure the Asian-language collection is well maintained, and attractively displayed with good lighting and comfortable seating.
14. Collection signage and cataloging should provide access for both the Asian-language-reading patron and the English-reading-only staff person.
15. To increase the library’s visibility in the community, make the library’s community meeting room available to English-as-a-second-language classes.

Collection signage and cataloging should provide access for both the Asian-language-reading patron and the English-reading-only staff person.

16. Promote access to Asian-language materials through loans to branches where there is no collection or only a limited one.
17. Provide audiovisual materials in Asian languages. These are extremely popular, especially entertainment videos.
18. Have Asian-language materials in different formats (audio, video, newspapers, and magazines) in close proximity. Asian-language newspapers and magazines will not be read if they are kept apart from the main Asian-language collection. New library users prefer to browse and often do not wander far from where the bulk of the Asian-language collection is located. If it is not possible to keep materials together, post bilingual signage near the main Asian-language collection to alert patrons that additional resources are available and point out where they are located.

“As a child growing up in Los Angeles, I had a happy rendezvous with the public library. Inside those quiet walls, I discovered fascinating words of enchantment, adventure, and discovery on the pages of books.” *Judy Chu, Mayor Pro Tem, Monterey Park*

19. Many Asian-language-reading patrons do not use the on-line catalog to check for a title or subject in the Asian-language collection. Transliterated information (Asian scripts rendered in Romanized text) is probably more useful to the staff than to the Asian-language-reading patrons. Instead, they like to scan the materials on the shelves for items they missed in their previous visits. Therefore, all new books should be kept in the special “New Books” section, and with the “New” labels on the spines. Keep the materials labeled “new” for a while and then integrate them into the main collection.
20. After purchasing new Asian materials, prepare a “New Additions” list, and post it by the main Asian collection with the approximate date for circulation. This will alert patrons to new materials.
21. Consider eliminating user fees on materials that teach English. Some libraries charge a nominal fee for audio cassettes and higher fees for videos. Videotapes that teach English or those which show patrons how to become U.S. citizens are very popular with new immigrants and cannot be viewed or used within just a few days. Allow more checkout time so that library users have time to review them. To encourage wider use of these resources, provide a “no user fee” designation.
22. If the library system has a bookmobile, include a well-stocked Asian language collection aboard when visiting neighborhoods with Asian-language-speaking patrons. Provide the same level of service on the bookmobile, such as new book lists and program announcements, and give bookmobile patrons the same attention you would those who use the “regular” library.
23. Some patrons bend the corners of a book page to mark their places when reading. Bilingual book-

marks which provide book-care suggestions might help eliminate this problem. Another solution would be to glue a 10-inch piece of string or ribbon on the last page so that it can be used as a bookmark.

24. Search materials by subject or by using a different format or variation of an author’s name when titles needed by the patron are not available. Usually the first word is used as the last name and the last word as the first name. If a book is cataloged with the last word as the last name, and the patron goes by the first word as the last name, the patron or staff members will not be able to retrieve that particular book. For example, “Nhat Hanh” should be cataloged as Last name: “Nhat” and First name: “Hanh.”

Cataloging

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All materials in all languages should be fully cataloged to full U.S. MARC standards.
2. Patrons should be able to view information about materials in the vernacular on OPAC, the Internet, and other electronic and print resources.
3. When libraries copy MARC records for Vietnamese books, some library OPAC systems do not have the capability to encode diacritics (accent marks). Therefore, the spelling of an author’s name may be altered, or the title of a book may be misspelled. For example, in Vietnamese, the words “an” and “the” are actually a verb or a name, but the OPAC system can consider them as articles or can ignore them completely. The books with these words at the beginning will not be retrieved. Install appropriate cataloging software to help solve this problem.
4. If a bilingual Asian cataloger is not a possibility, consider contracting with a reputable cataloging service (e.g., OCLC TechPro/Asia Link) for Asian language cataloging requirements.

5. Training community members to assist librarians in cataloging Asian-language materials helps the library provide access and strengthens ties to that Asian-language-speaking group.
6. Work to reduce the turnaround time for cataloging and processing materials, making them available for circulation as soon as possible. Small Asian-language collections may be depleted by regular library users in a short time.

Translations

Oral and written translations should be an integral part of language-focused patron services. As a matter of fact, translation has become a routine library service, especially at libraries serving large numbers of new Asian immigrants with limited or no English skills. Consequently, these patrons often request library staff members to translate English documents they have received from public and government agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Translation requires skill and expertise. Oral translation over the public counter can be performed by any bilingual staff member; however, written translation that requires accuracy and vernacular language skills should be done by a qualified translator. Identify such translators who work in the library and other departments of city or county government and use them to serve library patrons. Compensate them for their language skills used on the job.
2. Jobs involving an extensive amount of translation cannot be done by library staff members due to limited time; therefore, those translation assignments should be referred to local translation businesses. Keep a roster of translation businesses or agencies at the reference desk, especially those offering translation services at little or no charge.

3. Contact the personnel office of the library in order to identify bilingual staff members who may be available for translation. In situations where a bilingual staff member is unavailable for translation, accept the help of patrons skilled in the requested language for simple and easily understood verbal or written transactions.
4. The library can recruit volunteers to help translate for patrons. Times and dates for translation services provided by volunteers should be posted in the library.



Oral and written translations should be an integral part of language-focused patron services.

Materials and Collection Development

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Collection development goals and plans should be based on needs assessment results. The materials budget allocation for Asian-language materials should reflect the documented needs of the community.
2. Create a clearly defined materials selection procedure for Asian-language materials. Nontraditional acquisition sources such as bookstores, overseas vendors, direct purchase, and book buying trips may be required.

“American libraries with multicultural spirit have served all. As a first generation Vietnamese-American artist who must go to the library for references, I am very happy to see that more and more young Vietnamese readers are also coming here.” *Kiêu Chinh, Actress*

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Maintain an adequate and current collection of Asian-language materials. The Asian-language collection should meet the informational and recreational needs of all ages in the community, with a balance of fiction and nonfiction titles for children, teens and adults based on needs assessment. 4. English/Asian language bilingual materials are extremely popular. Make a focused effort to collect them, especially those produced for children who can learn English while enjoying traditional stories. 5. Any Asian-language collection should include a special section of literary works by Asian Americans in English (as well as translations in the Asian language section) plus literary works written in English by major Asian writers. 6. Collection development should be on-going. Keep in mind that some Asian-language materials go out of print rapidly, and there is a brief opportunity to purchase them. 7. It is desirable to build a permanent collection with all materials properly cataloged. Work with technical services to package multi-volume sets of Asian language materials. Work collaboratively with technical services staff members to remove barriers to acquisition and circulation of materials in varying formats and multiple volumes. Increase the durability of materials with appropriate bindings because Asian-language publications are often poorly bound. 8. Balance spending between popular titles and materials that have long-term value. Start with popular, high-demand materials and expand the collection over time into an in-depth collection, including reference materials. 9. Get to know Asian-language vendors and book suppliers and seek out small presses and providers of ethnic materials beyond traditional sources (see Supplemental Materials for vendor lists). | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Asian-language newspapers have a high use rate among Asian-language speakers. Although they can be expensive, daily newspapers and popular magazines in Asian languages can be instrumental in attracting new patrons to the library. Cater to new Asian immigrants by subscribing to one or two magazines at different levels. English-language newspapers and magazines aimed at the Asian Pacific American market are also of interest to Asian-language speakers who are learning English (see Supplemental Materials for the periodicals list in each language). 11. Rely on community input for collection development. Asian-language media, Asian-language bookstores, needs assessment, and staff expertise all share a role in materials selection because there are few analytical/critical/evaluative review sources for Asian-language materials. Patrons can often be excellent sources of information on new Asian-language materials. 12. When the library has no Asian-language speakers on staff, seek assistance from Asian-language bookstores to help the staff develop a list of resources. The library can also organize a committee of Asian-language-speaking patrons to assist in developing a materials list (see Supplemental Materials for vendor lists). Asian American library associations (such as the Korean American Library Association), may maintain lists of resources for starting core collections. 13. Encourage community members to donate new books and other materials in their own languages to the library. Consulates and embassies can also be sources for hard-to-find language materials. |
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Resource Sharing

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As a temporary solution, connect with Asian-language-speaking librarians at other branches or in other library jurisdictions for assistance with collection development and book-buying to start the library's collection. (Consult the list of resource people in the Supplemental Materials.)
2. Resource-sharing might also include standing committees and task forces designed to share experiences, expertise and knowledge about services for Asian-language speakers.
3. Those libraries with CJK (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) terminals, bilingual staff members, and cataloging expertise should be noted for resource-sharing assistance. Also note the type and level of assistance the staff is willing to provide to other libraries.
4. Strive for regional cooperative collection-development planning to avoid duplicating materials already available at other library locations. Libraries can also avoid duplicating Asian-language collections by marketing their holding and collection strengths to other libraries for Interlibrary Loan purposes.
5. No amount of interlibrary borrowing can substitute for an Asian-language collection. Interlibrary borrowing should supplement the collection, not replace it. Interlibrary borrowing is a restrictive and cumbersome process that requires the staff to make a strong commitment to help patrons access the materials they want. Interlibrary Loan staff members should keep collection staff members apprised of requests for Asian-language materials.
6. Keep customers apprised of the Interlibrary Loan service which enables them to borrow materials from other libraries. Patrons should know that many books may be available only by this means, and that there may be a fee involved.

When trying to obtain an item from another library, ask the patron to write down the title requested in the vernacular, and then fax that written information to an Asian-language resource person within the system. This facilitates the translation of the request to the ILL staff.

7. Regularly share invoices or lists of recent acquisitions with other library staffs serving Asian-language speakers. These can alert the staff to recently published and available Asian-language materials.
8. When attempting to locate Asian-language materials, the library staff should use innovative strategies such as searching materials by subject when titles the patron needs are not available.

Marketing and Awareness

The library is an integral part of the community.

Marketing should be a fluid process developed by the library's staff, the community, patrons, and potential users. The community should develop a sense of ownership of the library and become empowered by its strengths and resources. They will then be able

Marketing should be a fluid process developed by the library's staff, the community, patrons, and potential users.

to help the staff make intelligent decisions about services, programming, and promotion of the library.

Public Relations

The library's customers are its best promoters. Satisfied customers refer other customers, expanding the library's customer base. When the library promotes itself, patrons, the community, and elected officials will also promote it. It is essential for the library to expand its marketing to reach the Asian-language-speaking community, promoting its programming and resources to attract new and repeat customers.

“One of my favorite childhood memories is going to the library with my mother. It’s exciting to see so many books written about our experience and history and wonderful to see the library develop services for the Asian American community.”

Wendy Tokuda, News Anchor, KRON-TV, San Francisco

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Keep the library visible in the community by participating in community or citywide activities, including Asian cultural events and celebrations (see Supplemental Materials for lists of holidays and celebrations by culture). Include library programs related to these events in the library’s event calendar , creating increased awareness.
2. Promote Asian-language or cultural programs and services with bilingual fliers distributed where Asian-language speakers gather, such as ethnic restaurants, grocery stores, temples and churches, and community centers.
3. Talk with teachers and students in English-as-a-second-language classes about the library. Provide tours to these classes. Most of these students, especially the older ones, are not aware of libraries or that library services are free.
- 4 Provide space in the library for cultural exhibits of artifacts or folk art and invite the community to open houses to see them. Or , invite artists to display their works at the library, then invite the community and the Asian-language media to the openings. The library can also sponsor children’s art work exhibits and then invite parents to attend the openings.
5. Ideally, fliers and brochures should be designed specifically for Asian-language-reading patrons. Each Asian culture has a different way of developing fliers. No matter how well the materials are translated, fliers designed by and for the English reader do not have the “soul” or “spirit” that cater to the tastes of the Asian-language-speaking patron.

Media Relations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A bilingual interview with the media is one of the best marketing tools available.
2. Asian newspapers, radio and TV are eager for stories about positive American experiences about their audiences. Providing library success stories (how the library helped an Asian patron, including quotes from the patron) to Asian media creates opportunities for the best possible publicity for the library.
3. Asian-language newspapers frequently print bilingual editions, providing an excellent opportunity to reach an audience that reads in a native language or in English.
4. Create media kits on the library in a variety of languages. Media kits usually include one or two media releases, fact sheets, public service announcements (PSAs), and lists of contact people for follow-up or interviews. Be sure to provide the name, affiliation and phone number for each contact person. Media kits for print media can also include black-and-white or color photos of patrons or programming. Include a written photo cut line describing the who, what and where of the photograph.
5. Track publicity by clipping published articles. Newspaper reporters and editors, and television producers and reporters can often tell you when the story will appear. Although some newspapers and TV stations may provide you with a copy of the coverage, others may not.

6. Keep in touch with the media by sharing news-worthy library activities and programs in an on-going manner. It would be a good idea to keep a list of local Asian-language media along with the names of reporters who have written articles about the library so the library staff can contact them about future programs, events or activities.
7. Positive publicity is invaluable and can contribute to the library's long-term goals such as capital campaigns, issues surrounding construction of new buildings, or the passage of a tough bond or tax initiative.
8. Advertise library services and collections on local Asian-language TV and radio stations. Asian-language media often provide free public service announcements and will broadcast information on the library's special programs and services for Asians.

Evaluation

It is important to not only identify needs and develop programs, but also to determine the effectiveness of programs delivered. This provides a library with feedback on the programs delivered and can also influence the development and delivery of future programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Evaluation involves tracking activities and results, reviewing those results, and repeating successful strategies and activities while eliminating unsuccessful ones.
2. Keep logs of circulation data, reference questions answered, Asian-language-speaking patrons served, and other records to track results of library programs and activities that target Asian-language speakers and readers. Even scrapbooks of photos and promotional materials can provide qualitative evaluation.
3. Be diligent in ensuring that results influence future plans and activities.

Technology in Libraries

Having Asian-language capabilities on the Internet can provide access to a wide range of resources for Asian-language speakers, including web sites for Asian-language daily newspapers, social, recreational, educational and political organizations. The software needed to provide these capabilities is relatively inexpensive and effectively makes any personal computer a "CJK" (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) terminal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Be sure to include Asian-language signage around computer stations.
2. Print handouts and fliers in the appropriate Asian languages, explaining how to operate the computer.
3. Ask Asian-language-speaking patrons to volunteer for computer instruction. Approach Asian-language-speaking patrons and offer them instructions on the computer during their visits.
4. Create an Asian-language computer club and provide the library's community room for meetings. Or, recruit Asian-language-speaking teens to help provide computer instruction in the library.
5. Provide a computer with dedicated CJK (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) software for staff to instruct patrons how to use the program to access materials in those languages. For Vietnamese web pages, install Vietnamese fonts so that users can read the pages written in Vietnamese. Vietnamese fonts are available on the Internet.
7. Increase the number of Asian-language computer programs available in the library's computer.

It is important to not only identify needs and develop programs, but also to determine the effectiveness of programs delivered.

8. Provide Internet access and create an on-line resource of helpful information. This can include information from various community agencies and services, including information on immigration, citizenship classes, English-as-a-second-language classes, and a calendar of events.
9. Provide computer classes in different languages and ask the Friends of the Library, community organizations or businesses to cosponsor the events. Publicize computer classes taught at the library by Asian-language speakers.

Services

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Effective library service necessitates providing services or access to services culturally relevant to Asian-language speakers. These can include: English-as-a-second-language classes, citizenship classes, programs on community law, immigration information, voter registration information and forms, pamphlets, attorneys who speak Asian languages or who are familiar with immigration law, and bilingual tax preparation.
2. Provide information and materials for new immigrants' survival in this country – for example, materials on how to find a job, how to prepare a resume, how to fill out a job application, etc.
3. Another aspect of effective service includes providing an inviting, warm and welcoming environment for Asian-language speakers.
4. Provide the services of a copy machine and assistance with deciphering and filling out forms.
5. When possible, policies regarding the issuance of library cards should be improvisational for first-time library users. In many Asian families, family ties are extensive. Close relatives – uncles, aunts, grandparents, even older siblings – may act as guardians for young children when their parents are not available.

Denying a library card to children on their first visits may discourage them from returning. Flexible library policies, which allow relatives to sign a library card application for a child in the parents' absence, will make both the child and the family members accompanying the child feel welcome and eager to return. Staff will still need to explain to the relatives

Authentic cultural performances with Asian performers and celebrations of Asian holidays can provide cross-cultural experiences that appeal to all patrons.

the responsibility of borrowing library materials.

6. Some Asian extended families or groups of families, especially Southeast Asians, may live together in one home or apartment to share housing costs, so they may not have separate utility bills to show proof of residence. Some libraries require patrons to show two pieces of identification with the same address. Many new immigrants do not have enough mail or identification to be issued a library card. Showing trust in them will make a big impression and will encourage them to return.
7. In recent years, some library systems have enforced a fee-based policy for nonresidents. In some communities where there are large populations of new immigrants, the closest library might be the one right next to the border of their city of residence or within walking distance or easy access via public transportation. Those libraries could extend free services to nonresidents whose income is below the poverty line or to students with limited or no income.
8. Some senior citizens living alone in senior apartment complexes are without convenient public transportation or other means of getting to the library. The library can develop a book delivery/pickup system (like Services to Shut-Ins) to bring library books to these customers. The library could use volunteers for delivery and designate a bilingual staff person as the contact person for this service.

“My mother urged all four children in our family to take advantage of our public libraries. The bookmobile was one of my favorite spots because there I found friendly people who took an interest in who I was. I was fortunate to have had them when I was growing up.”

Angela E. Oh, Attorney

9. First-time library users often feel intimidated, especially if they have not had any library experience before arriving in America. A short, person-to-person library tour or orientation could alleviate that situation. The tour could be conducted by a bilingual staff member who could explain policies and procedures, how the materials are arranged, and answer any questions these first-time library users may have. Tours for English-as-a-second-language classes would also be beneficial to new immigrants.
10. Place bilingual fliers and library card applications at popular community places such as churches, language schools, and social service agencies to reach out to people who might otherwise not know about the library.

Programs

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Library programs should be culturally relevant or educational. They are usually most successful when they are designed and implemented with the help of community members. Authentic cultural performances with Asian performers and celebrations of Asian holidays can provide cross-cultural experiences that appeal to all patrons. This is especially true when programming includes a participatory element (see Supplemental Materials for calendars of holidays and celebrations in each Asian culture).
2. Politically astute library staff will research the political climate of the community to be aware of “politically charged” situations before implementing a programming plan. The library’s best approach to political situations is to be ideologically neutral.

3. Whenever possible, pay performers. If the performers wish to donate their fees to the library, then that is a choice they will make. The library should strive to produce Asian programming which is as “professional” as possible.
4. Prepare a mailing list of participants in library activities and programs and use it to increase attendance for the next library program.

Future Implications

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Administrators should seriously consider patron input and staff suggestions, giving staff the flexibility, tools, resources and authority to decide how best to meet patrons’ needs.
2. Administrators should embrace and support the changes necessary to better serve the focused community. One single staff person should not be the sole source of service to the focused community. Effective service to Asian-language speakers requires that the entire library – not just one person – be committed to providing effective library service to all patrons. The staff needs ongoing, pervasive, interaction and contact with the changing community to develop good customer service skills.
3. Administrators should expand and maintain the library’s efforts to serve the focused community, including empowering and trusting the community members.
4. Administrators should have a realistic plan to accomplish all the things necessary for effective service to Asian-language speakers. These include: ongoing needs assessments, mission statements, goals and objectives, accountability, a long-range perspective, and evaluative measures.

5. The administration should prepare and plan library services for the 21st century when 40 per cent of the 11 million Asians in America will reside in California. This also includes preparing the staff by recruiting, hiring, training, mentoring and developing their skills and expertise to meet the information needs of the 21st-century population.
6. Ultimately, the library should strive for a customer-centered, community-oriented library which is an integral and vital part of the community and the community is integral and vital to the library.
7. Providing the most equitable service possible to the entire community while raising the level of library service to the underserved should be done with the goal of generating a wider base of support for the library and its services.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 “Census Facts about Asian Americans” is a product of the U.S. Census Bureau’s Public Information Office (cf. www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/intfile3-1.tx).
- 2 Suzanne Walters, *Customer Service* (New York, Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 1994), p. 1.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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“A nation of readers will be a nation of leaders. Public libraries should not be best-kept secrets. Librarians are very important role models and should be highly visible. If we succeed in instilling in our young people the love of books, perhaps they will not feel the need to reach for guns, alcohol, or drugs.”

Huong Tran Nguyen, 1994 Walt Disney Outstanding Teacher of the Year

“Growing up poor in Stockton, my brothers, sisters and I turned to our neighborhood library as a place to learn and discover experiences and adventures beyond our family’s means. The diversity of patrons reaffirms our libraries as non-judgmental, democratic institutions for all, whether one is poor or well-off, an English learner or native English speaker.”

Henry Der, Deputy Superintendent, External Affairs, California Department of Education