ADDRESSING MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Certain management issues will have a significant impact on your collection development efforts, and the way in which your library system handles them is important. In some cases they involve a challenge to traditional collection development practice of selection and evaluation. When selecting books from a Latino perspective, the same skills are necessary but one must be flexible in their application. (Mestre and Nieto, 1996)

The following are management issues pertaining to collection development:

- reviewing collection development policies and practices
- linking collection development to the results of the needs assessment
- establishing advisory groups
- dealing with the lack of Spanish-language skills among collection development staff
- encouraging the development of support systems

REVIEWING COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

If you have a formal collection development policy, you need to review it to identify practices and procedures that are potential barriers to your multicultural collection development efforts. Some well-meaning policies unintentionally impede the development of collections for Latino users.

Your policy should clearly indicate that your library collections are for the benefit of everyone in your service area and that some information needs in your community can only be met by purchasing library materials that are bilingual or in languages other than English. Including this idea in your collection development policy is a clear signal that you are serious about meeting the information needs of all your citizens. Additionally, a policy statement will give you much-needed backup in case any members of your community complain about the noticeable increase in the number of Spanish-language materials in your library.

Some libraries require that two positive reviews of proposed materials be found before they can be acquired, or they favor purchasing from one or two major vendors, discouraging the purchase of items from small or specialty presses in the United States, publishers and distributors outside the country, neighborhood bookstores, or conferences and book fairs. These entrenched library policies add complications to the collection process. (Marquis, 2003)
LAS VEGAS-CLARK COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT
DIVERSITY VISION STATEMENT

The Las Vegas-Clark County Library District is committed to a workplace in which all people are respected as individuals and are valued for their contributions in accomplishing the District’s mission. The District will foster an inclusive, supportive, open, challenging and innovative work environment to enable employees to be positive, creative and reach their full potential.

Why Diversity?

American Library Association Key Action Report #4

The following is taken from the American Library Association’s action report regarding diversity.

“Diversity is one of five key action areas adopted by the American Library Association to fulfill its mission of providing the highest quality library and information services for all people. The Association actively promotes equal access to information for all people through libraries and encourages development of library services for diverse population.

The strength of our nation is the diversity of its people. How we deal with this diversity continues to be a challenge.

Diversity applies to more than race and ethnicity. It applies to physical disabilities, sexual orientation, age, language and social class.

Democracy is rooted in respect for all people. Respect is based on understanding. Librarians believe that education is key to building communities and a nation based on understanding and respect.

Libraries are an American value. They offer people of all ages and backgrounds the resources they need to learn and grow and achieve their dreams.

The strength of libraries has always been the diversity of their collections and commitment to serving all people. Libraries of all types—public, school and academic—provide a forum for diverse ideas and points of view that can help us learn about and better understand ourselves and each other.

If libraries are to be their best, their services and staff must reflect both the people they serve and the larger global community. Today’s libraries provide a wide range of opportunities for people with diverse needs and interests. These include cultural heritage collections, materials in alternate formats such as large print, also multilingual Internet training, bilingual story hours, English as a Second Language classes and many other creative and resourceful programs.

Adopted: February 8, 2001

Figure 7-1a. Las Vegas-Clark County Library District Diversity Vision Statement

(Permission to adapt and reproduce granted by Las Vegas-Clark County Library District.)
As a profession, librarians are committed to providing information and resources that serve the diverse needs of their communities and reflect the diversity of human knowledge and experience.

Diversity and the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District’s Mission Statement

The Las Vegas-Clark County Library District’s mission is “to provide the community with materials, services, and facilities to satisfy the need for information; to facilitate lifelong learning; and to promote use of the library. Its aim is to promote the value of information, reflecting the diversity of cultures and viewpoints; and to enhance the community’s awareness of services which aid in the development of individual and community creativity and excellence.”

In order to successfully achieve the District’s mission, we need to attract and retain a skilled, competent and diverse workforce and foster a positive work environment with opportunities for advancement, training and challenges for all.

The ALA Diversity Action Report states that to effectively serve an ever-growing diverse population our workforce needs to be reflective of the Nation and of our communities’ diversity. A diverse workforce is inherently more productive. Implementing strategies that encourage diversity such as empowering employees, enhancing the quality of work life, forming labor-management partnerships, and fostering a positive work environment with opportunities for advancement, training, and challenges will strengthen the District’s mission.

An organization that accepts diversity and recognizes the contribution of all employees is a healthier and more productive organization than one that does not. Understanding and recognizing diversity enables an organization to capitalize on the differing views and contributions that each of its employees bring to the workplace. Such an organization provides for a richer work environment and ensures that employees work more closely with one another in carrying out organizational goals and objectives. Understanding and recognizing the contribution of diversity enables an organization to better adapt to change.

Managing diversity is important. Whatever the diversity, in people or systems, the benefits of factoring a myriad experiences, insights and approaches into decision making can only enhance the viability of solutions, and our ability to forecast potential consequences. Integrating diversity into an organization’s management practices provides opportunities to facilitate organizational change, harness employee potential, achieve performance goals, and enhance internal and external customer satisfaction, thus furthering the mission of the District. The District’s greatest assets are its employees.

The District’s Diversity/Competitive Workplace Committee realizes that pursuing the objectives of a diversity initiative will require new ways of thinking and doing business. These new ways of thinking can be accomplished if the District’s policies and vision are supported by the organizational culture. The District’s commitment to the principles and legal obligations of Equal Employment Opportunity objectives remains firm and unchanged, and in fact, is enhanced and strengthened through its ability to manage diversity.

Adopted: February 8, 2001

Figure 7-1b. Las Vegas Diversity MISSION Statement

(Permission to adapt and reproduce granted by Las Vegas-Clark County Library District.)
Librarians must make every effort to identify and acquire Spanish-language, culturally sensitive materials for their Latino users in order to accomplish the mission of serving communities regardless of language, cultural background, and economic status. (Marquis, 2003: 106) As a manager, your role should be to remove barriers and to facilitate Latino collection development.

LINKING COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT TO INFORMATION NEEDS

You will gain much-needed support and assistance from the Latino community by showing that your attempts to meet their identified needs are sincere. A second management issue is making certain that your collection development efforts are linked very closely to the results of the Latino community demographic analysis and needs assessment. Since each Latino community’s needs are unique and since each library is unique, it is not possible for us to tell you specifically what should be in your collection, nor can we provide any formula that can tell you what percentage of your collection development budget to devote to Latino material collection. You and your staff are ultimately responsible for developing a collection that meets the unique blend of needs identified in your Latino community assessment.

Latinos in one community may want you to concentrate on improving the English reading skills of their young children. In another community, there may be an overwhelming concern about providing more recreational materials for young adults. Latinos in still another community may want you to purchase mostly newspapers and magazines from various Central and Latin American countries, rather than books. Perhaps Latinos in your community will want you to devote most of the available resources to purchase Spanish-language, self-help materials for adults. These are just a few of the many possibilities.

Fortunately, your analysis of Latino demographics and your local needs assessment will help you determine where the greatest needs are—and will enable you to develop the library’s collection for Latinos, based not on any preconceived ideas of what might be needed, but on the needs expressed by members of the Latino community during the needs assessment.

As an administrator, you will need to develop a plan that shows how your library will allocate collection development funds to meet these needs. This plan need not be lengthy to be good. It should be readily understood by managers, library employees, the board of trustees, the media, leaders in the Latino community, and the general public, and it should include a list of needs identified by the community (see the Latino needs/wants statements described in Chapter 4). This list should be accompanied by library strategies to meet each of the identified needs with budget allocations assigned to each strategy. Figure 7-2 provides two examples of a needs/wants statement with a collection strategy and a budget allocation.
1. Specific need/want example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need/Want Statement</th>
<th>Collection Strategy 1</th>
<th>Budget Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latino young adults in our community want Spanish-language magazines.</td>
<td>Library will purchase 10 Spanish-language magazines for Latino YA males.</td>
<td>10 Spanish-language magazines at $40/each = $400.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collection Strategy 2</td>
<td>Budget Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library will purchase 10 Spanish-language magazines for Latino YA females.</td>
<td>10 Spanish-language magazines at $40/each = $400.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Budget:</td>
<td></td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. General need/want example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need/Want Statement</th>
<th>Collection Strategy 1</th>
<th>Budget Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latinos in our community want their elementary school children to read and have an appreciation for both English and Spanish.</td>
<td>Library will purchase bilingual recreational books for elementary school children.</td>
<td>100 books at $30/each = $3,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collection Strategy 2</td>
<td>Budget Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library will purchase bilingual language instructional DVDs for children.</td>
<td>50 DVDs at $25/each = $1,250.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Budget:</td>
<td></td>
<td>$4,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7-2. Sample Needs/Wants, Collection Strategies, and Budget Allocations**

It is impossible to obtain everything that is needed all at once; nonetheless, it is essential that you make a good-faith effort to allocate resources where they are needed most. In the end, you will be thankful that your library devoted the necessary time and energy toward the Latino community needs assessment. Now you can channel your limited funds to the areas that are considered to be a high priority by the Latino community.

**ESTABLISHING AND LISTENING TO A LATINO ADVISORY GROUP**

A voluntary Latino advisory community group may be helpful in developing a collection for Latinos. You can share your ideas on the allocation of resources with members of this advisory group to get feedback on and support for your library strategies and budgetary allocations. Consider establishing an advisory group of Latino teens (young adults) to give you ideas on library materials that will help attract this hard-to-reach clientele.
Members of advisory groups can provide direct assistance in any number of ways:

- They can peruse appropriate publisher or distributor catalogs and make recommendations to the selectors.
- When new books are processed, they can prepare bilingual handouts or bibliographies publicizing the new arrivals.
- They can review the newly acquired materials and write bilingual articles about them for your library newsletter.
- They can be involved in organizing Spanish book clubs based on the new arrivals.

Your local situation will inspire you to think of other possible uses for this advisory group. Remember that this advisory group can also serve as one of your political action groups when needed.

HANDLING SPANISH AND BILINGUAL MATERIALS

Your Staff who are unfamiliar with Spanish will have difficulty choosing Spanish library materials that are the most appropriate for Latinos in your community. This is a management issue that is important to address when developing a collection for Latinos. Just as an English-speaking American might have a little difficulty with British English or with English from several hundred years ago, so too might an American Latino have some difficulty reading books in Spanish from different Central or South American countries. If the language barrier is too great, the material will not be used or enjoyed. Generally speaking, the selector should try to select materials that are closest to the vernacular used by Latinos in the community, but this is not an absolute rule.

Bilingual materials also present a problem to English-monolingual selectors, as they will not be able to judge the quality of books that contain inferior translations. One solution is to have bilingual and bicultural library staff who can make these quality judgments. The next best solution is to provide opportunities and incentives for your selectors to learn Spanish. Also, you can encourage your selectors to interact with and get advice from bilingual individuals in the community. Even if all the above steps are taken, every now and then a few unwanted books will still make their way into the library collection. When this happens, acknowledge it, accept it, use it as a learning experience, and then move on.

A significant number of English-speaking Latinos have very limited Spanish speaking and reading skills. Consequently their preference will be for English-language materials on a wide variety of subjects. You cannot assume that all Latinos want or need Spanish or bilingual resources.
Make sure that your collection includes English-language materials about the history of Latinos in the United States, with particular emphasis on the history of the particular subcultures represented in your service area. It should also include a selection of literary works by U.S. Latino authors writing in English, as well as English translations of major literary works from the Spanish-speaking world. Your collection probably already addresses many of the needs of Latinos whose first language is English but remember to utilize the community analysis data, your Latino advisory members, and teen advisory group members as sources of suggestions and trends.

SUPPORTING SELECTORS

You need to provide a supportive atmosphere to ensure that your staff can develop skills and confidence in these new endeavors. As the final management concern, we would like to address the development of a support system for your collection development staff. Most likely, starting a Latino collection from scratch will necessitate change, some of which could be drastic. Some of your staff will respond quite well; others may have a more difficult time. Useful strategies include the following:

- Establish in-house teams to discuss Latino collection development issues and resolve any problems that arise.
- Support attendance at national, regional, and state conferences and workshops where Latino collection development issues are discussed.
- Provide opportunities for staff to meet and interact, formally and informally, with others in the immediate area who are dealing with similar issues or who have special skills.
- Cooperate with other libraries and library associations to bring outside speakers and experts to local workshops and conferences.
- Provide funds, opportunities, and incentives for employees to learn Spanish.
- Encourage collection development staff to interact with the Latino community and solicit ideas on improving the library’s collections.

Being aware of these issues and dealing with them constructively will establish and nurture a positive framework. Your library’s overall success in collection development may very well depend on how effectively staff can respond and adapt to the needs of customers.