

# Versed

adj. Practiced or skilled; knowledgeable.

BULLETIN OF THE  
OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY,  
AMERICAN LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION

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SPECIAL MIDWINTER MEETING 2005 ISSUE

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Looking for History Through the Streets of San Francisco

Adan Griego

Adan Griego is Curator for Mexican American Collections, Stanford University Libraries.

I live a couple of blocks away from one of the main streets of San Francisco's Mission District, the Latino section of a city known for the local flavor of its many neighborhoods. During my routine walks through the *barrio* several times a week, I pass by four bookstores, a few coffee shops and three art galleries, not to mention several restaurants. At any given time, it is possible to collect flyers for a film festival, a poetry reading, a couple of free bilingual weeklies, or an anti-something demonstration. Collectively, these ephemeral pieces document the vibrant social activity of the *barrio*.

Just a mile away, on the other side of the hill, is the Castro, the city's well-known gay neighborhood. Here too, similar fugitive materials can be seen, in this case very particular to the gay community. It is here that several evenings a week, another piece of Latino history shows up on light poles, bulletin boards, and bus stops: posters announcing a monthly dance. The names of the gatherings have come and gone over the last five to seven years, *Futura*, *Club Papi*, *Pan Dulce*, and more recently, *Revolución*. But the images remain the same: a very sensual, scantily clothed Latin male. The seductive pose on a poster announces a *Cinco de*

*Mayo* dance, a release party for a Latin celebrity's latest album, or just a Labor Day or Halloween party, always adorned with green, white and red, colors of the Mexican flag, while at other times the flags of other Latin American countries appear.

Individually these posters and the supplementary 5" x 7" cards with the same image might not tell much. But collectively they bear witness to both Latino and Gay history. A future researcher may pose these questions: How are the demographics of the Castro changing or merging and why? Why are these Latin images showing up here and not in the Latino sector? Is there similarly distributed information about HIV/AIDS prevention or immigration issues? Why are there no similar posters with African American and Asian American images?

I have been collecting these posters and flyers for the last few years as they supplement our already extensive primary source collections on the Mexican American experience in the United States. At first I thought a more methodical way would be to call the sponsoring agencies and ask to be included on their mailing lists. They must not have been impressed with my glorious title nor the prestigious name of my institution as there was no response to my phone calls or e-mails. So, I have continued with my transgressive way of collecting: removing a poster from a light pole or a bus stop as it appears, usually in the middle of the week, late in the afternoon. In the process, I have learned from my preservation colleagues to remove any residue of tape, even if it means tearing down a corner here or there. As a result the poster looks less perfect, but more authentic.

As the sun sets and the fog rolls in, I can be found many evenings, looking for history through the streets of San Francisco. ♾

**"The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you. They are unique manifestations of the human spirit."**

—Wade Davis

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## About Versed

**Versed**, the official publication of the American Library Association's Office for Diversity, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611, is published 5 times per year online at [www.ala.org/versed](http://www.ala.org/versed) with paper printings available twice yearly at ALA Midwinter Meetings and Annual Conferences.

True to its meaning: practiced, skilled, or knowledgeable; **Versed** will bring together the most progressive practitioners and the best practices in current library-based diversity work.

Please consider submitting an article or editorial; sharing a successful program or initiative; reviewing and recommending diversity-related books and videos of interest to library service (whole bibliographies and videographies are especially welcome); tackling pressing social or professional issues; and publicizing diversity related events or conferences. Visit [www.ala.org/versed](http://www.ala.org/versed) for our submission guidelines and editorial calendar or email inquiries to: [diversity@ala.org](mailto:diversity@ala.org).

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## FROM THE FIELD

# No Time for the Burden: Combining Diversity Activism and Educational Leadership

## An Interview with Ling hwey Jeng

### Aisha Harvey

**Ling hwey Jeng** is Director, Texas Woman's University School of Library and Information Studies. **Aisha Harvey** is a Collection Development Librarian, Duke University.

*In this second interview in a series of conversations between veteran and "new generation" librarians, Ling hwey Jeng, Executive Director of the Asian/Pacific Americans Library Association and one of a handful of ethnic minority library school directors in the country, talks with former Spectrum Scholar Aisha Harvey about her vision for service to diverse communities and her journey to professional leadership.*

**AH:** *Professor Jeng, could you tell me a little bit about how you became interested in Library Science?*

**LJ:** For practical reasons. The most important was that I thought this was a field where I could get a job easier. I like reading, but that wasn't the reason. I kind of like to be with people, but that wasn't the main reason either.

**AH:** *That's interesting because I chose the profession for very practical reasons as well. But you went a lot further than most people. Could you talk to me a little bit about what made you decide to get a PhD?*

**LJ:** That was actually another accident. I finished my master's degree and I was not mobile at that time because my husband then was in a PhD program, and so I had to wait for him to finish his degree. Moving somewhere else was not really an option, so the easiest way seemed to be to continue studying. I did have the chance to work with a faculty member at that time at the University of Texas at Austin, and that seemed to be a logical reason for it. However, the faculty member died from an accident just shortly after I was admitted to the PhD program. Another member joined the faculty, and I

began to work with him, and that was when I really became serious about the PhD program and about really pursuing a career as a faculty member.

**AH:** *Were there many students of color pursuing PhDs in library science in the eighties?*

**LJ:** In the eighties there were some. But my impression was that most students of color pursuing PhDs were actually foreign students. I remember in our program there was an African American woman who finished her PhD a few years ahead of me. Quite a few of us were foreign students.

**AH:** *Do you think that still holds true today twenty years later?*

**LJ:** I have not looked into the statistics closely, but I would say that foreign students are still a large percentage of PhD students in our field.

**AH:** *That's interesting. Could you discuss your decision to become a library school director?*

**LJ:** Oh . . . being a director. Well I've been on the faculty, this is the seventeenth year. I've always been interested in some kind of administrative position, not because of the position itself, but

because I think I have a strong sense of wanting to be able to influence the environment where I work. I had worked for four different institutions by the time I was in Kentucky and it came to the point where I realized that if I want to really make any changes, if I really want to make any difference, I need to be in a position where I can make the system, the structure change and not just someone who provided input. Sometimes when I saw someone doing something, I would ask myself, “Can I do better than that?” and frankly, sometimes I’d think, “I can do better than that.” So part of it is that slight frustration of not being able to do as much, and part of it is the desire to have more direct influence on the environment where I work. So when I saw the opportunity, I grabbed it (laughs).

**AH:** *Did you realize that you would need to advance this far right away? Like in your first institution? Or did it take you a few years to realize that you would really want to be a director to have this sort of influence?*

**LJ:** It was actually pretty early in my teaching career that I knew I wanted to be a leader in a library science program. But it took me a while, because for one thing I needed to build my credentials. For example, you don’t do that as an assistant professor. Even as an associate professor it’s risky because a lot of the changes you want to make you need to be able to make without having to worry that someone else is going to retaliate when your promotion comes up. So when I negotiated with Texas Woman’s [School of Library and Information Studies] for the position, I knew that I had the credentials to be a full professor. I was an associate professor at that time. But I knew I had to be a tenured full professor to do my job and Texas Woman’s Administration recognized that and agreed.

**AH:** *Do you find that most people in your position are as good as you are at negotiating tenure and position in the way that you did?*

**LJ:** I think so, although I have seen a few who act as either the director or chair of the unit without tenure. And I have seen disasters in that kind of situation, but I have also seen people who know how to move around and basically use the position as a way to move up.

**AH:** *As one of only five or so library school directors of color . . . I’d say it fluctuates between three and five and if we’re not careful you could be the only one, I hope not . . . but in that position do you feel any added weight or sense of responsibility attached to your position?*

**LJ:** Not at the moment. Although when I look at the big picture there is always that sense of burden that I need to do well because people are going to look at me as



Ling hwey Jeng

an example of a minority leader. And like it or not, the success or failure that I have will be seen as the success or failure of a minority group. I am not the only. I am not the first Asian American library school director or dean. There were people who came before me so that I could be one of them or I could be better than them or I could be worse than them, I guess. Yes, I do have that awareness. But when it comes to day-to-day operations, when I go into my office, when I run around all day, I don’t have time to think about my burden. I don’t have time to think, “Okay, where am I in this whole history?” Maybe I’ll have time twenty years later and I’ll look back and say, “Yeah, that is what I did.”

**AH:** *Do you feel like perhaps you are a role model for people who want to do what you’re doing?*

**LJ:** Oh yes. I am aware that I am a role model for some people, and maybe more

than “some.” I normally tell people—sometimes a student will tell me that—and I tell the student, “Don’t look at me as someone that you must emulate. Look at me and learn from watching me. Don’t just try to be like me.” A role model is not an image or a person, it’s really a set of skills, expertise, attitudes, what I want people to see in me is what they can learn from me, whether it’s the good part of me or the bad part of me.

**AH:** *It sometimes seems that there is a wedge between LIS education and practice. This wedge is particularly evident in the area of service to diverse populations as many LIS graduates leave school without the cultural competencies necessary to serve increasingly diverse schools, campuses, and neighborhoods. What should LIS programs be doing to prepare students to work in a twenty-first century information environment?*

**LJ:** It’s a tough one because the whole idea of teaching culture has been a difficult one for LIS educators for two reasons. One, most educators do not see themselves as teachers of culture. They see themselves as teachers of specific skills, specific disciplines, areas of knowledge. They don’t really see themselves as the ones who cultivate the mentality, the attitudes of a librarian. And to me that is a very academic way of looking at a profession. When we look at a profession what we really need to recognize is that people who work in this profession must have not only the knowledge and skills of that particular discipline but must be able to hold the profession together with the kind of attitude that would advance our understanding and our empathy and uplift the society. When the society is so diverse, and we only want them to know how to do cataloging, how to do indexing, how to do a reference interview of a generic person, then we lose the cultural context, the social context of our services. The other part of course, is that a lot of library educators are simply not comfortable themselves with the whole idea of cultural competencies. I think in a way we could say, let’s have some programs to expose library educators with diverse cultures and diverse backgrounds. I don’t know how successful that has been. A lot of times it’s about self-awareness. It’s harder to teach from outside. How do we

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**JENG** continued from page 3

get people to think about their own cultural competencies, I think that needs to be done before they can integrate cultural competencies in their curriculum. I don't have a good answer for that yet I am still struggling with this.

**AH:** *Yes, it's sort of like self-awareness is a part of your credential.*

**LJ:** It is self-awareness. It is the work and the most important part of the work is sensitivity. I don't know, and I am generalizing here, that a lot of educators understand how important it is to be sensitive to the cultural context, the diverse cultural contexts, of society.

**AH:** *To change the subject for a minute, you've been pretty active in promoting mentorship. Why is this so important to you?*

**LJ:** We've got to have young people. We have to show them what their potential could bring them. We have to show them that they have better alternatives; they have a much bigger field. The young people must be encouraged anyway they can. It's important to realize that none of us will be here forever and frankly none of us are indispensable. So it is important to keep the flow of human resources and human power coming so that we can ensure that our understanding, what we have learned will continue and will be expanded.

**AH:** *Professor Jeng, what can libraries do to respond to the tremendous growth of the Asian/Pacific Islander community which increased by nearly 60 percent over the last fifteen years? Are there any best practices that you can point to of libraries responding effectively to this community?*

**LJ:** What libraries can do when we look at this population is first recognize that this population is not one voice. This population has so many different languages, so many different colors, so many different voices and so many different cultures. It is not just that we're Asian Americans—there are so many different things meshing together. And that's what librarians encounter; they say, "We have Asian users but we don't know who they are," or sometimes, "We know who they are but we don't know them. No one on our staff speaks their language; we don't know whether they can read. We assume they can read because they're Asian" . . .

there are all kind of assumptions. But in reality Asians are all so different. Take the most recent tragedy in Minnesota, you wonder how two communities with such big, big differences can co-exist in the same area for so long and live completely separately. And when you read the newspaper and people interview the Hmong community leaders, and they interview the majority-population leaders you hear them

*For the chance to weigh in on some of the themes mentioned in this interview please attend the . . .*

### National Dialogue on the Curriculum of Readiness for the 21st Century Librarian

*Co-sponsored by the ALA's Office for Diversity and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the summit will be held Tuesday, June 28, 2005, 8:30 A.M.–3:00 P.M., in conjunction with the 2005 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago.*

This summit brings together leaders, practitioners, educators, and advocates in Library and Information Science representing a variety of library types and settings. During this one-day program participants will engage in structured and open discussion of needed reform in and enhancements to current LIS education and pedagogy with special attention paid to the recruitment and education of students from underrepresented backgrounds. Breakout sessions will be organized around selected topics of concern. As an end product of the summit, participants will generate a set of formal recommendations that shall be incorporated in a published report to be disseminated in the profession in print and online.

Program consultants José Aponte and Dr. Ethelene Whitmire, ALA Office for Diversity staff, and members of the Spectrum Advisory Committee, will facilitate the summit. The Office for Diversity welcomes your input during this important dialogue. Please RSVP to Tracie Hall at thall@ala.org or 1-800-545-2433, ext 5020.

talking about two different things. The voices coming from the Hmong community are voices of isolation. They don't feel respected, they don't feel they are tolerated. But when you hear the white majority population leaders they are completely unaware of anything going on. The sen-

tence that kept coming up is, "We're not aware of any complaints . . . we're not aware of any problems." And I say, where is the gap here? And how do libraries serve the Asian communities better. The first thing is we have to have library workers inside the communities as part of the communities. If not we will be sitting outside saying, "There is no problem." So the thing that libraries could do to serve the community better is to include the community in the library by having some of the staff come from that community, the language must come from the community, otherwise we are not integrating them. They are still left out. We could have programs set up, but those programs are still separated, isolated programs. They are not an integral part of the library program.

**AH:** *They're "special" or additional.*

**LJ:** Yes, they're "special." It's like every time you see a user of color, the user always belongs to special [group] or to the outreach office. The user never comes to the regular reference desk or if the user comes to the regular reference desk the user is referred to the outreach office.

**AH:** *I think even the term "outreach" says that this group isn't a part of this library, that we have to go outside of ourselves.*

**LJ:** Absolutely and that's where we need to work the hardest. How do we integrate the culture of the people and their language into the core function of the library?

**AH:** *I've got one more question. What advice would you give to new librarians who want to maintain your level of enthusiasm and expertise as they progress in the field?*

**LJ:** There are several important things. One of course is to be a good librarian. And being a good librarian means we learn the knowledge and skills of our field very well. Being a good librarian also means we establish our own value systems, that we recognize the value systems of this profession, and really understand what's important about this profession. And we must be active in what we do. Take a proactive role in participating in all kinds of social, cultural, and professional activities. We can't just say, "I am going to sit at my desk and do the best I can at my desk." We have to be a central part of the community. Being a librarian means we have to know our communities. ♣

# Mark Your Calendar!

June 23–29, 2005

## ALA Annual Conference

### Office for Diversity Programs

June 24

#### **Many Voices, One Nation: An Evening of Sharing and Celebration of Our Lives and Stories**

ALA rocks the Windy City on this special evening to celebrate the diversity and creativity that enrich our nation. This enthralling display of talent and imagination by writers from across the land will weave a tapestry of spoken word eloquently expressing the myriad experiences from our varied ethnic, cultural, and lifestyle traditions and our fundamental unity within the global human family. This cultural convocation promises to be an unforgettable way to kick off the conference.

June 25

#### **The "R" Words: Race/Ethnicity, Recruitment, and Retention in Library and Information Services**

Diversity in the profession is of critical concern. Data collected over the last decade indicates that only one in ten librarians is from a racial/ethnic minority background. This reality fails to reflect the 152 percent growth in the nation's minority populations during the same period. Evidence of higher attrition among minorities in the profession is of further concern.

#### **Out of the Margins: GLBT Librarians, Libraries, and Literary Activism**

From activism in the profession, to the creation of specialized libraries and archives that document and celebrate GLBT life and history and the production of creative literature that resist boundaries, these individuals are ensuring that Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer existence is neither relegated to the margins nor hidden on the shelves.

#### **Charting Courses: Excellence in Diversity Research 2005**

2004 Diversity Research Grants Recipients share findings: Jane Karp discusses the development of a comprehensive bedside laptop computer course serving institutionalized older adults; Elizabeth L. Marcoux researches aspects of tribal children's literature that may contribute to its use as a communication mechanism for cultural dissemination of tribal interests; and Kyung-Sun Kim analyzes minority recruitment and retention in LIS schools. These award-winning researchers will be joined by the 2005 Achievement in Diversity Research honoree.

#### **Residencies—Not Just for Doctors!**

Participants in post-graduate academic, public, and minority library residency programs examine their experiences. If you are implementing a residency in your library or want to ensure your current residency's continuing excellence and growth, this is the program for you. Also a must-see for recent and soon-

to-be graduates looking to expand their opportunities. Sponsored by the Spectrum Scholar Interest Group.

June 26

#### **"Able"-minded: Disability Rights in Library Hiring and User Services**

Panelists will discuss accessibility issues for academic and public libraries. Learn about: an accessibility planning process through which librarians and user communities ensure that facilities and services comply with relevant laws; collaborating with a campus disability services office and managing an assistive technology center; implementing and providing public library services to people with disabilities; and, the experiences of professionals with a disability.

#### **Don't Move Out, Move Up!**

Strategies for underrepresented librarians to move up the ladder, not out the door.

#### **How Do I Know It's Discrimination?: Recognizing and Resolving Discriminatory Employment Practices in Libraries**

As charges of discrimination become more and more frequent in libraries it becomes increasingly important that human resources personnel, managers, supervisors, and individual library workers are able to identify and reconcile unlawful practices and disparate treatment in the workplace before they require third-party resolution or formal litigation. This program will look at civil rights and equal employment protections and guidelines for making and handling discrimination challenges.

June 27

#### **Flavors of Chicago: A Multi-Cultural, Multi-Sensory Tour of the Windy City**

*Ticketed event, register in advance*

From Oprah to Deep Dish, Chicago has it all. Don't miss this tour of the "city of neighborhoods" that engages all five of your senses. Participants will see and touch cultural landmarks and ethnic museums; hear the unique sounds and stories that make this city rich; and smell and taste cuisines representing Chicago's amazing diversity. From north to west to south side, this bus excursion with brief walking and munching interludes will leave no stone unturned.

#### **Diversity in Libraries Around the World: Perspectives and Practices from International Library Associations**

As global population and migration trends shift, diversity in the library workforce and in services to users has become an international priority. During this program, representatives from various international library associations look at the past, present, and future of diversity as library policy and practice.

**Visit [www.ala.org/diversity](http://www.ala.org/diversity) for full program descriptions and a listing of Office for Diversity meetings. Contact: [diversity@ala.org](mailto:diversity@ala.org), 1-800-545-2433, ext. 5048.**

## FROM THE FIELD

# RBMS Reaches Out to Librarians of Color

**Julie Grob**

Julie Grob is Chair of the RBMS Diversity Action Plan Task Force and Special Collections Librarian, University of Houston.

The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries is on a mission. The section is working to change its image of exclusivity, reach out to librarians and students of color, and encourage a more diverse array of librarians and students to join RBMS. The task before the section, which had a 96 percent white membership in 1997, is challenging, and change won't come overnight. But by adopting a Diversity Action Plan in 2003 and working diligently to implement its recommendations, RBMS has begun to create a more welcoming environment for special collections librarians of color.

RBMS formed a Task Force on Diversity in 2002 to create a Diversity Action Plan for the section. The task force designed the action plan to be practical and achievable, focusing more on basic steps that the section needed to take to encourage diversity than on grand visions for the future. The task force brainstormed and came up with a wide variety of ideas, then reality checked those ideas and narrowed them down to a manageable number. The result was a set of strategic actions that would be relatively easy for the section to achieve, but could have a significant impact on increasing diversity in the section.

The RBMS Diversity Action Plan was structured around five goals:

- To encourage librarians of various backgrounds, particularly underrepresented ethnic and racial groups, to join RBMS
- To promote Special Collections librarianship as a career to members

of underrepresented ethnic and racial groups

- To liaise and pursue initiatives with other groups that focus on diversity or diverse collections
- To encourage Special Collections to collect materials from diverse communities
- To promote diversity as a value to RBMS members

The action plan recommended fifteen actions for achieving these goals, including:

- offering scholarships for the RBMS Preconference to librarians and library school students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups
- creating a mentoring program for new members
- revising the section's brochure and Web site to incorporate diversity
- pursuing initiatives with the ALA Office for Diversity, and
- holding conference programs on issues related to culturally diverse collections.

The Diversity Action Plan was approved by the RBMS Executive Committee at the 2003 ALA Annual Conference. A new task force, the Diversity Action Implementation Task Force, was formed to oversee the implementation of the strategic actions. Over the past two years, committees throughout the section have been undertaking activities to encourage diversity, with exciting results.

RBMS awarded five of its scholarships for the 2004 Preconference held at Yale to minority applicants (two scholarships have been set aside specifically for minor-

ity librarians and library school students). RBMS and the ALA Office for Diversity sent out a letter to 120 ethnic studies programs at colleges and universities, encouraging students to consider special collections librarianship as a career. A mentoring program is set to launch that will pair experienced RBMS members with new members for a year-long commitment. The section held a well-attended program at the 2004 ALA Annual Conference in Orlando on "Documenting Cultural Communities in Florida." And the article "RBMS, Special Collections, and the Challenge of Diversity: The Road to the Diversity Action Plan" was published in the section's journal *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*.

Future plans for the section include holding presentations about special collections librarianship at institutions with heavy minority enrollment in cities where ALA meetings are held. In addition to recruiting special collections librarians from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups into the section today, RBMS is committed to encouraging a more diverse group of young people to become special collections librarians for the future. 

## Diversity Conferences in 2005

March 17–19, 2005

### Unleashing the Power: 2005 National Conference on Leadership Diversity

Rosen Centre Hotel, Orlando, Florida  
FMI visit: [www.diversity.ucf.edu/programs/national\\_conference/2005\\_National\\_Conference\\_Web/index.htm](http://www.diversity.ucf.edu/programs/national_conference/2005_National_Conference_Web/index.htm)

August 10–12, 2005

### The Multicultural Library: Staff Competence for Success Conference

Stockholm, Sweden

Satellite conference to the 71st IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Oslo, Norway. FMI visit: [www.ifla-stockholm2005.se](http://www.ifla-stockholm2005.se)

## FROM THE FIELD

## *“Bringing the Mountain”*

### *Improving Multilingual Interlibrary Loan Services for Non-English Reading Inmates of Correctional Facilities in New York State*

**Fred J. Gitner and Younshin Kim,  
with the assistance of Ying Shieh**

Fred J. Gitner is Coordinator, Younshin Kim is Assistant Coordinator, and Ying Shieh is Collection Development Librarian for the New Americans Program at Queens Library in Jamaica, NY.

“Bringing the Mountain” is a collaborative project between the Queens (NY) Library and the Library Services Division of the New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) that was successfully developed and implemented over the past year with Federal LSTA funding, awarded to the New York State Library. The purpose of this project is to provide library materials to inmates who do not read English or Spanish and are under custody at Department of Correctional Services facilities throughout New York State and to improve DOCS librarians’ ability to serve its rapidly growing foreign-born inmate populations.

As of December 31, 2002 there were 8,320 foreign-born inmates under custody of the NYS Department of Correctional Services. These inmates come from 123 countries throughout the world and represent approximately 12 percent of the total inmate population. 27 percent come from countries where English is the predominant language and 57 percent from countries where Spanish is the predominant language. DOCS librarians, through facility collections and interlibrary loans from their public library systems, are generally able to meet the needs of English- and Spanish-speaking inmates. It is the remaining 16 percent of foreign-born inmates, more than 1,300 inmates who speak other languages, many with limited English-language skills, who had little if any access to library materials in their own language.

This is where Queens Library comes into play. Queens Library, serving the most ethnically diverse population in the

United States, purchases materials in more than seventy languages, and its New Americans Program has been offering international language materials to immigrants for more than twenty-five years. Although QL’s ILL division has filled requests for these materials on an ad-hoc basis in the past, there was no systematic statewide means of serving this multilingual inmate population, about 10 percent of whom, comes from Queens. Queens Library recognized the need and with funding in hand, stepped up to the plate.

With the LSTA grant, Queens Library purchased 1,035 copies of books in the seven languages identified as most commonly spoken by these inmates: Chinese, Haitian Creole, Russian, Italian, Arabic, Korean and French to be made available for sixty-day loan as rotating collections to correctional facilities statewide. To aid in selection, DOCS librarians trained QL staff on Corrections Media Review (the screening of all incoming material by corrections staff, including what subjects to avoid, such as instruction in martial arts, origami—since folded paper can easily hide drugs, and any maps of NYS), security requirements, and reader needs. We purchased books for learning English, popular fiction in the original and in translation, self-help and popular psychology, religion, love poetry, biography, history, and more. Title information for each book purchased was translated into English to ensure that books would more likely pass Media Review, and a general subject category was assigned as well. Book preparation included placing a spe-

cial bookplate, with this information in English, inside the front cover of each book to assist Media Review and DOCS librarians in identifying materials, even if they don’t read the language in which the book is written. In addition, a special wrap-around book band was developed to identify books that are part of the project, and to facilitate delivery to the DOCS library and return to Queens Library. In turn, QL librarians provided multicultural training and guidance on collection development to DOCS librarians through workshops presented at the Department of Corrections training facility in Albany. Additionally, an attractive multilingual promotional poster, saying “Use your library— Read!” in the seven target languages, plus English and Spanish, was developed by QL and distributed to correctional facilities statewide for promotion of this new program for inmates.

As a result of these efforts, we expect inmates to be aware that books in languages other than English are available to them through facility libraries and that DOCS librarians are able to request international language materials for them through ILL. Inmates who speak languages other than English will have a conduit for improving literacy in their own language and/or in English, which, hopefully, will aid in their rehabilitation and economic viability when they return to the community. In addition, as a result of this project, DOCS librarians will be aware of cultural differences and better able to serve a multicultural, non-English speaking inmate population; they will understand issues in international language collection development and be able to locate and order materials in various languages including Spanish; and know how to request international language materials (excluding Spanish) through Queens Library. QL librarians will gain a deeper understanding of inmate interests and needs in order to better serve this population.

Assessing the success of this project will involve QL’s ILL Unit tracking the number of requests filled by facility and language and observing the increase in the number of Correctional Facilities requesting international language

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# Connecting People and Building Community at Ocean County Library

**Valerie Bell**

Valerie Bell is Supervising Librarian, Ocean County Library System.

“The Ocean County Library is a truly multicultural institution. We respect, honor, and celebrate individual and cultural differences. Our collections, programming, outreach, policies and personnel practices reflect this commitment. We are inclusive and understanding of our coworkers and of the communities we serve, and we seek out others to join us on this journey.”

That is the diversity mission statement for our library system. To facilitate this mission, we have formed a diversity committee. The committee is made up of full-time staff from every level of the organization. This committee meets on a monthly basis. Among their other duties, they set the diversity outreach agenda for the year.

The Ocean County Library has three outreach initiatives currently in place. *¡Libros Y Mas Para Todas!*—Outreach to our Hispanic and Latino community; Good for the Soul—Outreach to our African American and Black community; and Insight Out—Outreach to our Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender community.

Ours is a holistic approach to library service, assuring a welcoming environment and authentic inclusion.

Each of our outreach initiatives requires a minimum two-year highly focused commitment on our part. During the first year, we focus on developing authentic community partners from each of the traditionally underserved populations. Simultaneously during the first year, we work with our staff to increase cultural awareness and service to the

population. We also research programs, material vendors, and begin collection development. During the second year, we roll out the project to our public through programs and new revitalized collections.

## *Developing Community Partnerships (Ask!):*

To develop partnerships in our community we research both formal and informal groups of people. We try to uncover where the target community gathers to socialize and to worship, who are and where are the organized agencies that provide services for the target community. We set meetings as often as possible with these groups or group representatives and ask questions about their culture, their needs, their entertainment preferences, what they feel a welcoming environment is, and how we can achieve that environment in the library. We continually involve these groups in each planning phase of the initiative.

## *Developing Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Among the Staff (Communicate!):*

Each focus is announced to the staff at the start of the year. On a daily basis, cultural awareness seminars are provided for staff to learn more about the target community. Often guest speakers are invited to the library to share personal or profes-

sional experience as a member of the group or to work with the group. We have also conducted staff book discussions and film discussions; an expert on the topic has usually facilitated these discussions. The staff is invited and encouraged to attend at least one of these seminars, however attendance is strictly voluntary. Attendees are encouraged to ask honest questions with the intent to achieve greater understanding and to debunk myths and stereotypes. Supervisors across the library system are counseled to schedule accordingly so that as many staff who wish to attend will be able to attend these cultural awareness seminars.

## *Developing an Outstanding Collection of Materials and Programs (Go!):*

To meet the needs of our traditionally underserved populations, and to develop an outstanding collection of materials, we created an alternative process to uncover vendors, jobbers, and small press publishers that specialize in serving the target community. Our research took us to the Guadalajara book fair, the Harlem Book fair, to specialized bookstores, and to publishing houses in New York and Philadelphia.

To find outstanding programs, we clipped and read the newspapers and visited various Web sites. As often as possible, we would send staff to concerts, plays, and one-man shows to evaluate the program for suitability in a library setting. When we are invited to community group social activities, we always attend and accept and encourage their suggestions for entertainment.

## *The Splash—Roll Out to the Community*

During the second year of the initiative, we plan a big splashy event to highlight the new collections, programs, services and the library's commitment to serving the target community.

For *¡Libros Y Mas para Todas!*—our outreach initiative to the Hispanic and Latino community—we partnered with three community groups serving the Latino population to plan and present a half-day *Fiesta*. Complete with band,

dancing, food, informational resources, Bi-lingual story hours, *piñata*, and bi-lingual tours of the library.

For *Good For the Soul*—our outreach initiative to the African American and Black Community—we held a series of book and film discussions. The series culminated in a lecture by best-selling author Gloria Naylor. We also consigned a local African American artist to paint the advertisement poster used to promote the initiative.

For *Insight Out*—our outreach initiative to the GLBT community—we held cultural awareness seminars in the form of book and film discussions for the public. This series culminated in a lecture by gay rights activist Judy Shepard.

Our holistic approach to programming, outreach, collection development, and staff training has been successful in connecting us with our diverse communities and connecting our diverse communities with all that the public library can offer to them. The public response to each of our major activities has been enthusiastic to say the least. ♾

#### BRINGING THE MOUNTAIN

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materials. The increase in the number of requests for books in the seven target languages will also be monitored. Results for the first nine months of the project demonstrate that compared with the past year, prior to the project, more facilities are requesting books, that the majority of requests come from the target languages and that more titles per request are being sent out to meet increased demand. Since Mohammed could not come to the mountain, we are very pleased that this project is bringing the mountain to Mohammed.

For further information, please contact: **Fred Gitner**, Coordinator, New Americans Program, Queens Library, Jamaica, NY; e-mail: fred.j.gitner@queenslibrary.org; **Maureen O'Connor**, Director, Programs and Services Department, Queens Library; e-mail: maureen.t.o'connor@queenslibrary.org; or **Jean C. Botta**, Department of Correctional Services Supervising Librarian, Albany, NY; e-mail: jcbotta@docs.state.ny.us. ♾

#### DIVERSITY TOOLCHEST

## Multicultural Awards for Young Readers

### A Brief History

#### Sherry York

**Sherry York** is a retired school librarian and author of three books on multicultural literature including: *Picture Books by Latino Writers: A Guide for Librarians, Teachers, Parents, and Students* (Linworth 2002); and *Children's and Young Adult Literature by Native Americans: A Guide for Librarians, Teachers, Parents, and Students* (Linworth 2003). Forthcoming from Linworth Publishing in 2005 is York's directory of ethnic book awards.

While we librarians in the United States usually profess a pride in the multicultural aspects of our country, a close look at the field of children's and young adult literature reveals the regrettable fact that the vast majority of the books published for young readers each year in this country are not by ethnically or racially diverse authors. Thus, many children have not had access to books that are true representations of any culture other than that of the predominant, mainstream, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, middle class.

Many readers have grown to adulthood without having read a single book that positively depicted people like themselves. Conversely, readers of Euro-American origin have come to expect children's and young adult literature to contain characters like themselves. Again and again, at library conferences and in biographical accounts, multicultural authors have lamented this sad fact, saying, "As a child, I never read anything that reflected my culture."

Two results of the scarcity of quality literature by multicultural authors have been that young ethnic readers have been made to perceive themselves as outsiders and other young readers have not had the opportunity to read and learn about diverse cultures through authentic, high-quality literature. To remedy this situation, librarians, writers, and publishers have created, nourished, and supported a small but growing number of book awards based on ethnicity.

Since 1968 nine book awards that recognize and celebrate diversity have come into existence. These awards include in order of date established:

The **Sydney Taylor Book Award** established in 1968 in honor of Sydney Taylor, author of the All-of-a-Kind Family, a series of books (1951–1978) about an Orthodox Jewish family. ([www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org)).

The **Coretta Scott King Award** began in 1970 to commemorate the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. and to honor his widow. ([www.ala.org/ala/srrt/corettascottking/abouttheaward](http://www.ala.org/ala/srrt/corettascottking/abouttheaward)).

In 1973 the National Council for the Social Studies began presenting the **Carter G. Woodson Award**, which honors the memory of an African American educator and historian. ([www.socialstudies.org/awards/writing](http://www.socialstudies.org/awards/writing)).

In 1986 the **Ezra Jack Keats Award** began honoring new writers and illustrators. ([www.ezra-jack-keats.org/programs/nyplawards.htm](http://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/programs/nyplawards.htm)).

The **Américas Award**, sponsored by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, began in 1993. ([www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/america.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/america.html)).

The **Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Literature Award**, in honor of an educator and writer from Texas, was established in

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1995. ([www.schooledu.swt.edu/subpages/tomasrivera/](http://www.schooledu.swt.edu/subpages/tomasrivera/))

Also in 1995, as part of the Coretta Scott King Awards, the **John Steptoe Award** began to recognize new talent in writing and illustration. ([www.ala.org/ala/emiert/corettascottkingbookawards/winners/newtalentaward/newtalentaward.htm](http://www.ala.org/ala/emiert/corettascottkingbookawards/winners/newtalentaward/newtalentaward.htm).)

In 1996 the **Pura Belpré Award** was created in honor of the first Latina librarian at the New York Public Library. ([www.ala.org/ala/alsc/awardsscholarships/literaryawds/belpremedal/belpremedal.htm](http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/awardsscholarships/literaryawds/belpremedal/belpremedal.htm).)

Finally, the first decade of the twenty-first century saw the establishment of the **Asian Pacific American Award for Literature**, sponsored by the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association.

This award was presented in 2001 and in 2004. ([www.apalaweb.org/awards/awards.htm](http://www.apalaweb.org/awards/awards.htm))

These nine awards recognize and celebrate achievement in the portrayal of diverse cultural groups in literature for young readers. Collectively, these awards recognize excellence in books that present African American, Asian American, Caribbean, Jewish, Latino, and other ethnic characters and cultures in a positive, upbeat manner.

Librarians have played a key role in the development of many of these ethnic book awards. Two school librarians were responsible for starting the Coretta Scott King Awards. The Association of Jewish Libraries administers the Sydney Taylor Awards. The Asian/Pacific American Library Association is responsible for the Asian Pacific American Award. The Coretta Scott King Task Force, associated with the American Library Association,

administers the Coretta Scott King Awards and the John Steptoe Awards for New Talent. The Pura Belpré award is sponsored by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. The New York Public Library works with the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation to administer the Ezra Jack Keats New Writer and New Illustrator Awards for Children's Books. The Américas Award winners are presented at a ceremony at the Library of Congress.

Conscientious librarians who wish to provide positive reading experiences and recognition of the wealth of contributions of all the cultural groups of our multicultural country will do well to learn more about these awards and the excellent books, authors, illustrators, and publishers they recognize. 

## Club de Cuentos

### An Early Childhood Literacy Program

**Heather Moulaison, Janice Hendrix, and Brenda Watts**

**Heather Moulaison** is Cataloging Librarian; **Janice Hendrix** is Early Childhood and Family Development Instructor; and **Brenda Watts** is a Spanish professor at Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield.

How does a library at a university with a mandate in public affairs connect with an increasingly diverse community? Librarians and faculty at Southwest Missouri State University run *Club de Cuentos*, an early literacy program benefiting both Latino preschoolers and university student volunteers.

#### The Club de Cuentos Program

*Club de Cuentos* began in 2000 as a means of responding to the basic literacy needs

of the Latino community while offering students at Southwest Missouri State University an opportunity to have direct contact with diverse groups. The pre-literacy program has evolved into weekly sessions that take place in a church classroom while parents and older siblings attend Spanish-language church services. It offers children a welcoming place to come and read with a volunteer where everyone benefits from the exchange: the children begin on the path toward literacy, and the university students have meaningful contact with diverse groups while serving their community.

#### Current Practices

*Club de Cuentos* is staffed exclusively by volunteers. Faculty in Library Science, Spanish, Anthropology, and the Early Childhood and Family Development program manage the scheduling and direction. Student volunteers assist with planning and carrying out sessions. As a way of providing continuity, volunteers participate in at least two *Club de Cuentos* sessions per month during the academic year.

Sessions last for an hour. Volunteers read with the children either in English or Spanish for the first half. Pictures of objects are pointed out, words are repeated or left off a sentence from a repetitive book, and wonderful picture books are enjoyed by all. Books are then gathered up, and a snack is distributed. During this time, one of the volunteers models the "process art" craft project for the day. Children complete the craft in the remaining time, and are accompanied back to church by volunteers.

Over the course of the program, faculty sponsors and university student volunteers have received funding and supplies

## DIVERSITY TOOLCHEST

for the program. “Give-away” books to give to the children at the end of the sessions have been one of the biggest priorities. Some grant monies have also gone toward a permanent collection of quality hard-back books, flannel board stories, and props along with locked cabinets that we keep on-site.

## Benefits to Latino Children in the Program

Children participate at the developmental level they are in, based on age and previous experience. Children come with a variety of backgrounds in receptive and productive language. The younger children usually have little English ability, depending on their integration into pre-school programs. Older children usually have more English skills, based on their attendance in primary schools. The goal is to support the child where he or she is, reading in Spanish or English. Our assumption is that literacy activities in Spanish and English will be of benefit to all language learners in this setting. Research shows that second language learners do best when they maintain their home languages as they learn a second language, and will then do better in school later on (Collier 1987).

Modeling is done in a positive way so that children become aware of the adult's enjoyment of books as well. Volunteers engage the children in conversation. We often hear the college students say, “This used to be my favorite book!” Value is given to books as the children are allowed to decide at the end of the sessions which book they will choose to keep as their own.

Families strongly support the program and report that their children are becoming more successful readers, one even making the “Readers Who Have Achieved” list in his second-grade class after two years of participation in the program (Walker and Jones, 2004). Children appear very proud as they carry their books and craft back into the church service at the end of the hour. Oftentimes the congregation will clap for them, showing their support. Helping to meet the language needs of these children is an honorable goal that we participate in with the

parents. Everyone benefits from the support offered on all sides (NAEYC 1996).

### New Resource for Library Service to South Asian Children

*Kahani* is a Hindi word that means “story.” And today, *Kahani* magazine is just that: a place where the stories of South Asian children living in America are told. The magazine features a vibrant mix of stories, activities, reviews and articles that empower, educate and entertain the readers. *Kahani* even includes an original cartoon strip that follows the wild antics of Rohit and his sidekick baby sister Priyanka.

Every single word, every single brush stroke is original to the magazine. With the short stories, written by published, as well as upcoming South Asian writers, *Kahani* lets South Asian kids be the ‘cool’ kids for a change. Written through the perspective of a South Asian child growing up in America, *Kahani* is truly multicultural, yet one of a kind. Every story and every article is accompanied by original artwork from talented South Asian illustrators.

For more information visit:  
<http://kahani.com>

## Benefits to Volunteers

Southwest Missouri State University is a public affairs institution and actively encourages student volunteerism. The university is located in a region that has historically lacked ethnic diversity. *Club de Cuentos* volunteers have the opportunity to interact meaningfully with members of the Latino community on a regular basis, giving breadth and depth to their understanding of diverse cultures and groups.

While all of the volunteers find the experience rewarding, student volunteers who study Spanish also gain new confidence in their ability to communicate within the target language and develop a better understanding of their own linguistic strengths and weaknesses. Volunteers majoring in Spanish to become Spanish

teachers report that working with the Latino children has increased their desire both to teach Spanish and to share similar activities with their own students in the future. Upon graduation, former volunteers have expressed their regret at leaving the *Club de Cuentos* and their intention to continue volunteering in the Latino community.

An early literacy program such as the *Club de Cuentos* that serves diverse groups is rewarding on many levels. Both librarians and faculty coordinators at SMSU are pleased at the benefits afforded to student volunteers and to Latino children and are encouraged by the overall success of the program. ♣

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**“Communicating effectively with those with whom we have fundamental disagreements is more difficult but often more important than communicating with those we like.”**

—Roger Fish

# Beyond Diversity

## Working Together for Change in the Library

**Judy Evans and Alanna Aiko Moore**

**Alanna Aiko Moore** is a Student at the School of Library and Information Science, Dominican University and **Judy K. Evans** is a Student at the Palmer School of Library and Information Science, Long Island University. Both are 2003 Spectrum Scholars.

At the end of this year, we will graduate and officially become new librarians. We are part of a growing number of librarians of color who are now entering the profession thanks to diversity programs like ALA's Spectrum Initiative. Like us, many librarians of color share a commitment to public service, and hope to set an example that will encourage more people of color to respect and choose a career in library science.

Our experiences in school and at professional conferences, however, have dampened our initial idealistic views of the library field. Despite efforts to recruit librarians of color to the field, we have not always found that our ideas or our faces are welcome. The recent increase in library science students and librarians of color is a step in the right direction, but the profession still has a long way to go before it reflects the communities that it serves. More often than not, we are the only person of color in the room, in a library science class, or on staff. Everyday, we deal with isolation, tokenism, and racism.

As librarians of color, we have been told repeatedly (at an ALA Annual Conference no less!) that we should not "rock the boat," and that we should not be "hung up" on issues of race. We have heard that activist librarians have no place in the field, and we should concentrate instead on faultless professional behavior. While we have no argument

with becoming good, even great, librarians, and believe in upholding professional standards, this admonishment to keep quiet and do a good job reminds us of the old argument that women, or people of color, must work twice as hard and produce twice as much to prove that they are equal to men or white colleagues.

We have also heard from other librarians of color who have taken steps to spark change in their own institutions. These librarians, our future colleagues, sometimes met with resistance or indifference, but they all pinpointed the best way to work within their institutions to start a dialogue on diversity. Listening to stories from those who have successfully raised issues of racism and discrimination in their libraries and who have implemented plans to address these issues, inspired us and made us realize that change is possible. Therefore, we were shocked when we were told that we cannot change libraries, and that we should not even try.

We're certainly not alone in feeling somewhat disillusioned with our new profession. A recent *Ex Libris* article "The Right Hand Knoweth Not . . ." points out that librarians new to the field are meeting great resistance from a librarian old guard that does not want to change how things have always been done. This, combined with the discouraging news from *Library Journal's* 2003 salary survey, which states that starting salaries for new librarians, and minority librarians in par-

ticular, are falling, seems to us further proof that activism in partnership with other librarians is exactly what the profession needs.

We feel that for the field to change, librarians everywhere need to look beyond infusing the field with a little "color," and start working together for real progress. However, changing the field of librarianship is not something librarians of color can do alone. Nor should we be solely responsible for raising issues of race and diversity in the workplace or educating others on race issues. Ending racism and oppression should be the responsibility of everyone in the workplace. If there is a diversity committee in a library, do not automatically assign the librarian of color to it, or assume that we want to sit on a committee—issues of race, mistrust, and injustice negatively affect all of us, not just people of color. It is about standing up for justice for everyone, since inequities and prejudice affect us all.

Changing the libraries we work in, and connecting to the communities we serve, is about more than making us feel welcome. Increasing the numbers of librarians of color is not enough. Librarians need deeper cultural and racial understanding, and we need to respect various styles of leadership and communication. We need to move past stereotyping and the idea of a "colorblind" world; rather than ignoring racial and cultural differences, we all need to acknowledge them and recognize them as legitimate. We need to have real dialogue with one another and create concrete solutions. Working for systemic change is never easy and requires us all to work together. It can be uncomfortable and challenging but by acknowledging different backgrounds and experiences we can transform the profession. Only then will librarianship's commitment to diversity and public service be fulfilled. ♣

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