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A multifaceted model of outreach and instruction for international students

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Abstract

A multifaceted library outreach and instruction program consists of six elements: staff development, partnerships, outreach, instruction, student needs, and assessment. This chapter considers the varied academic needs of international students as they transition to a new campus community in a different language while encouraging library faculty and staff to build upon the distinct benefits of a diverse campus community. The University of Illinois has developed a holistic model that builds on the strengths of librarians, staff, campus partners as well as international students.

Introduction

In 2006, librarians at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign embarked on creating a versatile multicultural outreach program that would extend Library services and instruction beyond the traditional classroom experience by constructing a foundation in staff training and campus partnerships. International student enrollment continues to rise on the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana campus, currently second in international student enrollment at public universities according to the 2009/2010 Open Doors Report (Institute of International Education 2010). The Outreach Librarian for Multicultural Services and the Instructional Services Librarian strategically developed a multifaceted model of outreach and instruction that incorporates six primary components: staff development, partnerships, outreach, instruction, student needs, and assessment (Figure 1). This initiative considers the varied academic needs of international students as they transition to a new campus community in a different language while encouraging Library faculty and staff to build upon the distinct benefits of a diverse campus community. The following case study is a vision of multicultural services that outlines

and provides examples of a programmatic model designed to be modified to fit a variety of institutional types.

Review of the Literature

Much of the precursory literature on international student services written in the 1980s and 1990s constructed a theoretical foundation asserting that foreign students lack the technological savvy and comprehension of modern libraries to succeed in American institutions of higher education.

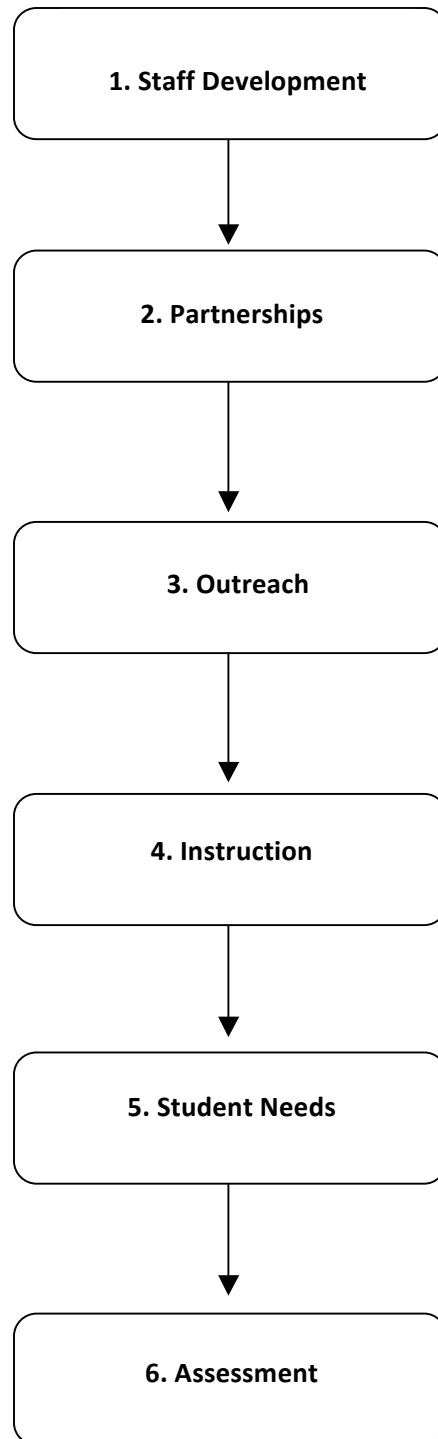
This body of literature suggests that American librarians are poised to rectify these students from their inadequate Library experiences (Moeckel and Presnell 1995; Goudey and Moushey 1984; Lewis 1969; Jiao and Onwuegbuzie 1999; Henricks, 1991; Liestman 1990; Helms 1995; Natowitz 1995). For instance, Goudey and Moushey (1984) state that international students are “confronted by obstacles of major proportions.” Wayman (1984) elaborates, “American students are taught to be self-sufficient in a Library. They must use the card catalog, retrieve their own books, check them out, and carry them back to their rooms. This idea of self-service is an anathema to some foreign students...” Liestman (1990) comments that “Most students are accustomed to rote learning rather than research. Independent study is rare.”

A number of outreach practices and instructional programs are discussed in studies on international students, however Conteh-Morgan (2003) argues that there are entrenched beliefs regarding international students that constructs a mental model where librarians base their services on the idea that international students are “flat, non-evolving characters, continually laboring under the weight of linguistic, cultural, and technological disadvantages as they try to acquire an American education.” Librarians can go beyond relying on outdated research and focus instead on establishing connections with campus partners to determine international students’ needs when developing new programs and initiatives.

Brief Description of the Academic Institution

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the state's flagship and oldest public university, currently enrolls over 43,000 students in more than 150 fields of study. According to the Institute for International Education's 2010 Open Doors Report, 7,287 international students from 119 countries elected to study at the University of Illinois during the 2009/2010 academic year. The percent of international student attendance at Illinois has increased dramatically from 11.38% of the student population in 2001/2002 to 16.67% in 2009/2010. Students' places of origin mirror the rest of the country, with almost half of all international students coming from China, India and South Korea. In both undergraduate and graduate student enrollment, the University of Illinois' Student Data Book indicates that Engineering and Business and Management are the most popular disciplines among international students. The campus also ranks second place in the nation's top 40 Doctoral/Research institutions in number of international students according to the most recent Open Doors Report.

Figure 1. A multifaceted model of outreach and instruction for international students



First level - Staff development

Staff training and development for librarians, staff and student workers is a key component toward fostering a culturally competent environment on campus. Training programs can often be developed through collaborations with other academic departments and student services units as a means to address new topics and areas of interest.

Library Diversity Committee

The Illinois Library Diversity Committee provides leadership and guidance to the Library faculty and staff by encouraging awareness about and discussions on diversity. Specifically, the committee focuses on diversity issues with regard to Library climate, cultural competence in the workplace, staff training and development, services to patrons, and campus outreach. The Diversity Committee also constructed the Library Diversity Statement with input from the entire Library staff as a way to demonstrate commitment to supporting diverse students, faculty, and staff members:

The University of Illinois Library is committed to an environment that welcomes, cultivates, values, respects and supports the differences and contributions of all students, faculty and staff at the University of Illinois, and the community. In addition, the University Library is dedicated to creating an inclusive community grounded in respect and appreciation for all individuals who work in the Library. The Library recognizes diversity as a constantly changing concept. It is purposefully defined broadly as encompassing, but not limited to, individuals' social, cultural, mental and physical differences.

(<http://www.library.illinois.edu/committee/diversity/charge.html>)

Staff Training

Library and staff training remains a pivotal component in the facilitation of establishing effective public service and communication with international students. The librarians partner with faculty and staff in other academic departments and student affairs offices such as the School of Social Work, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, and the Office of International Programs to provide training programs for librarians and staff working in public service positions. Through these partnerships, the Library's Diversity Committee sponsors an annual staff training program that reflects the Library's commitment to inclusion and cultural competence. Past programs include:

- Training on microaggressions led by a faculty member from the School of Labor and Employment Relations
- Sessions on inclusion in the workplace conducted by the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations
- Workshops on cultural competence in libraries led by faculty members in the School of Social Work

The Library Diversity Committee also hosts regular 'snack breaks' for the Library's staff, which serve as a facilitated discussion on current topics. Additionally, the Library encourages faculty and staff to seek out learning experiences that foster a climate of civility and inclusion. The Library's unique partnership with the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs offers librarians opportunities to mentor and learn from international librarians as a way to understand not only other cultures but to also learn about libraries in other areas of the world.

Second Level - Partnerships

Finding and establishing partnerships with student affairs units serving international students is a key step towards identifying, developing and sustaining new Library programs and services for international students.

Partnerships developed between the Library and Illinois campus offices serving international students include the Office of International Students and Scholars Services, the Intensive English Institute, the Department of Linguistic's English as a Second Language Program, the Study Abroad Office as well as four Cultural Centers. This series of partnerships are integral to the development of outreach initiatives and programs designed to reach international students, visiting international scholars, and their families on campus as they help to identify unmet student needs that inform new programs and services for international students.

These collaborations and partnerships also generate new marketing opportunities for the Library's programs and services for international students. Additionally, staff members at these offices may possess academic backgrounds and expert knowledge of cross-cultural communication methods, which can help to identify additional projects, lead to new collaborations, and the development of valuable training programs for librarians and Library staff working in public services positions. For instance, staff members at the Illinois Office of International Students and Scholars hold a series of training programs designed to help faculty and staff to learn more about international students' backgrounds and cultures.

Third Level – Outreach

Outreach to students beyond their traditional Library experiences extends the Library's services and programs to facilitate students' access to the Library's services, programs, collections, and research assistance whether online, in other physical locations, or at the Library.

International Student Orientations

Each fall and spring semester, the International Students and Scholars Services (ISSS), offers a new international student orientation where the Outreach Librarian for Multicultural Services designs and delivers information about the Library's services, programs and collections. Each year new international students attend this day-long orientation program with presentations from campus services such as financial services, athletic programs, campus safety and the Library for example. These orientations also connect students to a librarian, giving them an immediate contact for referrals for future research assistance. The fall orientations are conveniently scheduled one week prior to the Library's annual multilingual series of building tours, which helps to increase marketing and promotion. The orientations also serve as an invaluable venue to distribute Library information including promotional material, Library guides and handouts.

Multilingual Library Tours

The University Library initiated an annual series of multilingual Library tours in 2005, held at the start of each fall semester. The tours are designed to bring together Library staff, new students, researchers and their families. The first year the Library offered tours, twenty-eight students and community members attended, and by the fifth year, the number rose slightly to thirty-five. Results from an initial survey highlight that graduate students and their families compose the majority of attendees. A 2008 University of Illinois graduate student's thesis (Shiflet 2008) observed that non-native-English speaking spouses, classified as dependents on their full-time graduate student' spouse, often face more obstacles finding ways to integrate into the community. The study also shows that the Library stood out as a milieu that offers dependent visa holders a place of support and inclusion. Participants in the study, mostly women,

agreed that they appreciated exposure to collections in their native languages in addition to a friendly face that they could connect to in the future.

The combination of recruitment, training and publicity are critical elements in developing a series of multilingual tours. First, Library staff volunteers are recruited through the Library-wide listserv. Following recruitment, tour leaders attend a 30-minute training session where they receive a script of the tour in English, which they are responsible for translating. Posters are used to publicize the tour schedule throughout the Library and on campus. Over the past four years, Library staff, librarians, and graduate student assistants have led tours in an array of languages that include French, German, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Swahili, Polish and Russian.

Feedback from the volunteer tour leaders indicates their interest in the opportunity to speak with new campus community members in their native language. The multilingual tours, particularly those led in Korean, Chinese, Japanese and Swahili are well attended. The tours also help to extend immersion opportunities to students studying new languages. Finally, the tours increase an overall sense of inclusion among Library employees. Multilingual tours require no additional funding, only staff time, and can be easily replicable depending on an institution's strength of existing partnerships with international programs and the number of staff with multilingual backgrounds.

Reaching out to international students in multiple formats allows the student to choose what puts them at ease. For Library tours, formats also include cell phone tours, virtual tours and self-paced audio tours. For example, Illinois translated an audio tour into Chinese in order to accommodate the large number of Chinese students on campus.

Marketing Strategies

Marketing remains a lynch pin in the process of attracting students to the Library's programs and services. The University of Illinois librarians rely on several primary methods of communication to promote and market the Library's programs. Libraries can publicize events and programs through a variety of mediums, including listservs and posters or flyers in the following locations:

- The Office of International Students and Scholars
- New Orientation Programs for International Students
- The Study Abroad Office
- Faculty and Staff listservs campus-wide
- Foreign Language Departments
- The English Institutes and English Language Schools in the Community
- The Student Union and other public student venues
- Family and International Student Housing
- The Library's website

The partnerships with international student programs serve as valuable promotional partners, as they can disseminate information and publicity to their student listservs, reaching thousands of students. When developing instructional programs, film events, tours and orientations, marketing serves not only the international students but all faculty, staff, students, and community members, helping to establish a more robust campus experience for everyone on campus.

Fourth level - Instruction

Recent literature documents common struggles that international students face in conducting research at American academic libraries including language barriers, familiarity with Library systems, general cultural adjustments as well as research and writing skills. (Badke 2002, Baron & Strout-Dapaz 2001). Parallel to the ways in which information literacy has been incorporated into undergraduate education, librarians can assist in untangling the complex information needs international students.

Course-integrated instruction

Course-integrated instruction provides the librarian with an opportunity to work with international students within the context of an assigned research project. Students who enter the University of Illinois that do not speak English as their first language and have not met the mandated score for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam, must take an ESL Placement Test (EPT). The EPT determines who is required to take English as a Second Language (ESL) courses as part of their academic degree. In response, the Library built a partnership with the Department of Linguistics to create a course-integrated program with several undergraduate and all graduate level sections.

As part of the University's general education curriculum, the Library collaborates with Composition I instructors of undergraduate level ESL courses. The course-integrated sessions expect that students will have an assignment that requires research following the instruction. The sessions are a distinctive combination of elements including a discussion comparing home libraries across the world to a research Library environment, an introduction to Library databases through a concept mapping exercise that assists students with brainstorming search terms as well

as refining search strategies, and evaluating the credibility of various types of information sources.

In developing lesson plans for the graduate level ESL sessions, the Instructional Services Librarian collaborated with the ESL Program Coordinator to examine the curriculum within the context of expanding students' research skills. Specifically, the curriculum of the ESL courses focus on building students' skills in speaking, understanding, reading and writing English.

Examples highlight common obstacles that international students face in performing research:

an introduction to the conventions of group discussions and formal oral presentations;
introduction to paragraph development and organization of American academic writing;
introduction to the use of rhetorical modes typical of academic writing; introduction to the research paper; review of strategies for effective and critical reading; and special focus on advanced academic writing at the graduate level, including writing such as proposals, research reports, and theses. In response to these struggles, the Library developed the following primary learning outcomes for graduate level Library instruction at Illinois.

Attendees will:

- Contextualize the expertise of librarians in order to understand how librarians can assist scholars throughout their academic careers;
- Be prompted to ask questions (see below for the Cephalonian Method) about the organization and circulation policies of the Library in order to improve understanding of a research university Library system;
- Review citation identification strategies in order to learn how to locate a variety of research materials;

- Build on knowledge of subject area(s) and prior searching skills in order to conduct successful searches across Library databases;
- Sign up for a RefWorks account and select from 3 ways to import references in order to embark on citation management.

ESL courses present a distinctive learning environment, where diversity permeates the classroom. Students have disparate educational backgrounds and are at varying stages of their academic career. They were raised in different countries, have varying comfort levels with the English language, have contrasting experiences with libraries, and are enrolled across disciplines. The instruction classes are supported by a team of librarians and pre-professional graduate assistants from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Similarly, the ESL classes are taught by teaching assistants in the Department of Linguistics. The ESL classroom provides a laboratory for both the ESL graduate students, Library school students and teaching assistants who are working together to explore the complexities of teaching and learning within a research Library.

Active Learning

Haynes (2006) reminds us that, “It is always important for teachers to teach to their students’ learning styles but this becomes crucial when teaching English language learners.” In attempting to reach a variety of learning styles, the Illinois lesson plan includes active learning through the adaptation of the Cephalonian Method (Morgan and Davies 2004). The Cephalonian method is a welcoming orientation strategy that addresses auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic, global and analytical learners (Haynes 2006). Here’s how it works: Students are given color-coded slips of paper that are numbered with general questions about the Library. Examples include, “Does the

Library rent videos?” and “Can we eat in the Library?” and “How can I find journal articles?”

The librarian prepared a corresponding slide presentation that moves sequentially from question to answer. At the start of the session, the librarian instructs students that when their number is called, they should state their name, their home country, their field of study and then read the question. The librarian proceeds to answer the question. This ice-breaker activity generates conversation in the room and moves naturally into hands-on activities. Questions are updated based on classroom assessment and common interactions with international students. Hensley reflects that the Cephalonian method is a “user-centered instruction method where no two sessions are the same, incorporating the element of surprise for both the teacher and the learner (Hensley 2008, 27)

The Human Boolean (Dempsey 1998) exercise presents international students with an active learning approach to the complexities of Boolean. The instructor divides the classroom by common denominators such as male/female or wearing glasses/not wearing glasses. By asking students to stand up or sit down using the “and” or “or” terminology, students can visualize how to construct an effective Boolean search. In combination with Venn diagrams and database demonstrations, this quick exercise can complement demonstrations of advanced searching strategies. These are only two examples of active learning techniques that promote constructivist learning, an integral component in facilitating a framework of learning for international students.

Workshops

Graduate students, international and American, enter the university with vastly diverse information literacy skills. Since Library instruction is not mandated upon admittance or in all courses, students may experience significant gaps in knowledge regarding advanced research

skills and information management. One solution is to design a set of open workshops that assist students with critical thinking skills in a number of areas: scholarly communication issues including author rights and open access, plagiarism and academic integrity, citation management, searching for grant funding opportunities, data services, and proficiency around the publication and dissemination of scholarly work. A workshop on academic integrity encourages students to familiarize themselves with the academic standards of doing research specific to the University of Illinois. Students are introduced to Illinois documents that provide guidelines for academic integrity in teaching, research, service, coursework, research and publication, as well as information on intellectual property. The session is now part of Illinois' Mechanical and Science Engineering program, one of the largest academic programs teaching international students.

Although the Library advertises the series of workshops to the entire academic community, attendance is highest among international students.

Online Library Guides for International Students

Online learning opportunities can meet international students at their point of need. As a product of the partnership with the Department of Linguistics, librarians developed several online guides for incoming international students. The guides include basic information about how to use the Library including circulation policies, how to access Library resources and how to get help from research librarians. Learning modules also include video screen casts with closed-captioning to assist visual learners and to mitigate any language barriers. A glossary of Library terms can assist non-native English speakers with the Library jargon that inevitably arises when navigating an academic Library. The Association of College and Research Library's Multilingual Glossary provides a language table in six languages and a list of definitions of common terms. One example is the term 'reserves' which, when translated, does not refer to the Library's short-loan

service for course materials. Consulting with ESL instructors on campus will assist the brainstorming process for terms that may cause unnecessary confusion. The guides at Illinois are available to students as handouts at new student orientation sessions and during course-integrated instruction sessions.

Reference Services

The reference desk can be a place where international students are introduced to a librarian for the first time. By cultivating positive learning experiences and demonstrating the ways in which librarians can support long-term research needs, reference services can play a strong role in the academic life of an international student. When it comes to reference, staff training is imperative in serving an international clientele. Curry and Copeman (2005) remind us of the importance of being approachable, awareness of language barriers, and perhaps most importantly, making sure not to terminate interactions too early. In building reference services, would international students prefer interactions in their native language? Ferrer-Vinent (2010) conducted a study that found most students initially preferred interactions in English with follow-up conversations in their native language if they were not satisfied with the results of the initial transaction. The reference desk can also play the role of the connector, making referrals to the array of campus services that go beyond research support.

Fifth level - Student Needs

Academic libraries are situated to assist students with more than basic research needs. By incorporating a civil and sociable environment into the Library's daily activities, Library personnel can contribute to the diversity of campus life in addition to helping international students to feel more at home.

International Film Festivals

Each spring, the Office of International Student Programs coordinates an annual International Education Week. To complement this campus-wide program, the Outreach Librarian for Multicultural Services collaborates with the International Education Week planning committee to sponsor an international film festival. Selected films have included student documentaries, film projects that were created by local faculty, and a variety of films from the Library's collections with public performance rights. The partnership with the planning committee presents several key opportunities including recommendations for faculty speakers to introduce films, additional publicity which contributes to higher attendance, and new film suggestions. In selecting for the series, the librarian ensures that each film affirms the Library's commitment to encourage attendees to think critically about cultural issues and how those issues translate into daily life. The annual film festival also enables campus community members to come together and discuss each film through facilitated discussions.

Multicultural Library Exhibits

In an effort to generate an environment of inclusion as well as research, the Library produces monthly exhibits to promote collections, services, films, and community resources on a defined diverse topic. The exhibits are designed to encourage dialog about different cultures. For instance, each summer the Champaign-Urbana community hosts a food festival, highlighting locally-owned restaurants. Festivals present libraries with an ideal opportunity to showcase the community's resources such as international and ethnic restaurants as well as the Library's international cookbook collections. Other opportunities include international events such as the Olympics and the World Cup Soccer tournament, which can connect students to the Library's

collections on current events. Exhibit space also provides additional opportunities to collaborate with on-campus partners to expose their programs and services. For example, the Women's Resource Center and the Native American House collaborated with the Library to create exhibits related to violence against women and prejudice against Native American groups. The purpose of exhibits is to encourage students, faculty and staff to engage with the Library's dynamic resources and to think critically about current issues and global events.

Resource Allocation

Subject specialists at the University of Illinois are responsible for a collections budget of approximately half a million dollars that is set aside exclusively to support research in area studies and international languages. Additionally, the Outreach Librarian for Multicultural Services oversees a smaller budget to purchase requested items for the offices and student services programs. As many of the area studies specialists select monographs, serials, and online resources, much of the multicultural fund is reserved for acquiring international documentaries and media. Collection development requests, although traditionally reserved for faculty and academic departments, may also be extended to student affairs partners.

Multicultural Resources Portal

The Library can play an active role in highlighting activities across campus. Although many universities and libraries offer an array of diverse resources to their constituents, not enough libraries market their services and resources. For instance, Young (2006) conducted a study of thirteen libraries, revealing that only two libraries had a top level link for 'diversity' on their website. As students question what their universities are doing to support diversity initiatives, it is important to communicate what campus programs, services and resources are available and

how to gain new information in an easily accessible manner. In 2006, it was apparent that the University offered a wide range of diversity and international programs and services for faculty, staff and students, however, the University did not initially host a single clearinghouse to promote diversity programs and initiatives. The Library compiled a bibliography of the diverse programs, initiatives, resources, and services which transformed into a comprehensive web resource for students, faculty, staff and community members. Although the University has since developed a campus-wide portal for diversity and inclusion initiatives, the Library's portal also serves as a central place to search for Library resources on multicultural, international, multilingual information and Library outreach programs.

Sixth Level - Assessment

Assessment is an essential piece for an outreach program in order to meet the needs of an ever-changing international student population.

Instructional Assessment

Library instruction rarely lends itself to comprehensive assessment techniques, hence the decision to use the One Minute Paper Assessment (Angelo & Cross 1993) for Illinois ESL course-integrated instruction. As asserted by Conteh-Morgan (2002), "A more effective technique for ESL learners would be to implement classroom assessment strategies that can provide ongoing and immediate feedback." The One Minute Paper allows instructors to gauge generalized, formative feedback from students. Recent questions include "What is one thing you would still like to know about the Library?" and "Was there anything about today's session that confused you?" and "What is the most significant or meaningful thing you have learned during

the session?” The questions are changed from semester to semester and the responses help to inform the planning process for following semesters.

Given that responses received from the One Minute paper technique can be off-topic or contain incomplete thoughts, an assessment plan was designed to ask and examine identical questions in each student’s first language. Our hypothesis was that more robust feedback would be received if students were allowed to respond in their native language. The librarian worked with ESL teaching assistants to gather the native languages of the students in each class and hired translators to translate the questions and students’ answers. A parallel instruction session was used as the control and the assessment was issued in English. Surprisingly, the results did not validate the hypothesis. On average, we received the same number of incomplete responses and superficial feedback from the assessments as conducted in native languages as for the assessments completed in English. Although classroom assessment in native languages may not be necessary, it is still valuable to conduct regular assessment in order to consistently improve the changing classroom experience.

Conclusion

The most important partner the Library has in serving an international student population is the students. A holistic multicultural outreach program can address specific learning needs of international students and can also foster an open conversation regarding diversity among students, faculty and staff. The relationship is mutually beneficial. This chapter proposes elements of developing an outreach and instruction program geared toward reaching international students that is intertwined by staff training and partnerships. Additional ideas for programming and initiatives include:

- Hosting consulting firms outside the academic environment to offer training programs on cultures around the world;
- Working with university training to develop communication skills with specific groups of international students;
- Conducting institution specific focus groups to examine perceived international student library needs;
- Adapting instructional technology in the classroom that is appropriate for a wide variety of learning styles;
- Developing a peer tutoring service that pairs experienced students of similar cultural backgrounds with new students in order to develop research skills;
- Create a variety of multilingual resources for top represented languages;
- Network with campus faculty to explore research areas that enhance library offerings;
- Take workshops on topics developed for international students into campus departments.

Success resides in a commitment to growth, a willingness to adapt to change and a cohesive communication strategy. The demographics of international student populations will change over time and we have to be willing to embrace the opportunity to consistently reexamine how the Library's mission aligns with global perspectives.

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