
Surveying the Role of Ethnic-American Library Associations

TAMI ECHAVARRIA AND ANDREW B. WERTHEIMER

ABSTRACT

IN THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY, ethnic professional associations have been organized by American librarians of various ethnicities. These associations fill a niche in the profession not met by other associations. This article explores several such organizations to understand their origins and roles among the professional associations in library and information science. The associations examined are the American Indian Library Association, the Chinese-American Librarians Association, the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, REFORMA, ALA Black Caucus, the Association of Jewish Libraries, and the Jewish Information Committee. The ALA Ethnic Materials and Information Exchange Round Table and the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services are considered in connection with the ethnic American library associations. The authors also posit areas for further research.

INTRODUCTION

The last few decades since the blossoming of the civil rights movement have seen the emergence of a unique type of organization of librarians—i.e., the ethnic library association. These associations cross many professional and geographic boundaries, including public, special, school, and academic librarians from technical and public service as well as administration. What unites these professionals is an interest in professional opportunities for minority librarians, fostering access to unbiased ethnic

Tami Echavarría, Reference/Government Documents, Social Sciences and Humanities Library, 9500 Gilman Drive 0175R, University of California, La Jolla, CA 92093-0175

Andrew B. Wertheimer, Woodman Astronomical Library, 475 W. Charter Street, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706-1507

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information and recruitment of minority librarians to lead library service into a multicultural future. A survey of these associations demonstrates how many of these organizations were formed and ultimately examines the fruits of their collaborative action. While it is not a historical examination of the subject, a definition and a context is required to appreciate why these associations were formed and continue to fill a niche in the profession.

Minorities are comprised of individuals who have a common characteristic that is shared among them and which is different from the majority and from other minorities who do not share that characteristic. That common shared characteristic is the bond that unites the group. In the case of ethnic minorities, it is a common racial, cultural, religious, linguistic, and/or geographic heritage that defines a particular group as the same or similar and sets it apart from others (Chu, 1994, p. 128).

The 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were decades when white and minority societies were segregated and unequal in the United States. Nonwhite individuals had very limited opportunities and many were impoverished, under-educated, and alienated from the "American Dream." The 1960s was a decade of activism in which various entrenched values of American society were questioned and challenged, and new hope was born in the hearts and minds of many. Since the struggles of the 1960s for civil rights in American society, the voices of minorities, organized into groups for various causes, have been heard. Among these causes is equal opportunity for all of America's citizens irrespective of race, religion, gender, or color.

Libraries were, as they still are, a microcosm of American society. During the decades of the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and even into the 1960s, some library school professors expressed discriminatory attitudes regarding nonwhite students' intelligence being inferior (Williams, 1987, p. 156). Few minorities were in the profession, and their opportunities for advancement were virtually nonexistent. Discrimination in employment and promotional opportunities was rampant and blatant. The situation in libraries merely mirrored the larger society. In some states, professional organizations were segregated. Minority librarians who belonged to the American Library Association (ALA) felt that the association did not adequately represent them, did not provide opportunities for them to participate in decision-making, and responded to their needs too slowly and tentatively.

The result was that, in the 1970s, ethnic library associations and caucuses began to organize formally. The ALA Black Caucus formed in 1970; REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking, organized in 1971; the Asian American Library Caucus emerged in 1975; and the American Indian Library Association was established in 1978. This time period also saw the emergence of library

associations for Jewish-Americans and Chinese-Americans, among others. How they organized, their purposes, and the role they fill in the profession is important in understanding why they are needed. There are minority associations and caucuses in many professions; library and information science is representative, in this respect, of professions in the United States. Within the library and information science profession there are ethnic minority associations and caucuses at the national and, in some instances, state levels. It is the intent here to examine ethnic library associations and caucuses within the profession at the national level.

AMERICAN INDIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (AILA)

Indian peoples have seen libraries as a part of their education. During America's frontier days, Indian lands were often traded by Indian tribes to have access to the "white man's education." Treaties signed by the U. S. government, still in force today, guarantee this education. But living up to the agreements of the treaties has always been an issue, and the U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs has given Native Americans only the bare minimum.

Before the late 1970s, American Indians and Alaskan native people living on or near reservations did not have access to library facilities equal to other Americans. On most reservations under the auspices of the U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, the only library was a small school library. Its hours and resources were geared to juvenile readers and considered inadequate (Isaac, 1978, p. 13). State and public libraries felt no obligation to serve reservations since the Indian tribes were not part of their tax base (L. Mitten, personal communication, February 10, 1997). Most reservations provided nothing in the way of library services for the adult community. The only exceptions to this bleak situation were just a few isolated school library media centers which had sought and received funding from grants set aside for Indian education through initiative taken by the local reservation. These isolated models had been well received by their communities who took great pride in them (Buffalomeat et al., 1978). But the money had always been project oriented or short term, and there were no reliable sustaining funds for library services and resources for reservation libraries (Mathews, 1978, pp. 2-3).

Not only did the communities have current information needs that were not being served adequately, but the imperative need for Indian communities to know their past required the establishment of repositories in which they could do historical research into the archives of their historical records:

It is noteworthy that during the Second World War when many government agencies were asked to destroy old records in order to make room for war-time record-keeping that the Indian records were

among the few subject areas exempt from this requirement. . . . In preserving these records there is a clear indication that the Congress and executive branch intended that one day Indians would have access and familiarity with the records of their past as preserved in the federal archives and record centers. (Deloria, 1978, p. 12)

American Indians in the field of education needed to know their past, the traditional alternatives advocated by their ancestors, and the specific experiences of their communities. The oral history tradition remained, and the adults wanted the children to know their tribe's heritage, cultural values, and the meaning of its customs. There was a need for Indian writers to supply their history, record their lifestyle, and create their own materials (Shields, 1970, p. 858).

In 1971, a small task force of American Indian librarians formed to address the issue of a lack of any kind of libraries for Indian peoples. In October 1978, the *White House Pre-Conference on Indian Library and Information Services on or Near Reservations* was held in Denver to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive improvement of library services and resources to American Indians (White House Pre-Conference, 1978). Participants came from a variety of Indian tribes representing all parts of the United States. The result of the White House Pre-Conference was a resolution which was taken forward to the *White House Conference on Library and Information Services* the next year. This comprehensive resolution contained concrete proposals for providing financial support for building libraries, training library staff, library materials, technical assistance, the establishment of Indian Studies programs in institutions of higher education, and the establishment of a National Indian Library Center in the U. S. Department of the Interior's Office of Library and Information Services. The resolution was passed in 1979, and thus began the formal provision of library services for American Indians and Alaskan natives living on or near reservations (*Information for the 1980s*, 1980, pp. 75-76).

For American Indian librarians, the natural evolution of this important step forward was the formation of an ethnic library association. The American Indian Library Association (AILA) was organized in June 1979 and became affiliated with the American Library Association in June 1985. Its purposes are: (1) promoting the establishment, maintenance, and upgrading of Indian libraries on or near reservations; (2) developing criteria and standards for Indian libraries; (3) providing technical assistance on archival services to Indian tribes; (4) supporting the development of Indian information networks among tribes and institutions maintaining Indian archives; (5) educating public officials and the general public about library/information needs of Indian communities; (6) bringing together those interested in Indian libraries at conferences; (7) helping members of Indian communities gain access to and use libraries; (8) enhancing the capability of libraries to assist Indian authors; (9) planning workshops

on Indian library services; (10) developing grant proposals and fundraising activities to support Indian library projects; and (11) developing awareness in the non-Indian society of Indian peoples' desire for library information resources (American Indian Library Association, n.d.).

American Indians are accustomed to being invisible in all phases of American society. The lack of acknowledgment, basic respect, and cultural appreciation for the nation's native peoples is a form of racism (Fletcher, 1997, p. 3). The disregard for their needs and the disrespect shown toward the educational competency of minorities is also racist and is institutionalized in the highest levels of our government.

In the mid 1980s a new political appointee, a top administrator who was to head the library program in the United States Department of Education, told me [a founder of AILA], "I'm not interested in Indians." She wouldn't support renewal of a national training and assistance project for tribal libraries, saying that "they [Indians] don't need libraries; they can't read anyway." (L. Patterson, personal communication, February 12, 1997)

Over the years, the American Indian Library Association has promoted libraries and library systems in Indian Country (as defined in 18 U. S. C. 1151). These libraries provide the facility for preservation, documentation, study, promotion of Indian languages, history, legal rights, and culture as tribal institutions. They are the foundation for participation in modern automation and technology. AILA has facilitated the provision of information resources to improve Indian library, cultural, and information services in schools, libraries, and reservations. AILA is committed to disseminating information about Indian cultures, languages, values, and information needs to the library community.

The number of tribal libraries has risen, but even today there is no permanent source of library funding from the federal government, which is responsible for Indian reservations. AILA has kept the issue in front of the U. S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, but it is a continuing issue, and AILA's voice is small in an arena of multiple conflicting demands and shifting political priorities. There is the hope that "technology is going to leap frog some of these tribal libraries over the barriers they've been facing" but the funding varies from state to state and remains project oriented and short termed. There is no coordinating office for Indian libraries anywhere (L. Patterson, personal communication, February 12, 1997).

AILA's priorities have shifted somewhat over the years. Getting funding for new reservation libraries is no longer the urgent need it once was. Permanent funding to keep reservation libraries going is still problematic. There are still few American Indian librarians in the profession, and recruitment is a priority (McCook, 1993). Since there are so many

tribes, the American Indian Library Association is a unifying voice for issues concerning many tribal libraries and for networking among American Indian librarians. It is the only voice for an overall vision.

ASIAN-AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

Discrimination has become a major part of Asian-American history. Significant events in this history included laws which barred Asians from citizenship, the "internment" of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and the Chinese Exclusion Act. Immigration scholar Daniels (1988) goes so far as to write that: "Unfortunately, much of Asian American experience is what I call 'negative History'; that is, for a significant part of their history in this country, Asians have been more celebrated for what has happened to them than for what they have accomplished" (p. 4).

Asian-American immigrants settled in ethnic communities, mostly along the Pacific Coast. Chinese, the first group to immigrate to the West Coast in significant numbers, were segregated to special schools in San Francisco (Daniels, 1988, p. 111). A historical search of library literature before World War II reveals a dearth of material on Asian-Americans as library patrons or as librarians. A search of biographical dictionaries of librarians from the same period reveals that most were catalogers of Asian-language material in academic libraries or ran branch libraries in larger cities. This lack of Asian-American librarians, and attitudes related to them, is highlighted in a speech by Yust at the 1913 ALA Conference: "So far there is no indication of a yellow race [sic] problem in public libraries. When foreigners enter a field which is already occupied they do not produce a real race problem so long as they are so few in number that they are chiefly objects of curiosity" (p. 159).

To counteract these attitudes, Asian Americans have organized several professional organizations to serve the diverse community of Asian-American librarians. They have been instrumental in the struggle to fight discrimination, overcome racial bias and language and cultural differences, and to provide mentoring and community for one another.

With over 600 members, the largest Asian-American professional library association is the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA). CALA is the product of a merger of two organizations, the Chinese-American Librarians Association, founded in Chicago in 1973, and the Chinese Librarians Association which was established at Stanford University in 1974. According to the current President, Mengxioung Liu, CALA was founded "because there was a need to enhance communication among Chinese-American librarians to discuss the common concerns in providing service to Chinese-American populations, and to promote career advancement for Chinese-American librarians" (personal communication, March 28, 1997).

The goals and objectives of CALA are: (1) to enhance communications between Chinese-American librarians and other librarians and among themselves, (2) to serve as a forum for discussion of mutual problems and professional concerns for Chinese-American librarians, (3) to promote Sino-American librarianship and library services, and (4) to provide a vehicle for cooperation with other associations with similar or allied interests (Wan, 1986, p. 141).

To meet the aforementioned goal of communication, CALA maintains a Web site, a listserv, a newsletter, a directory, and copublishes the *Journal of Library and Information Science* with the National Taiwan Normal University. It also sponsors an annual banquet and programs in conjunction with the ALA annual convention. Five local chapters also meet approximately twice each year (M. Liu, personal communication, March 29, 1997). At the annual banquet, the association presents two scholarships and the CALA Distinguished Service Award, which recognizes an individual's activity to promote CALA and Chinese-American librarianship.

CALA has also been active in transliteration standards and a program of sending books to China. Besides professional development, the association also offers a place to "assist members to develop some management and leadership skills" (M. Liu, personal communication, March 29, 1997). That these efforts are bearing fruit is evident by the increasing number of CALA members who have run for ALA Council. CALA works closely with the ALA and the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) to represent the interests of the membership.

The Asian Pacific American Librarians Association is another affiliate of ALA. Formally established in 1980, APALA's roots date back to 1975 as an "informal discussion group in ALA" entitled the Asian American Librarians Caucus. The nearly 300 members "represent 17 self-identified ethnic groups ranging from American to Vietnamese" (Asian Pacific American Librarians Association, n.d.).

The four largest APALA ethnic groups are Chinese (40 percent), East Indian (14 percent), Filipino (10 percent), and Korean (16 percent). Members are "tuned to diversity among themselves, and practice what APALA promotes." For example, the members have worked out a harmonious rotating system by ethnicity for the presidency (Asian Pacific American Librarians Association, n.d.).

The objectives and purposes of APALA are: (1) to provide a forum for discussing problems and concerns of Asian/Pacific American librarians, (2) to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, (3) to support and encourage library services to Asian/Pacific Americans in the library/information professions, (4) to seek funding for scholarships for Asian/Pacific American students in library and information science schools, and (5) to provide a vehicle for communication with other associations having similar or allied interests (Nicolescu & Collantes, 1986, p. 138).

In addition to a newsletter, listserv, directory, and annual programs, APALA published in 1996 the first *Asian American Resources Directory*, which serves as an important reference tool.

The Asian-American Law Librarians Caucus was organized at the 1987 American Association of Law Librarians (AALL) Annual Meeting and has presented thematic programs at AALL meetings since then. It also maintains a Web site and a newsletter (Asian-American Law Librarians Caucus, n.d.).

REFORMA: THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION TO PROMOTE LIBRARY SERVICES TO THE SPANISH SPEAKING

Concern with providing library services and resources for Spanish-speaking Americans evolved slowly in American libraries. Prior to the mid 1950s, library services and resources were inadequate for anyone who did not read English. Other than the limited work of the ALA Committee on Work with the Foreign Born in the 1940s, librarians showed little interest or understanding of the various cultures within the Latino community and their library needs (Jones, 1991). Spanish-speaking children were segregated in their schools. Discrimination in housing was exercised against Latinos. Latinos were largely ignored by American society and American libraries. The belief was common that conventional library services were sufficient for Hispanics, and that they did not use the libraries because they were not interested or could not read (Haro, 1987, p. 142).

In 1956, the Seminar for the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) was founded. SALALM is an organization which focuses on publications from Latin America so that libraries and librarians have at their disposal a forum on the development of collections about Latin America. Although, by the late 1950s, Chicano authors were producing an increasing number of publications, this body of literature was not considered mainstream by the academy (Dawson, 1990, pp. 121-22). By the 1960s, a few people saw the need for information sources for the increasing Spanish-speaking population in the United States, and federal funds became available for developing new library programs to address this need. Since this purpose was not being addressed by the profession nor its associations, a grassroots movement among Latino librarians emerged.

In 1968, the Committee to Recruit Mexican American Librarians formed in Los Angeles, and from it was founded the Graduate Institute for Mexican American Librarians at the now defunct library school at California State University, Fullerton. By 1972, the Graduate Library Institute for Spanish-Speaking Americans (GLISA) was founded at the library school at the University of Arizona. Both programs focused on recruitment to librarianship and on increasing the number of Latino li-

brarians serving Spanish-speaking communities (Güereña, 1996, p. 77). But both were funded on short-term money and the funding ran out.

The National Association of Spanish Speaking Librarians in the United States was founded in 1971, and a year later "REFORMA" was added in front of this name. REFORMA is not an acronym but rather reflected the goal of this association to reform the lack of outreach to Spanish-speaking people. In 1983, the name was changed to REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking to better reflect the goal rather than the membership of the association (Dawson, 1990, pp. 123, 127). The association consists of regional chapters in diverse geographic parts of the nation. Since Latinos in different parts of the country are from various countries of origin, there are significant variations in culture, values, and even language (Trejo, 1970, p. 716). Librarians must understand the language and culture to be effective within the Spanish-speaking community and to have the opportunity to bring understanding about the Latino community to others in the larger community (Haro, 1987, pp. 143-47).

REFORMA's purposes are to: (1) unite librarians of Ibero-American extraction and those interested in working with the Spanish speaking/Spanish surnamed; (2) work toward implementation of policies which adequately fulfill needs of the Spanish speaking/Spanish surnamed in matters concerning librarianship; (3) study available research data to understand Spanish-speaking ethnic groups to make library services more meaningful and useful for them; (4) promote research on problems concerned with production, distribution, and use of library materials and compile bibliographies; (5) develop a clearinghouse for information about the Spanish speaking; (6) identify and evaluate library programs designed for adequate service to the Spanish speaking; (7) identify needs and priorities for those working with the Spanish speaking; (8) formulate guidelines for libraries at all levels of service to the Spanish speaking; (9) explore the application of computer technology for resolving problems with library services to the Spanish speaking; (10) make recommendations for ALA and other associations to play a more active role in promoting library service to the Spanish speaking; and (11) conduct an annual meeting to carry forward REFORMA's objectives (Dawson, 1990, pp. 130-31).

In August 1996, REFORMA marked its twenty-fifth anniversary and held its first independent conference. It was a coming of age for this growing organization and a time for reunion and centering for many colleagues. It was a celebration of progress and pride and set the stage for new challenges, goals, and growth (REFORMA's rite of passage, 1996). One of these challenges is to increase the number of scholarships from the thirty-three REFORMA has already given (Oder, 1996, p. 39).

As the Latino population increases in the United States, REFORMA's role continues. In the current economic climate with budget cutbacks,

there is stiff competition for finite resources and numerous conflicting demands for those resources. REFORMA continues the struggle to get Spanish language resources and Latino-oriented materials into libraries at all levels. REFORMA has been successful in lobbying American publishers to produce Spanish language materials, including a recently released Spanish language index (E. Erazo, personal communication, February 27, 1997). Despite many positive changes that libraries have made and many inroads toward enlightening librarians to this need, it remains troubling that it is still problematic to get adequate resources and services into Spanish-speaking communities (Güereña, 1996, p. 77).

Recruitment is a continuing priority for REFORMA. A shortage of Latino librarians still plagues the profession in spite of efforts over the years at recruitment. However, the voice of Latino librarians has gotten stronger within the American Library Association and some state associations, where many have taken their place in the process of decision making and leadership.

REFORMA's objectives remain as valid today as they were in the early days of its existence. The members are united by their common goals of developing Spanish language and Latino-oriented library collections, recruiting bilingual librarians and library staff, promoting library awareness of collections and services, and advocating the information needs of the Hispanic community. REFORMA is an association where members with similar experiences and goals unite to address issues and plan strategies that are not addressed by other associations.

BLACK CAUCUS OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (BCALA)

The conferences of the American Library Association were attended by few black librarians before 1940. Humiliating conditions and segregated accommodations made it difficult for the few black librarians in the profession to participate. After the 1936 ALA cConvention in Richmond, Virginia, where black members of the association were treated with hostility by the local citizens, an outcry of protest was lodged by some ALA members. This marked a turning point for the American Library Association and resulted in passage, at the next conference, of a resolution that all meetings connected with ALA conferences would be open to all members. This meant that conferences could not be scheduled, however, in the segregated southern cities. Black librarians continued to suffer the humiliation of staying in inferior accommodations and lacked any mechanism to influence improvement. By the mid-1950s, when some hotel accommodations became available for blacks in northern cities, black librarians participated more broadly in ALA and, in 1954, the ALA Council adopted a constitutional change regarding state chapters that was to force the issue of disallowing segregated state chapters. But this issue was not settled until a resolution was passed at the 1962 ALA

Conference in Miami Beach. After that, some black librarians were able to participate, and a few rose to leadership positions in some state chapters. But membership for blacks was not routine in other state chapters and had to be fought for in some associations, particularly in the South (Marshall, 1970, pp. 178-81).

The 1960s were filled with strides which gave black Americans their civil rights in many arenas. But the activism of the 1960s left black librarians dissatisfied with the American Library Association, because the association had been too slow and reticent in promoting their needs. Discrimination in employment and lack of equal promotional opportunity remained prevalent. Blacks involved in the association were dispersed among the various divisions and activities and therefore did not have a collective voice on issues of social change or in shaping ALA's principles and practices. The few blacks who were given leadership positions in the association were often considered mere tokens by their colleagues. "After a decade of heightened civil rights activities, the race barriers have been lowered somewhat and blacks are gradually gaining acceptance in libraries. Libraries, nevertheless, continue, to a large extent, to mirror the larger society and, despite substantial gains, the black librarian still finds only a limited role" (Alford, 1970, p. 131).

Efforts to organize the Black Caucus of the American Library Association began in 1968 and gained momentum in 1969. It was officially organized at the Midwinter Conference in January 1970. The stated purposes of the ALA Black Caucus are: (1) to call ALA's attention to the need to respond positively on behalf of black members and the information needs of the black community; (2) to provide equal opportunity for black members as candidates for ALA offices; (3) to monitor ALA divisions, round tables, and committees regarding meeting the needs of black librarians; (4) to promote wider participation of black librarians at all levels of the profession and the association; (5) to promote efforts for equitable representation for black librarians in state associations and library advisory boards; (6) to facilitate library service that meets the needs of black people; and (7) to encourage development and dissemination of authoritative information resources about black people to the larger community (ALA Black Caucus, 1978, Foreword).

Black librarians knew that the decade of the 1960s was only a beginning, and there was more work to be done to achieve their goals of true equality. The Black Caucus was the answer:

With widespread support and an organizational commitment to the professional interests of its members, such an organization could effectively intervene in cases of abridgment of intellectual freedom as well as give strong support to upgrading the status and working conditions of librarians.... The Black Caucus offers the possibility of power within ALA in order to call attention to the lack of career

opportunities for black librarians and the lack of an effective voice in the affairs of the Association. (Wedgeworth, 1970, pp. 74-75)

And so it has. Over the next two decades, the Black Caucus was a voice of solidarity for African-American librarians. As African-American librarians began to move into the infrastructure of the American Library Association and assume leadership roles, employment and promotional opportunities for African-American librarians in libraries throughout the nation increased. Supporting the library needs of the African-American community is another area that has seen great improvement but still requires more.

African-American librarians are greatly concerned about racism. At a time when there is much concern about cultural diversity in our country, "in many instances it appeared that around the country many organizations and institutions had given up on their commitment to minorities. In addition, the campus bigotry in many of our universities has motivated violence and has called for an examination of the problem of hate speech as well as hate crimes that have been hurled against not only African Americans but all minorities" (Josey, 1994, pp. 1-2).

The struggle to deinstitutionalize racism continues in our society as well as in libraries and professional associations, which mirror the society at large. Some progress has been made but not nearly enough. "Perhaps in the last 25 years the only change in racial attitudes, in the United States, is the covert rather than overt nature of beliefs about blacks" (Biblo, 1994, p. 334). Although racial taunts and indignities are no longer socially acceptable in American society, racist outbreaks and hate crimes bespeak a more covert level of racism that has not been eradicated. Racism is poisonous, whether subtle or blatant. "Subtle discrimination, often defended as being unintended, lends itself to individual interpretations depending upon the predisposition of the recipients. This form of discrimination is only slightly less humiliating than the blatant version that often leaves its victim feeling degraded and demoralized" (Williams, 1987, p. 157). The energies of the Black Caucus have been somewhat redirected as some of the issues have improved. Recruitment of new African-American librarians to the profession has been an ongoing concern and in 1988 emerged as a priority for the Black Caucus. In the 1990s, the unprecedented competition for scarce resources has put library services in African American and other minority communities at risk. The Black Caucus continues to have the role of advocate for library service and resources for the nation's African-American community. For African-American librarians, the Black Caucus continues to be the place where they keep community, network, and learn with others like themselves.

The Black Caucus has held two conferences in which African-American librarians have a chance to network, learn, keep community, and celebrate culture. One concern African-American librarians addressed

at these conferences has been subject headings that ensure effective and efficient retrieval of African-American collections (Bell, 1994, pp. 568, 570). A third conference was held in 1997.

ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH LIBRARIES (AJL) AND THE JEWISH INFORMATION COMMITTEE (JIC)

Many treatments of multiculturalism in libraries do not deal with Jews either as patrons or as staff. This is not unique to librarianship. Multiculturalism can be seen as empowering historically disenfranchised groups, and Jews are often not regarded as being in this group. This attitude ignores the history of anti-semitism in America, as exemplified by the scandal when a Jew was not allowed to participate at the New York Library Week, which took place at Melvil Dewey's Lake Placid Club (Wiegand, 1995, p. 361). The migration of Eastern European Jews coincided with the emerging years of librarianship. During the century between then and the time that awareness of the Holocaust made American anti-semitism significantly less socially acceptable, many Jews encountered difficulty securing library jobs (Wistrich, 1991, p. 115). Jews are also not recognized on census data because of the separation of church and state, which raises the question of whether Jews are an ethnic or a religious group. The answer depends on the respondent, as can be seen from the two associations which serve Jewish-American librarians—the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) and the Jewish Information Committee of the ALA Ethnic Materials and Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT—JIC).

The AJL is the largest and the oldest of the two organizations. It is the product of a merger of the academic Judaica librarians of the Jewish Librarians Association, established in 1946, and the Jewish Library Association, which goes back to the 1950s and was composed of Synagogue and Jewish Community Center librarians (Posner, 1991, p. 110). The two groups merged in 1965-1966, although the organization recognizes the division of the two groups into a Research and Special Libraries Division as well as one for Synagogue, School and Community Center (SSC) librarians. The over 1,000 members of the AJL are involved in many projects regarding the profession. Communication is effected by the AJL Web page, a listserv entitled *Ha-Safran*, and the bimonthly *AJL Newsletter*, which features brief reviews of recent Judaica. It also publishes a peer-reviewed journal entitled *Judaica Librarianship*. Members of the association have gathered at annual conferences and also meet in over a dozen chapters throughout North America and Israel. Conferences feature presentations, continuing education courses, and comradeship.

The AJL established standards and accredits SSC libraries. Both divisions also attempt to foster the publishing of quality materials on Jewish studies and Jewish children's books by presenting several prestigious

awards—three Sydney Taylor Awards, which recognize the best published books for younger and older readers, and one which goes to a previously unpublished manuscript. Since 1985, the AJL Reference Book Award has been presented annually for the most outstanding Judaica reference book, and the AJL Bibliography Award has recognized the best works in that field since 1988. The AJL also seeks to recruit qualified Judaica librarians through a scholarship and a program of conference mentoring.

Catalogers play an active role in the association with one serving as a voting representative to the National Information Standards Organization with special attention to Hebrew and Yiddish language transliteration (Posner, 1991, p. 134). The association seeks to eliminate bias from Library of Congress (LC) and Dewey Decimal subject headings for Judaica as well as providing assistance for libraries which use the Weine and Elazar schemes for cataloging Judaica (Frischer, 1991, p. 161).

The Jewish Information Committee of ALA's Ethnic Materials and Information Exchange Round Table is a much smaller group. It fights discrimination and provides a gathering place for Jewish librarians at ALA conferences. The committee and the AJL have been involved in political struggles with the Library of Congress regarding discriminatory subject headings and were involved with the political struggles over the proposed exhibit at the 1984 California Library Association conference by a Holocaust revisionist publisher, the fate of Jewish librarians in the USSR in the 1970s, and the ALA resolution on Israeli censorship. Since 1995, it has co-sponsored a program with the AJL to increase awareness of Judaica librarianship. The JIC began as the Jewish Librarians Caucus in the 1970s and issued a mimeographed newsletter for several years until it became a committee of the EMIERT. This change was made in order to bring more life into both organizations (D. Cohen, personal communication, March 29, 1997). Until this year, the organization was known as the Jewish Librarians Committee.

THE ALA ETHNIC MATERIALS AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE ROUND TABLE

The ALA's round table which promotes multicultural library services is the EMIERT, which began as a task force in the young ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) in 1972 and became a full round table in 1982 (ALA EMIERT, n.d., p. 1-1). Unlike many other organizations, the EMIERT focuses not on one ethnic or linguistic group. In a recent newsletter article, editor David Cohen (1996) answered the question on defining multiculturalism as: "Multiethnic' wrapped up with 'Multilingual.' It reflects our concerns as professionals about reaching out into the community to deal effectively with all ethnic groups. Some ethnic groups need our attention more than others, but all come within our

purview of responsibility" (p. 1). Several committees foster the round table's goals, and it presents the Gale Research/EMIERT Multicultural Award. Its quarterly newsletter also reviews ethnic books and prints bibliographies.

EMIERT also is the home of the Jewish Information Committee, formerly the Jewish Librarians Committee. An Armenian-American committee is also being organized. EMIERT has invited other groups to come under its umbrella, but they have chosen to maintain their independence.

THE ALA OFFICE FOR LITERACY AND OUTREACH SERVICES (OLOS)

Several of the aforementioned associations (AILA, APALA, BCALA, CALA, and REFORMA) are affiliates of ALA. Many of these groups have been active in working with the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS). According to APALA President, Kenneth Yamashita, the OLOS Director, Satia Orange, "is determined to involve the affiliate minority librarian associations, to which she is the liaison, in the setting of priorities for the office and as resources for those seeking information on library services to minority communities" (K. Yamashita, personal communication, March 28, 1997). Yamashita believes that the increasing size of the Asian/Pacific American population, as well as the activism of APALA members within ALA, will encourage the association to address APALA's concerns. One positive example of this was the acceptance of APALA's decision that a minority affiliate association representative be included on the ALA Executive Director Search Committee. Other examples include the Diversity Council and the Spectrum Initiative (K. Yamashita, personal communication, March 28, 1997).

The Spectrum Initiative is a draft proposal by ALA's Executive Director, Elizabeth Martinez, to the ALA Executive Board to attract and retain minority librarians. It suggests the establishment of a three-year program involving five library and information science schools and fifty students "representing the four largest ethnic minority populations—African American, Asian Pacific Islander, Latino/Hispanic, and Native American" (Martinez, 1997, p. 1).

The current draft proposes a \$5,000+ annual scholarship and an additional \$30,000 for each school to develop enrichment activities. The initiative, which is not an implementation plan, contrasts the figure of the above-named minorities representing 26 percent of the population but only 10.5 percent of library school graduates in 1993-1995. To promote retention and promotion of minority librarians, the initiative also suggests annual leadership institutes for mid-career minority librarians (Martinez, 1997, pp. 1, 2). Martinez (1997) posits the initiative as "a model for education that can be transformed to other issues of diversity" (p. 4). This proposal clearly reflects some of the influence of the ethnic

library associations. However, it is much too early to see how this will be received in the association.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The organizations referred to in this article have been briefly examined. Further historical examination should be done. Additionally, other associations such as the Korean American Librarians Association and the Ukrainian Library Association of America merit examination. Future researchers would be encouraged to compare the relationship between the various groups and the larger field and consider the communication among them. A comparison might be made to the ethnic associations in other professions. Due to a scarcity of documentation available on some of the ethnic library associations, more oral history recordings could be made with the pioneers of these organizations. These organizations should ensure that their records are preserved in the ALA Archives at the University of Illinois or at other institutions to allow historians further investigations.

CONCLUSION

Insensitivity to the needs of cultural and language minorities continues. Bilingualism is often seen as a threat to American society, and English-only legislation continues to be proposed. Racism is apparent even among powerful national leaders (role models) in our nation. Newt Gingrich, the speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, said: "Allowing bilingualism to continue to grow is very dangerous. . . . We should insist on English as a common language" (Shogren, 1995, p. A13). Discrimination has not ceased to exist in American society. Inequity exists in the standards by which accomplishment is judged so that minorities are held to a higher standard of achievement than their white counterparts. The perception is that "there is more scrutiny of women and minorities which is a lot of pressure. Any organization run by a minority is held to greater standards. The demand is 'show me how good you are'" (L. Herrera, personal communication, February 11, 1997).

Multiculturalism represents a distinctive way of thinking about minorities. Racial and ethnic minorities are entitled to recognition of their culture and attainment of equality politically, socially, educationally, and economically (Olshen, 1996, p. 2). The United States is a society full of diversity, a tapestry of multiculturalism. This article demonstrates that in the 1990s ethnic library associations still fill a need.

But racism, anti-semitism, and discrimination continue to rear their ugly heads time and again in our society. "Racism is so universal in this country, so widespread and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal" (Chisholm, 1970, p. 133). Laws have not changed the hearts and minds of men and women; exclusionary practices still contribute to

the underrepresentation of minorities (Nance-Mitchell, 1996, p. 410). Racial discrimination is systemic and embedded within the policies and practices of our institutional structures which mirror our nation's social fabric. It is exemplified in most areas of American life including economic, social, cultural, political, and educational.

Racism is a grave concern of ethnic library associations. It is an issue of high priority. Until racial equality is achieved, racism continues to be a motivating force for ethnic library associations to exist. When racial and ethnic minorities receive the recognition of their culture and attainment of political, social, educational, and economic equality to which they are entitled, multiculturalism will be realized.

In the 1990s we are struggling to change the organizational policies and practices which have a discriminatory impact and to change individual behaviors and attitudes that reinforce racism. But we still have a long way to go before policies of diversity and equity are operational in the hearts and minds of most. "Until the United States comes fully to grips with its most historic, endemic, and pervasive problem—the problem of racism—it will be incapable of fashioning a real cultural diversity climate throughout the land" (Josey, 1994, p. 2). We have not reached the stage of cultural pluralism where value is placed on maintaining unique ethnic and cultural heritages and is respected by the society at large.

Diversity must evolve from being a buzzword to being a keyword in the philosophy, terminology, and activity of the American Library Association, other library associations, libraries, and librarians throughout the country (Liu, 1994, p. 73). As a start, cultural diversity programs have been established in many libraries and associations. Many librarians have participated in cultural diversity initiatives, and many minority librarians have had the opportunity to lead some of those initiatives. But there is also the strong sense that more lip service has been given than actual implementation of positive change and that the commitment to multiculturalism is weak. It is a long process but, until diversity is truly incorporated as a strong value that most individuals will adopt, it will not be realized.

Recruitment of new minorities to the profession is an ongoing process in which all of the ethnic associations are involved. Although some progress has been achieved, huge strides have not been made in attracting ethnic minorities into the profession (McCook, 1993, pp. 36-37). Doing so continues to be a priority for ethnic American library associations.

Ethnic associations provide a sense of community and networking for their members. When a former president of BCALA was asked why he joined that ethnic caucus, he said: "I found a group of people who were fighting the same battles and had the same goals and aspirations for themselves and the profession as I did" (S. Biddle, personal communica-

tion, February 21, 1997). Many minority librarians feel that they get lost in the larger associations such as ALA (Nelson, 1994, p. 38). In the ethnic caucuses, opportunities are available to learn and exercise leadership skills which can later be used in the various divisions, committees, and round tables of the ALA. And each ethnic association and caucus is a voice of unity for its constituents. This united voice can be used to effect change, to teach others about the group, and to stand up for the needs of that group. Until multiculturalism and cultural pluralism are institutionalized as pervasive values, the need will continue for minority librarians to have the support of being with others like themselves.

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