

A Multicultural Sensitive Librarian:

Political correctness amidst cultural differences



Presented during the Seminar-Workshop on Catalyzing Multicultural Librarianship: Opportunities, Challenges and Strategies in the 21st Century
Organized by the Association of Special Libraries of the Philippines (ASLP)
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Hotel Roma, Tuguegarao City

Understanding the fundamentals?



**Political correctness =
right things to say and/or to
write**

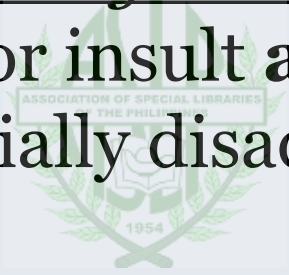


**Multicultural =
several cultures or ethnic groups**

Political correctness + Multicultural awareness =



Focusing on *your expression/actions* (verbal or written) that *can be or may not be perceived* to exclude, marginalized or insult **a person or groups of people** who are socially disadvantaged and/or discriminated against.



Some variables that could affect a multicultural setting



Multicultural

ideology /beliefs, social behavior, influence, ethnicity, gender/sexual orientation, minority/ies

Political Correctness

verbal communication, non-verbal communication, attitude (tone of voice, bias), language



What is a multicultural librarian?



A multicultural librarian has the skills to foster and cultivate harmonious co-existence and interaction to serve diverse cultures in the delivery of library and information services.

Multicultural Library Manifesto



Principles: Each individual in our global society has the right to a full range of library and information services.

In addressing cultural and linguistic diversity, libraries should:

- Serve all members of the community **without discrimination** based on cultural and linguistic heritage;
- Provide information **in appropriate languages and scripts;**
- Give access to a broad range of materials and services **reflecting all communities and needs;**
- Employ staff to **reflect the diversity of the community**, who are trained to work with and serve diverse communities.



The journey to become a multicultural librarian will take commitment, hard work and a continuous learning process.

How do we start and what do we need?



I. Understand your landscape (the structure of your organization)



- ✓ **Gather your facts**
(where the library stand in your company or organization)
- ✓ **Identify your clients**
- ✓ **Define the value of the library**
- ✓ **Assets (manpower, collection, resources, website)**



II. Know the priority programs of your organization



- ❖ What are your goals?
- ❖ Why programs have impact on your collection development and your information products?
- ❖ How do you effectively serve your clients?



III. Assess your resources



Collection

- ❑ **Subject areas covered**

(Know what you have and what you do not have)

- ❑ **Format (Print, Non-Print, Databases)**

- ❑ **Accessibility (on-line)**



IV. Delivery of Services



What do you offer?

- Reference services
- Bibliographic/citation services
- In-depth research
- Document delivery

Establish a policy on how to serve your clients



Your library clients can be internal or external and may request library services via **off-site** (request by email, chat, or telephone) or **on-site** (visit the library)

- **Internal clients (staff)**
 - Briefing on library services and products
 - Prepare a library user manual
 - Website (intranet, if available)
- **External clients (the public, partners, researchers)**
 - Library flyer
 - Library website



Tips on how to provide library services to off-site clients (Request by email)



- Write clearly with formality, politeness and honesty
- Promote your services that are accessible on the website of the library
- If your library has a public database, send the link
- Send a library visitation form
- Always sign your name at the end of the email

Sample: Reply to Email Inquiry

Email from Library Internal User

From: Na, Sei
Sent: 04 July 2017 08:41
To: WP RO LIB ALL Staff
Subject: Inquiry for journal access

Dear Library:

Hi, I am currently an intern at the Country Support Unit
Researching on documents, I need access to online journals.
I was wondering if WHO has journal subscriptions (Science Direct, in particular)
Thank you!

Best,
Sei Na

Reply to Library internal user

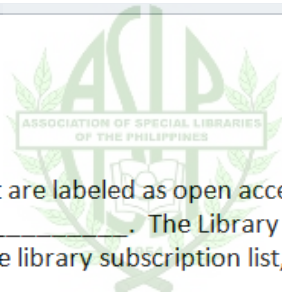
Dear Sei Na,

WHO has limited access to Science Direct journals, only those that are labeled as open access.
You can check the Library database by going to this link [_____](#). The Library database Icon is also visible in your desktop.
If you are accessing an article with journals that are included in the library subscription list, the pdf or full text access will be automatically displayed in your computer.

If you have additional questions on how to access the library database, you can drop by the Library and look for me.

Regards,
Alma

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Sample: Visitation Form

Library Visitation Form

DATE & TIME OF VISIT:

____ : ____ ____ / ____ / ____ UNTIL: ____ / ____ / ____
Time Day Month Year Day Month Year

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

First Name: _____

Family Name: _____

Email: _____

Nationality: _____

City/Country of Residence: _____

Please select the category that best describes you (select only one):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> P - Professional | <input type="checkbox"/> UN - United Nations Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R - Researcher | <input type="checkbox"/> PS - Master/Doctoral Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GE - Government Employee | <input type="checkbox"/> U - Undergraduate Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WF - WHO Fellow | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

PURPOSE OF VISIT:

What is the purpose of your visit?

What topic will you be researching/studying?

Which of the following resources do you plan to use (please select all that apply)?

- Use a computer
- Use printed collections (publications, journal articles, books)
- Other: _____

INSTITUTION / UNIVERSITY/ORGANIZATION:

Name of the institution: _____

Address or location of the institution: _____

V. Intensify your communication skills



Clients of different nationalities

How to communicate verbally with a client who does not speak English well?

You can check this video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqZUCKc6NiI&index=14&list=PLiwWmOJG10s6JWznyt20qonRh2q_ekf-



Communication with clients via telephone



- Always identify yourself at the beginning of the call and ask also for the name of the caller
- Speak clearly and slowly (if needed) in your normal tone of voice.
- Do not shout or raise your voice in a manner that is impolite.
- Observe proper telephone etiquette



Verbal communication with a client



- Speak clearly and slowly (if needed)
- Avoid the use of slang words or phrases
- It is ok to ask the client to repeat the question or the sentence
- Do not pretend that you understand if you do not





- **Body or sign languages can be helpful (but keep in mind that in some cultures there are some gestures that could be inappropriate)**
- **Encourage feedback**
Ask questions like: do you have any other questions, or am I clear?



Work towards having an effective team



- Establish leadership
- Establish relationship with each of your team
- Build relationship with your team
- Foster teamwork
- Set ground rules
- + **RESPECT** each other



Source: Cardinal, Rosalind. 5 steps to building an effective team

Available at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rosalind-cardinal/5-steps-to-building-an-effective-team_b_7132406.html

Build your network

(local and international)



- Peers and colleagues
- Stakeholders
- Professional associations
- Libraries and information centers
- Suppliers and contractors

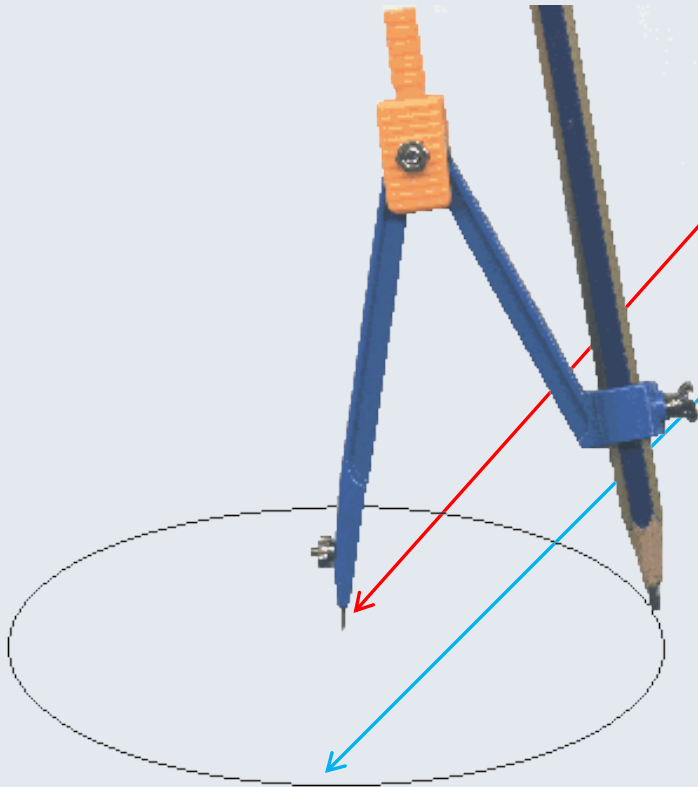
Do Not Stop Learning



- Read informative, relevant materials
- Continuing Education Programs (workshops, short term courses)
- Check and join relevant professional online forums
- Find a good mentor



The Compass Story



**Middle point of the compass
– your root as an individual**

**The circle that you draw is
how you connect to the world
(whether this is local or universal)**

**The pencil is You – deciding
whether you want to draw a
smaller or bigger circle.**

Source: The Power of Fiction: Elif Shafak
https://www.ted.com/talks/elif_shafak_the_politics_of_fiction#t-1166545

References:



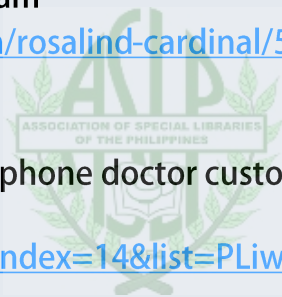
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IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto. The Multicultural Library: a gateway to a cultural diverse society in dialogue.
Available online at <https://www.ifla.org/node/8976>

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Available online at https://www.ted.com/talks/elif_shafak_the_politics_of_fiction#t-1166545



Thank you for listening...



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ALMA MILA PROSPEROSO



TOPIC
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CPD
points