

1-1-1994

## Cultural Awareness and Bibliographic Instruction in Academic Libraries

Scott Mandernack

*Marquette University*, [scott.mandernack@marquette.edu](mailto:scott.mandernack@marquette.edu)

Poping Lin

*Purdue University*

David M. Hovde

*Purdue University*

---

Accepted version. "Cultural Awareness and Bibliographic Instruction in Academic Libraries" in *Diversity and Multiculturalism in Libraries*. Ed. Katherine H. Hill. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1994: 85-104. [Publisher Link](#). © 1994 Emerald (JAI Press). Used with permission.

This article is © Emerald Group Publishing and permission has been granted for this version to appear here. Emerald does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without the express permission from Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Scott Mandernack was affiliated with Purdue University at the time of publication.

# Cultural Awareness and Bibliographic Instruction in Academic Libraries

Scott B. Mandernack

*Undergraduate Library, Purdue University*

*Lafayette, IN*

Poping Lin

*Undergraduate Library, Purdue University*

*Lafayette, IN*

David M. Hovde

*Humanities, Social Sciences, & Education Library, Purdue  
University*

*Lafayette, IN*

## **Abstract**

Bibliographic instruction programs in academic libraries have come to recognize the growing prevalence of cultural pluralism on campus and the concomitant necessity to design services that will improve learning and relevancy among these students. The authors assert that cultural awareness and understanding must become a guiding principle in designing all aspects of instructional programs, from collections to class presentations, facilities to human resources. The Purdue University Libraries have developed a multi-faceted program of instructional services and facilities to meet the demands of a large, diverse student body with a variety of learning styles.

For the past several decades, educators and public service librarians in American academic institutions have become increasingly aware of the emerging nature of our multicultural society and the specialized needs of diverse user groups within our campus communities. Whether based on racial or ethnic background, country of origin, age, gender or other characteristics, all have become recognized in some fashion as distinct population groups with particular needs. These changing demographics are evidenced by both the ever-increasing numbers within each of these groups, and the increasing percentage of the total student population that these groups represent. While specific responses to these changes vary across the spectrum and from one institution to another, the common thread that pervades is the recognition that the individuals within these populations require special attention to instill confidence in their use of library facilities and to further their development of library research skills.<sup>1</sup>

From the earliest research it has been noted that the attainment of library skills is an important factor in the "non-traditional" student's overall development within American academic culture.<sup>2</sup> However, the unique cognitive styles of these diverse groups, drawn from a variety of cultural and environmental stimuli, may present barriers to achieving successful library research skills. These barriers, which may be numerous, and vary with the group in question, include: deference to authority figures; cultural perceptions of gender; learning styles and rates; differences in the role of libraries in the education process; cultural concepts of research and independent thinking; language proficiencies; educational disadvantages; and physical barriers and lack of appropriate equipment.<sup>3</sup>

Instructional design librarians must be cognizant of these special needs and be open to implementing appropriate and relevant programs. However, before one can begin to plan and design library services to address these particular needs, a basic, very fundamental premise must first be developed: an acute sense of cultural awareness. Throughout all aspects of program design and development, consideration must be given to the recognition of and sensitivity to the needs of individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences.

Culture is a notoriously ambiguous concept, the definition of which has baffled the minds and imaginations of many anthropologists and other scholars. Nevertheless, the fact that culture is all pervasive and penetrates into every nook and cranny of human life is almost universally acknowledged. Culture is indeed commensurate with human life itself. Formulations of the concept of culture by some of the most prominent anthropologists may well illustrate this point. A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, after reviewing 164 formulations of the concept of culture, presented their own:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; cultural systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.<sup>4</sup>

Clifford Geertz, perhaps the most influential anthropologist in this country in recent decades, offers a much simpler but no less comprehensive definition:

The concept of culture I suppose... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.<sup>5</sup>

The definition offered by Kroeber and Kluckhohn sees culture as patterns of behavior with traditional ideas and values as its core. The second definition views culture as systems of meaning. Their approaches are different, but both stress two seemingly paradoxical points: first, culture is all-inclusive, in the sense that it permeates one's ideas, values and patterns of behavior; second, culture is specific, in the sense that different peoples have different cultures with different ideas, values, and patterns of behavior.

Just like the air we breathe, in every place and every moment, the all-inclusive nature of culture tends to dull our sense of its existence, especially the cultures of others. Cultural awareness,

however, keeps alive that sense of the existence and presence of other cultures. The plural form "cultures" is used deliberately, because there is no "general culture" in the sense that culture is universal. All cultures are concrete, particular and specific to certain groups of people. Cultural awareness, therefore, by definition, embraces a multicultural approach and automatically rejects ethnocentrism or any other forms of cultural chauvinism.

Emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness is extremely relevant to the planning and development of library services in today's society. The first step in developing a cultural awareness is to identify the diversity of the population being served. There are different emphases in the interpretation of the meaning of "diversity." Some for instance, emphasize ethnic diversity, making ethnic or racial factors their major concern. To them, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, etc., constitute diverse populations, in spite of the fact that some of these people actually embrace many of the same cultural constructs as the cultural mainstream of American society. Others emphasize gender (male vs. female), age (adult vs. non-traditional students), or profession (majors in sciences vs. humanities). In addition to different groups of people, different aspects of people may also be considered in defining "diversity." Some emphasize the psychological aspects (such as aggressiveness vs. timidity in asking questions, or self-confidence vs. diffidence), while others concentrate on the communication aspects (such as the difference between verbal and non-verbal skills). Still others may emphasize physical aspects (those with physical disabilities), educational level, or socioeconomic status.<sup>6</sup> Different emphases bring to light different dimensions of the issue of population diversity.

In regards to library instruction, the authors believe, cultural awareness should be of utmost concern and given top priority. Some may argue that since learning is a cognitive process that can be scientifically described, and since science is universally applicable and not culture-specific, it follows that consideration to cultural diversity in instructional design is unnecessary. However, culture is the most pervasive and fundamental source of the formation of the self, including one's character and way of thinking. The authors believe, therefore, that although the content of library instruction -- the knowledge to be transmitted and acquired -- may be universally valid,

both the transmitter and the learner of that knowledge are human beings and are, therefore, culture-specific. Both have certain culturally defined characteristics or "pre-structures" in their minds. These "pre-structures" influence not only the learning patterns of the audience but also the teaching style of the instructor. Library instructors should be aware of cultural diversity not only among the audience they are addressing, but also within themselves.

At Purdue University, enrollment over the past decade has experienced an overall growth rate of 12.5%. Distributions and growth rates among specific population groups have generally reflected the national trends, with the numbers of "ethnic Americans"-- African-Americans, American Indians, Asian-Americans, or Hispanic-Americans -- international students, nontraditional students (undergraduates over the age of 25), physically challenged students, etc., all increasing at a faster pace than the general enrollment. The relative percentage of these diverse student groups have indeed changed the character of the campus population. In 1986/87, students identified with these groups constituted just over 27% of the general campus enrollment: 6.7% ethnic Americans, 5.5% international students, 14.8% nontraditional students, and 0.5% physically challenged or learning disabled students. By contrast, in 1993, over nine percent of the students identify themselves as ethnic Americans and nearly seven percent are international students from over 100 countries. Add to this the 19% of returning adult students and those with physical challenges or learning disabilities, and the figure of "non-mainstream" college students rises to over 35%, more than one of every three students on our campus.

Agreeing with Stoffle in her assertion that "the needs of students from cultures other than the dominant one... is the single greatest area of concern confronting undergraduate education in the next several decades,"<sup>7</sup> cultural awareness in the Libraries manifests itself through numerous efforts to implement services that better serve the wide range of learning styles and information needs represented on the campus. Library instruction in the Purdue University Libraries has evolved into a multi-faceted program of offerings reaching students with different interests, learning styles, backgrounds, and experiences. Many of the services have been designed not so much to target a particular audience within the campus community, but rather

with a sensitivity to the variety of cultural and educational needs. Hence, the mix of services provided -- perhaps not unique unto themselves, but the composite picture, as it were -- convey a general theme of inclusiveness, enabling us to accommodate the demands of many different users with differing viewpoints.

## **Laying the Foundation**

Adequate facilities and equipment, knowledgeable and well-trained staff, and well-developed collections are important prerequisites in providing effective instructional services. The building design and how it is equipped determine the accessibility to resources and, to some extent, influence the modes of instruction used. The composition of the staff, their service priorities, and their ability to communicate well shape the image and perception of the library, as well as the ability to effectively teach library concepts and resources. The scope and relevancy of the collections are important indicators of the library's ability to adapt to the needs of the users and they provide the key resource for developing critical evaluation skills as an important part of the research process.

When considering the needs of a diverse clientele, each of these elements takes on added dimensions. The traditional thinking about each of them may no longer be valid or relevant for today's users. The changing campus populations require that we carefully reconsider each of these components to ensure that we maximize the potential for effective learning of library research skills and strategies.

### *Facilities*

The Undergraduate Library at Purdue views itself, in some respects, as a cultural center. The building was designed with the undergraduate student in mind, and as such, includes a large number of study spaces. The Library regularly attracts large numbers of students, and has become a gathering place for groups from all walks of life. It is generally regarded as "the place to meet people," particularly for freshmen new to the campus and the community. The "study hall" concept is further supported through the provision of "incidentals," from printed guides and bibliographies to staples, paper clips, correction fluid and other supplies. While of little real significance in fulfilling the educational objectives of the Undergraduate Library,

providing such token incidentals sets a tone and engages the students into the mindset that the library is available for their needs and that it supports their basic, immediate objectives -- that of getting their papers or other research projects completed -- as well as contributing to the long term goal of teaching them to become information literate. Encouraging an atmosphere of casual comfort and diversity, the library is promoted as a meeting place and thus serves as a foundation to a general climate of awareness and openness to a pluralistic society.

Further, recognizing that learning disabled, physically challenged, visually impaired, and hearing impaired students often require special assistance in meeting their educational goals, the Libraries received funding to develop a facility specifically designed to provide equipment and support to such students. The Adaptive Learning Programs (ALPS) center was established to offer four principal services: text services, allowing students to have their textbooks recorded on tape; adaptive equipment loan service, providing equipment for use in class or at home; ALPS center, providing access to a variety of assistive technologies for information access and other computing needs; and, instructional services, offering training on the use of equipment and computer software. Use of the facility and services is restricted to students who have registered with the Office of the Dean of Students, who recommends appropriate services campus-wide to meet the needs of each individual.

Closely allied with ALPS, the Undergraduate Library also includes an Instructional Media Center, which supports a collection of audiovisual media and equipment for listening and viewing. In addition to providing information in formats other than print, it enables the Library to take advantage of computer technology for instructional purposes. A local area network was installed, including both Macintosh and IBM-compatible computers, which allows for group instruction sessions on using the online information system and also for the use of locally-developed computer tutorials on an individual basis. An outgrowth of this has been the addition of a large print software program to one of the CD-ROM workstations in the Reference unit, allowing visually impaired users to utilize resources that may otherwise be unavailable to them. Nonprint and computer options have proven very beneficial in expanding the availability of resources, and in providing access, both physically and bibliographically, through a



variety of means, thereby addressing the needs of our diverse user groups.

## *Staffing*

That the staff is a key resource in the provision of effective library service goes without saying. Whether at the Reference Desk or in a classroom setting, the interaction and communication between the staff and the patron often determines the success of that individual's comprehension and understanding of the information and concepts being presented. Effectively addressing the needs of a diverse user population introduces additional concerns, both in the hiring process and in training. The staff, in addition to being well trained in their jobs and able to communicate well, must also be able to understand the varying needs of a diverse user population, which includes awareness of and sensitivity to the differing experiences, perspectives, and values that individuals bring in to the library. Staff members who have been sensitized to the issues of cultural differences will be more likely to serve each individual more effectively by making a better-informed assessment of the patron's actual needs, taking into account expectations, fears, attitudes, etc. A diverse staff, by its very nature, is much more likely to recognize differences in sensitivities, thus providing a "teaching laboratory" in the every day work of the unit. Moreover, it also conveys to the users a greater invitation to utilize the resources of the library. By breaking down some of the initial barriers of approaching a staff member who may or may not understand -- let alone appreciate -- cultural differences, the library is much more approachable and presents itself in a more positive light. Cultural awareness, then, is critical to a successful encounter with the patrons.

Approachability is one aspect of public services that includes a great many issues, from a simple smile, to how one dresses or wears their hair, as well as how he or she communicates with the patron. In many cases approachability issues are beyond the control of training or supervising. Racial and ethnic representation, young and old, male and female all contribute to the image of the service component of a library, so the hiring process is of utmost importance. While the primary concern is to recruit people with appropriate skills, representatives from the various population groups can provide the added dimension of improving this aspect of public services.<sup>8</sup>

The staff in the Purdue Libraries, while not absolutely representative of the general university population, has nevertheless succeeded in recruiting a truly diverse staff. The Libraries administration actively sought to fill a faculty position with a librarian who would add a new cultural dimension to strengthening library services to diverse populations. Clerical staff, graduate assistants and student assistants also reflect the diversity of the campus population, including nontraditional students, international students, ethnic Americans, physically challenged individuals, and some who are fluent in other languages, including sign language.

Training and staff development seminars or workshops have been utilized successfully in many institutions as a method to dispel stereotypes, examine cultural differences, and promote multicultural awareness among library staff.<sup>9</sup> Purdue University Libraries have held seminars on this and related topics. One seminar included a panel discussion entitled "International Students in the Libraries," composed of one of the authors, who is from China, and three graduate students from Kenya, India, and Costa Rica. The panelists reflected on their experiences in academic libraries both in their respective countries and in the United States. Five programs were presented in another large scale, system-wide seminar entitled "Survival At The Front." The topics encompassed a wide range of issues in dealing with the varied student populations. One session dealt with communication skills and cultural attitudes as they relate to the reference interview. Another was concerned with adult student learning styles and expectations of library service. A wide ranging discussion was also held on perceptions that various international students have toward libraries and librarians, and vice versa. Examples of conflicting expectations based on custom were examined in relation to their effects on library service.

## *Collections*

Collections serve as a powerful teaching tool in fulfilling the instructional objectives of the library and reflect strongly on the library's commitment to its mission. In expressing a commitment to promoting tolerance and sensitivity to cultural diversity, the library's collection should also represent these values. Materials that support research and teaching from a pluralistic perspective should be actively sought and acquired, and statements in support of this must be incorporated into collection development policies and practices. In

some cases, appropriate materials may not be as readily available as are the mainstream publications, yet they are vitally important to the development of independent thinking among library patrons. This includes publications from minority and alternate presses, as well as from the literatures of other countries. It has been argued by some that, in the case of international students enrolled in American institutions, they should be expected to improve and expand their knowledge of English, and libraries need not be concerned with providing materials in their native languages. Such a view, however, may well undermine efforts to instill in patrons the sense of lifelong learning and independent curiosity. Indeed, cultural mores and attitudes are invariably reflected in language. The study of language, therefore, as a reflection of cultural values and beliefs, becomes a vital component of the educated person. Whether directed towards the international student or the American student studying a foreign language, materials in other languages can provide unique opportunities to a more thorough understanding of the world. Caution should be taken, especially in times of budgetary constraints, not to view such acquisitions as "supplemental" to the curricular needs of the university, but rather as enhancements to it.

Measures to ensure a broader scope for the collections of the Purdue Libraries have been incorporated into several collection development policies. One such policy which was rewritten was that of the recreational reading collection. For years, this collection of current materials had consisted largely of American bestsellers and popular fiction, with a small selection of English titles. However, because of an increased awareness and attention to cultural pluralism, it was decided that this collection could be expanded to provide more opportunities for "chance encounters" with literature from other countries or that expressing "alternate" viewpoints. As such, the collection development policy for this collection was enhanced to include contemporary fiction, drama, and poetry, selected from among American bestsellers (still the majority of titles, representing approximately 60% of the collection's new acquisitions); from small and alternate presses, emphasizing women's and multicultural literature (25%); and from foreign literature in English translation (15%).

Another collection which has been developed to more adequately serve diverse populations is the newspaper collection. The

Purdue Libraries subscribe to numerous newspapers, primarily local and regional selections, with representative titles from across the United States and the world. However, in recognizing that only very limited views may be reported in this selective collection, the Undergraduate Library also coordinates and maintains a collection of international publications donated to the Libraries by campus student organizations. This collection is comprised primarily of newspapers from other countries, although a number of popular magazines are also included, and most are written in the native language.

Title selection of these newspapers is the responsibility of the student organizations, although a balance of representation and perspective is maintained by the library, with the cooperation of the Office of International Programs. Since American ethnic and minority press publications were not well represented in the collection, the library added a subscription to a collection of such publications on a full-text CD-ROM database.

The benefits of the newspaper collection are great. The scope and nature of the collection is such that it is current and dynamic enough to remain a vital source of information, directly relevant to our users, yet administratively, the cost is minimal. It is used primarily as a popular reading collection, however, the educational benefits are apparent, as well. These materials provide a variety of differing viewpoints (e.g., the Chinese language publications represent various social and political perspectives) which are useful in illustrating the need for careful evaluation of sources. Additionally, they encourage students to explore other sources of information which may have heretofore gone unnoticed.

Developing these resources to consider the values and beliefs, skills and abilities of a diverse, multicultural population provides the foundation for building an effective instruction program. The ability to adapt to changing needs and a willingness to take risks concerning library services can be achieved more easily with an educated and willing staff, knowledgeable of the resources that are available. Instilling an attitude of tolerance and flexibility is critical to fulfilling the mission of the library in today's society in which cultural diversity is so readily apparent.

## Developing the Instruction Program

The design of instructional services for diverse user groups can be a complicated issue, one which requires considerable thought and planning. As with any instructional program, one must first conduct a needs assessment, which involves identifying the audience and determining their information and instructional needs. In a large university setting, the student population is so heterogeneous that to make assumptions and design programs to meet even the majority of the students' needs, will invariably still leave significant gaps. However, a basic understanding of learning styles of both the students and the instructors may provide valuable insights into designing effective and relevant bibliographic instruction services.

Learning style generally refers to the patterns of behavior that direct an individual's learning. Each person has a unique learning style composed of several components: their cognitive inclinations, how they perceive and process information; affective aspects, including emotional and personality characteristics; physiological traits and sensory perceptions; and sociological preferences.<sup>10</sup> With the increasing awareness of cultural diversity in American classrooms, numerous studies have been conducted to determine whether different population groups tend to learn differently than others. Some researchers, such as Hale-Benson, Ramirez, Anderson, and Cooper, have posited that African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans, as a result of their cultural heritage, are more affective and relational, viewing the world more holistically, as connected parts.<sup>11</sup> European-Americans, on the other hand, tend to approach learning more analytically and impersonal. Some research indicates that the cognitive styles of some groups are oriented more toward the visual than the oral. Others contend that Asians have a lower preference for warmth, intake, and mobility while learning, are less conforming, and remember better auditorially and visually than Caucasians.<sup>12</sup> Hands-on/real-life experiences may be necessary for some groups, such as nontraditional students, who tend to prefer instruction that incorporates real-life examples, things they can relate to.<sup>13</sup>

While the research to date suggests that cultural and ethnic differences in learning styles do exist among various segments of the population, it also engenders considerable debate. Learning styles are individual as well as culturally derived. Generalizations based on

cultural styles, without considering individual differences, may indeed have a negative effect on the instruction.<sup>14</sup> As stated by Stodolsky and Lesser in an early study on learning patterns, " ...social class and ethnic influences differ not only in degree but in kind, with the consequence that different kinds of intellectual skills are fostered or hindered in different environments."<sup>15</sup> Information about learning styles, then, may be used most effectively in individualizing the learning process for all students, regardless of the composition of the particular audience.

Language is also an important consideration in library instruction, particularly when the class includes students from other countries. The majority of international students who enter American higher education institutions come from countries where English is not utilized as a second or official language, or a language of commerce.<sup>16</sup> For those who have had English language training, it is not uncommon that much of it was restricted to reading and writing and the verbal aspects were not emphasized. They may, therefore, not have achieved the proficiency needed to clearly express their own questions or needs.<sup>17</sup> For others, English may not figure prominently in their previous educational experience at all. Problems with language skills may also be an issue for American minority students.<sup>18</sup> Because of language and cultural differences, as well as physical and hearing impairments, some students may not be able to absorb all the necessary information given in a bibliographic instruction session.

A student's general perception of a library, how it functions, and its role in the general education process may be quite different from that of the instructor. The student may come from a culture where text books are so precious they are locked away to prevent loss or are held in faculty offices rather than libraries. Students in some cultures are trained by recitation and thus feel that it is necessary to copy down every word. The material they use may be prescribed to them rather than being given a wide variety of choices as in American academic libraries. Returning adult students may find that the library they left a decade earlier is quite a different place, filled with CD-ROMS, online catalogs and other technological developments.

The issues of learning style, language proficiency, and perceptions about the role of the library are important factors in designing library instruction programs in a multicultural environment.

Each has tremendous impact on the individual student's ability and capacity to learn. Understanding the role each of these factors play in the learning process, and relating them to the diversity of needs of the students, will foster more successful and effective learning experiences. The key to addressing these issues in the Purdue University Libraries has been to develop a multi-faceted program of offerings, each reinforcing the others, but presenting the information in a variety of formats, styles, and languages.

Orientation is perhaps the most basic level of library instruction: acquainting the patron with the facility and general resources. The Purdue Libraries provide orientation services through a variety of means. So as to accommodate a large student body, an audio tour on cassette was developed to introduce students to the Undergraduate Library. This method of orientation has proven useful for its availability to large numbers of students, but it is also very effective for students with limited language proficiencies and for those with physical disabilities. While the Library conducts only a very limited number of walk-through tours, an oft-cited disadvantage to this method of orientation for students unfamiliar with the American library philosophy or those with limited English language proficiency, is their inability to absorb and comprehend quickly enough all that is said before being shepherded off to another area of the library. Similarly, for physically challenged individuals on a group tour, unless the instructor or guide is completely sensitive to the limitations of the facility and the difficulties of access one may encounter, more attention may go in to simply navigating the building rather than learning about the services, etc. The audio tour solves this problem by providing a floor plan and checklist, identifying key resources and service areas, and by allowing the user to repeat any portion of the tour at their own convenience. For those patrons who are unwilling or uncomfortable to ask questions, this approach may alleviate some of their fear or trepidation, thus overcoming at least some of the initial barriers that present themselves. We must be careful, however, not to assume that this can fully take the place of more personal service and contact with the library staff.

An additional approach to orientation of the Purdue Libraries is directed more specifically towards international students. In cooperation with the Office of International Student Services,

representatives from the Libraries meet with newly-enrolled international students as part of a week-long orientation program to the campus and the community. A brief introduction to the Libraries is presented and a series of handouts are distributed to each student, including one brochure written in seven different languages explaining basic services, functions, and terminology of the Purdue University Libraries. Conceived and designed by the Instructional Design Librarian, this brochure is one in a series introducing individual libraries and library services. This brochure specifically serves to fulfill the following objectives:

- the need to understand the Western philosophy of libraries, i.e., 'access' to information in all formats, open stacks, etc.;
- an explanation of services available in American university libraries which may not exist in developing countries, i.e. database searching, term paper consultation, the reserve materials function, interlibrary loan, photocopying, etc.;
- an understanding of the multi-faceted aspects of the fifteen libraries of Purdue - their individual focus, scope of resources, services, layout, borrowing privileges, hours of operation, etc.;
- a familiarity with the kinds of materials available within the libraries which not only provide current linkages with their culture and home countries but also to enhance their educational and cross-cultural experience in this country...;
- a working knowledge of the appropriate specialized library terms needed to effectively interface with professional and clerical staff in the search for information.<sup>19</sup>

A follow-up session is offered to explain in more detail the organization of the Libraries and the use of key resources, including the online information system, CD-ROM indexes, and other reference sources. This session is designed to include only key information necessary to get the students started in their academic careers at Purdue.

One additional approach to orientation has been to offer tours in native languages. This supplemental service has been designed to help



meet some immediate needs of students new to the country and to provide a "first step" in becoming acquainted with the library system. The tours, offered early in the fall semester, are very general and allow the patrons to learn about basic services without worry of misunderstanding Americanisms or library jargon. The tours are conducted by individuals proficient in the language, either identified from among the library staff or, where a given language is not represented, from appropriate student organizations. Volunteers enlisted from student organizations are first trained by a librarian. A basic introduction to the library and the library system, cursory introductions to the collections and some of the computerized resources, with which many international students are unfamiliar, and rudimentary search techniques for using the online information system are covered in the training.

The core of the Purdue Libraries' instructional services is the Undergraduate Library's Research Skills program. The program has been developed into a multimedia, multi-faceted array of offerings accommodating the needs of many learning styles. The components of the program include: (1) a slide presentation which provides a brief orientation to the Purdue library system; (2) a printed guide, *The Savvy Student's Guide to Library Research*, which presents a model research strategy and introduces students to resources primarily available in the Undergraduate Library; (3) *Information Access*, a hypercard tutorial, which is available for use on Macintosh computers in the Instructional Media Center of the Undergraduate Library, parallels the information presented in the research guide, but includes interactive exercises throughout the program; (4) the Research Project Advisory Service, providing individualized consultations by appointment; (5) library workshops, usually offered in the evenings, designed to convey general principles about libraries and resources.

Each of the components of the program may be used independently of any of the others, although in many cases several of them used in conjunction with another will be more effective. In addition to these services, class presentations are offered, and a number of handouts and bibliographies are always available, whether to entire classes or for individuals as they come in to the libraries for specific purposes. Because of language and cultural differences, as well as physical and hearing impairments, some students may not be

able to absorb all the necessary information given in a lecture, therefore printed materials become increasingly important. Librarians who present bibliographic instruction sessions often know the subject so well or have given the lecture so often that they may not be aware they are not communicating effectively to many students. Jargon, projection, enunciation, and accent may interfere.<sup>20</sup> Instructional handouts and annotated bibliographies can assist these individuals in clarifying and reinforcing key points covered in a class presentation and therefore further their continued educational development. They can also serve as a reminder to the student that the librarian is available for further individual consultation.<sup>21</sup>

The process of developing many of the printed guides and handouts in the Purdue Libraries has been one of joint cooperation among the instruction librarians. Having identified a need, a draft of each handout is presented to a committee for review. The committee considers the general content of the handout, the language and tone in relation to the intended audience, and stylistic consistency with other handouts. The very nature of a committee review incorporates a variety of perspectives into the content and limits individual biases, thereby ensuring greater usefulness to a wider range of users.

The services available in the Purdue Libraries are not designed with any single group of users in mind. Rather, they attempt to address larger issues. Individually, the separate components may not be unique, but it is the overall concern with cultural awareness as a guiding principle that serves our patrons well. The slide presentation offers a visual orientation to the library system and its services, which may be better suited to some individuals than a lecture-type presentation. The printed guide is a required or optional text for many of the basic composition classes, but it is also available for sale to anyone who wishes to purchase it. It focuses on the Undergraduate Library, but the information is presented within a context or framework of general concepts which may be applied to any library situation. Being in printed form it may be retained and referred to time and time again. The hypercard program offers yet another, more interactive format, which some students may find more conducive to their learning style. The entire program may be completed in one sitting or it may be referred to only for particular sections to refresh one's memory about selecting and refining a topic, developing a

research strategy, using the online catalog, or selecting an index appropriate to their topic. The advisory service has been very successful especially for the nontraditional and international students, as well as students enrolled in the General Studies program. The more individualized approach seems to help set them more at ease, freeing them to ask questions they may be too timid to ask in a class setting. Students have utilized this service in a number of ways: as reinforcement of concepts discussed in a class presentation but applied to their specific, immediate research needs; independent of any other library instruction, for assistance in formulating a search strategy and identifying relevant sources; or for more in-depth discussion about general library concepts, etc. The workshops present general library concepts, such as basic organization of a library and how its catalogs and indexes relate to that organization, fundamental concepts regarding the differences between card and online catalogs, print, online, and CD-ROM indexes, etc., and basic search techniques and strategies. These, too, have been utilized heavily by international and nontraditional students.

Taken as a whole, the bibliographic instruction program in the Purdue Libraries is very flexible and has proven useful in addressing the needs of a large student body with many different needs. Although each of the components will not necessarily serve all learning styles equally well, address all the differing cultural perceptions, or provide the appropriate level of information for every individual, the hope is that at least most needs can be accommodated in some fashion. Whether it's a greater reliance on visual or oral presentation, rote learning or active learning, print or computerized, group or individual instruction, the program is adaptable to many situations.

The success of the instruction program in the Purdue Libraries is rooted in cultural awareness. Recognizing and responding to the diversity of the campus population has provided library instruction services that are grounded in openness, sensitivity, and innovation, and thereby enhance the educational improvement of students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. The multi-faceted approach retains the necessary flexibility to adapt to changing needs so that, as the campus population evolves, so will the instruction program, with a strong foundation on which to build.

## Conclusion

Cultural awareness stems from a comparative study of cultures. The alien culture of another people is like a mirror without which our own culture can be detected. Paul Bohannon, in *We, The Alien*, relates an interesting episode that reveals vividly the mutuality of cultural awareness:

I was coming home on a streetcar late one August afternoon from the playground where I taught during some summer vacations while I was a college student. White and Negro men who had obviously been digging and... working in the sun boarded the car. They were all dirty and sweaty.... A white woman standing by me complained about the smell of the Negroes; they did smell. I wondered about the white workers and moved next to them; they smelled, too. The blue cotton uniform which I wore as a playground teacher was wet with perspiration from my strenuous day. I then became aware that I smelled. [It] was a discovery. -- Hortense Powdermaker (1966).<sup>22</sup>

What then was the discovery? The discovery was, "We are all aliens to each other." Black and white, male and female, Chinese and American, Westerners and Easterners, each with our own specific cultures imbedded in our character, all smell to each other. It behooves each of us to reflect on the nature of our richly multicultural society and to consider how we can most effectively foster cultural awareness through our actions, thoughts and deeds, both professionally within our libraries and personally throughout our lives.

## References

1. Mary Alice Ball and Molly Mahony, "Foreign Students, Libraries, and Culture" *College & Research Libraries* 48 (March 1987): 160-165; Patrick Andrew Hall, "The Role of Affectivity in Instructing People of Color: Some Implications for Bibliographic Instruction," *Library Trends* 39 (Winter 1991): 316-326.; Mary M. Huston, "May I Introduce You: Teaching Culturally Diverse End-Users Through Everyday Information Seeking Experiences," *Reference Services Review* 17 (Spring 1989): 7-11; Gina Macdonald and Elizabeth Sarkodie-Mensah, "ESL Students and American Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 49 (September 1988): 425-431; Terry Ann

*Diversity and Multiculturalism in Libraries, Cultural Awareness and Bibliographic Instruction in Academic Libraries*, (1994) pg. 85-104., [Publisher Link](#). This article is © Emerald (JAI Press) and permission has been granted for this version to appear in [e-Publications@Marquette](mailto:e-Publications@Marquette). Emerald (JAI Press) does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without the express permission from Emerald (JAI Press).

- Mood, "Foreign Students and the Academic Library," RQ 22 (Winter 1982): 175-180; Dario J. Villa and Jane Jurgens, "Minority Students in Higher Education: A Challenge for the 90's," Illinois Libraries 72 (November 1990): 626-628.
2. A.R. Hagey and Joan Hagey, "Meeting the Needs of Students from Other Cultures," *Improving College and University Teaching* 12 (Winter 1974): 42-44.
  3. Elaine P. Adams, "Internationalizing the Learning Resources Center," *College Board Review* 119 (Spring 1981): 19, 27-28; Dick Feldman, "The International Student and Course-Integrated Instruction: The ESL Instructor's Perspective," *Research Strategies* 7 (Fall 1989): 159-166; Sally G. Wayman, "The International Student in the Academic Library" *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 9 (January 1984): 336-341; Ball and Mahony; Hagey and Hagey; Macdonald and Sarkodie-Mensah; Villa and Jurgens.
  4. A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum of American Archeology, 1952), 181.
  5. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.
  6. Huston, 8.
  7. Carla J. Stoffle, "A New Library for the New Undergraduate," *Library Journal* 115 (October 1, 1990): 50.
  8. Manuel D. Lopez, "Chinese Spoken Here: Foreign Language Library Orientation Tours," *College & Research Libraries News* 44 (September 1983): 265, 268-269; Jean Sheridan, "Andragogy: A New Concept for Academic Librarians," *Research Strategies* 4 (Fall 1986): 156-157; Robert G. Trujillo and David C. Weber, "Academic Library Responses to Cultural Diversity: A Position Paper for the 1990's," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 17 (July 1991): 157-161; Adams.
  9. Louise Greenfield, Susan Johnston, and Karen Williams, "Educating the World: Training Library Staff to Communicate Effectively with International Students," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 12 (September 1986): 227-231; Irene Hoffman and Opritsa Popa, "Library Orientation and Instruction for International Students: The University of California-Davis Experience" RQ 25 (Spring 1986): 356-360.

10. Sonia Bodi, "Teaching Effectiveness and Bibliographic Instruction: The Relevance of Learning Styles," *College & Research Libraries* 51 (March 1990): 113-119; Claudia E. Cornett, *What You Should Know About Learning Styles* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1983); Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn, *Teaching Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles: A Practical Approach* (Reston, VA: Reston Publishing Co., 1990); Rita Dunn, Josephine Gemake, Fatimeh Jalali, and Robert Zenhausern, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Learning Styles of Elementary-Age Students From Four Ethnic Backgrounds," *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 18 (April 1990): 68-93; Wayne B. James and Michael W. Galbraith, "Perceptual Learning Styles: Implications and Techniques for the Practitioner," *Lifelong Learning* 8 (January 1985): 20-23.
11. Charles S. Claxton, "Learning Styles, Minority Students, and Effective Education," *Journal of Developmental Education* 14 (Fall 1990): 7.
12. Dunn et al, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Learning," 72.
13. Jeanne B. Ewing, Mary E. Ewing, Jack London, and Yolanda Ramirez-Ponce, "Adult Education and Computer Literacy: A New Challenge," *Lifelong Learning* 10 (November 1986): 21-23; Barbara Foster, "Hunter Midtown Library: The Closing of an Open Door," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 2 (November 1976): 235-237; Mood.
14. Claxton, 6; Luis Baez, *Basic Skills Curriculum for Cultural Inclusiveness and Relevance, 1990 - 91* (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Area Technical College, 1991), Microfiche (ERIC document ED341816), 15.
15. Baez, 15.
16. Macdonald and Sarkodie-Mensah, 425.
17. Lopez, 268; Mary E. Nilles and Dorothy B. Simon, "New Approaches to the Multi-lingual, Multi-cultural Students in Your Library," *Catholic Library World* 55 (May/June 1984): 438.
18. Villa and Jurgens, 627.
19. Kovac, Roberta, "Internationalization of the Purdue University Libraries: A Project to Develop Instructional Resources/Programs for International Students Faculty, and Visiting Scholars," *Global Initiative Faculty Grant Proposal, Purdue University, 1991, 2.*
20. Adams, 27; Macdonald and Sarkodie-Mensah, 426.

**NOT THE PUBLISHED VERSION; this is the author's final, peer-reviewed manuscript.** The published version may be accessed by following the link in the citation at the bottom of the page.

21. Hoffman and Popa, 358.

22. Paul Bohannon and Martha C. Ward, *We, The Alien* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1992), 35.