

Serving Diverse Users

Cultural Competencies for Health Science Librarians

MLA 2006 – Phoenix, AZ

Cultural Immersions Café: Roundtable Discussions #3

Scenario: Three

Glendale, Arizona, is the fourth largest city in Arizona. West of Phoenix, it is part of Greater Phoenix, which experienced a 35% change in population within the last decade to have become the sixth largest metropolis in the nation. Glendale has one of the highest concentrations of Hispanic population in the nation - 25% citywide compared to the national average of 14%, reaching a high of 63% in its downtown area. Many of these people do not speak English or know just enough to get by. To these, the extensive library health collection in English is of little benefit. They cannot take advantage of the increasingly available online health information in Spanish for lack of computer skills. Neither can they benefit from the in-English only library health programs that are gaining popularity. Meanwhile, the librarian has read about national surveys of health concerns regarding Hispanics and the difficulties health professionals have encountered in reaching this population - among them the fear of established institutions including the library. How can the library serve this huge segment of the population that seems to be out of the loop?

Identify the barriers to the access of health information:

- Language
- Culture
- Economics
- Transportation
- Child care
- Literacy
 - Computer skills
- Education – reading, language abilities
- Limited Resources for infrastructure
 - Staffing – bilingual, bicultural
 - Collection in Spanish
 - Computer training workshops in Spanish

How to reach the constituency to promote programs and services:

- Community groups that service Hispanic, limited English population
- Churches
- Schools
- Day Care Centers
- Social Services agencies
- Community Health Centers
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Clubs and Organizations – LULAC, Sports teams
- Word of Mouth
- Media (Spanish language)
- Diversity groups
- REFORMA – Library Association for Services for Spanish-speaking customers

What information should be provided:

- Ask them
- Distribute packets of information on Hispanic health related issues – Diabetes, Cancer, Obesity
- Information on social services, jobs, legal services etc.

Where should information be provided:

- Schools
- Public libraries
- Computer in community center points

Who should provide the information:

- Library staff; Expand Spanish language collection and resources
- Health providers
- Children of limited English adults
- Social services agencies

Submitted by Annabelle Nuñez