This Trend Called Diversity

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ABSTRACT

THE WORK OF DIVERSITY IN LIBRARIES BEGINS at the crossroad where superiority, inaction, and denial become intolerable. Yet in working toward true diversity, we work without the familiar construct of a mainstream. We respond to, or ignore, repetitive critique of being too exclusive or not inclusive enough. We decide whether it is appropriate to quantify the existence of a people or to trust what we know intuitively. These paradoxes present us with questions that serve as teachable moments or paralyzing hurdles. Once at the crossroads, however, there are systematic strategies and operating principles for bringing significance, meaning, and action to this trend called diversity.

INTRODUCTION

"Diversity" is a trend that is ever contemporary, historical, and futuristic. It touched our foremothers and forefathers, it touches the seventh generation that follows us, and it touches us now—at this moment. Within the history of the designated borders that is presently called the United States, within the bookshelves, the oral traditions, and the Web sites and links located in the brick and mortar and/or click and point libraries that we work in, we find the stories of "difference." Our ancestors came by choice to this land, others were forced out of one land and onto another, and yet others who lived here on this land bore witness to someone else's "discovery" of their life. Perhaps the forefathers and foremothers, per-

haps James Byrd, Matthew Shephard, and Won-Joon Yoon watched their own lives "discovered" at the crossroads of dehumanization and survival while experiencing great trauma in the midst of strangers. The deaths and the lives of contemporaries and ancestors connect us. Suddenly the borders dissolve between Texas, Indiana, and Wyoming; between history and the new millennium; between what is "real" and what is online; what is national legislation; and what is "on the streets"; and what occurs inside the library building and outside of it. Here are the borderless crossroads where the connection to self-reflective questions about how one wants to live, how one wants to work, and how one will develop strength enough to take a stand on behalf of these personal and professional choices ruminate.

"Diversity" is named and defined in places of great power. It is articulated by one's own "home talk" at the kitchen table with trusted friends, cousins, and elders. It is articulated by business terminology at executive retreats by designated leaders. "Diversity" is fiery and tame depending on one's perspective, the context, the issue at hand, and one's own energy flow for the day. Sometimes the definitions and visualizations are sharp and explicit: racism, white privilege, homophobia, heterosexual privilege, inequity of access, institutional racism, organizational barriers, apologies and reparation, "illegal" aliens, non-English speaking, non-white, non-user, old boys' network, and old girls' network. Sometimes the definitions and visualizations are easier on the senses and perhaps more elusive: celebration of difference, internationalism, intellectual diversity, global village, multiculturalism, organizational cultures, pluralism, diversity of work style, and diversity of learning styles. At times the term is simply empty and unfulfilling and has not earned its credibility. Peterson (1999) points to the "trivialization of discrimination, in curricula that present difference as a non-political, ahistorical concept, does not serve to educate for work in a multicultural environment" (p. 23). Welburn (1999), in his comprehensive essay on the debate surrounding the multicultural curriculum and the impact on academic libraries, cites Stanley Fish's notion of boutique multiculturalism "characterized by its superficial or cosmetic relationship to the objects of its affection" (p. 158). Colleagues and librarians point to "window dressing," "diversity officer as token," and a professional value that "is too broad to have significance." Which of any of these terms is "principally" correct? Where do the meanings land in the traditional hierarchies and trends of acceptable communication and acceptable interpretation? "We may understand, we do not misexperience" (DeLoria, 1991, from a promotional poster).

At times we speak "too strongly"—excitedly, forcefully, passionately, angrily—on diversity as it is experienced, and colleagues feel attacked, shut out, and equally angry as they hear and receive what they are supposed to understand. At times we speak "too softly—thoughtfully,

inclusively, matter-of-fact—on diversity as we rationalize it, and colleagues feel weary of the "talk" with no faith in action or credibility as they hear and receive the message that they are supposed to understand.

Even so, every so often we take a full breath from the integrity of our professional collective soul and we move from process to action with outcomes in sight. We have spent enough time on caution. This time we will take what we have learned and be effective. We take an aspect of diversity—where there is shared significance—one piece, and we create a goal, an initiative, and a plan. We communicate the intent and quickly it is cited as too narrow, too exclusive, too limited, too short, too sullen, too ambiguous, not created by the right people, not implemented by the right people and, thus, energy toward the desired outcome becomes diffused. It must come from the "top." It must come from the "grassroots." It must move from being an arm to being institutionalized. It must remain autonomous and non-mainstreamed.

At what point does developmental feedback and constructive criticism turn into an elevated art form—one that generates the exclusion of people's presence and contribution? (O'Neill, 1998, p. 144). Accountability moves from shared to nebulous. Support wanes. Fragmentation occurs. Focus is clouded. Intent is distrusted. Credibility is dissipated. Maybe next time it would be simpler to avoid the topic, the session, the workshop, the initiative, the project, the effort, and the risk. Maybe next time we simply do the work at our own local level—among the generative people we "know" who see, hear, and work as we do. We return to where there is comfort, perhaps less risk, and, from our point of view, more directed action and less "mess." Why not be selective with one's time and energy? Why place one's self in the midst of the tension of balancing public discourse with the private urge to "get it done." Perhaps silence along with separatist action is a better strategy with consequences that are worth taking, including the betterment of one's own health.

These are reasonable human questions when again, at the crossroads of deciding how we will work, we remember that last week's multicultural food festival seemed a lot more fun and, quite frankly, much easier than "this."

PROFESSIONAL PRIDE

Nevertheless, within our profession, our associations, and in many of our libraries, we claim "diversity" as a value and an operating principle. We responsibly and professionally quantify it with demographics, community-based surveys, customer surveys, user statistics, and percentages of potential access as we apply our technical skill to gather proof and rationale for its existence. The numbers, studies, and data—depending on how we interpret them nationally, regionally, and locally—will indicate and demonstrate the existence of diverse users and the "need" for, and/

or potential of, a diverse workforce, diverse collections, and diverse ser-
vices. We are acutely aware of the connections between proof of "need"
and its relationship to the mission statement, to customer service, and to
resource allocation even though Hernon and Altman (1998) caution us
to be aware that a mission statement comes alive with more than good
intentions (numbers can be misleading) and that customers/patrons are
the critical decision-makers. We sincerely attempt with our professional
skills to collectively gather "around" diversity, to corral it with formations
of diversity committees, diversity officer positions, and staff development
committees. We charge ourselves with constructing meaningful
diversitystatements, designating budgets and monies, soliciting input and
opinion, studying information-seeking behavior, and targeting services,
collections, recruitment, and training. Finally, we apply interpersonal and
cross-cultural communication skills. Whether in diversity study circles or
dialogue groups described by Simmons-Welburn (1999) as one effective
strategy of facing "into" our organizations or when one least expects it—
e.g., in the break room or across the reference desk—diversity becomes
qualitatively enlivened by the personal and the community narrative. The
narrative, on some days, rises up from deep within our own personal
mineshafts" (Aponte, 1999) of stored history, well-placed emotion—and
unfinished business—and it emerges painfully disparate—"mine from
yours"—with no possible bridge of respect, let alone understanding, or
empathy. Everything clouds. On another day, the narrative deeply inter-
connects us with its message of what it looks like, feels like, tastes like to
have our friend, our family, our elder, our child, our ancestor, ourselves
dehumanized. In this case, sometimes for a moment, a clear bridge ap-
pears "between you and I." The clouds disappear and the choices of how
to live and how to work become clear, possible, and even sustainable and
renewable.

RECIPROCATION NOT ASSIMILATION

Zora Sampson (1999) states the reality of what the work of diversity
entails, "to attempt cultural exchange that results in progress, not loss of
identity. This participation takes courage. To question oneself and to ques-
tion others is work. To speak up and try to move others to change is no
task for cowards" (p. 107).

Any "shoring up," a jolt, a clarity of solidarity encourages us to get
"back in the ring" (for some of us it is sometimes referred to as a "battle"
or a "war"). We proceed to juggle and struggle with the multidimensional-
ity, simultaneity, the definitions, the parallel tracks, the numerous "fronts,"
the legislation, our own professional principles of intellectual freedom
and equity of access, and the dance of how we and others interpret privi-
lege, power, exclusivity, and inclusivity. Energized, we strive to learn what
effective leadership looks like, what collaboration and partnership with

like and unlike allies is like, what a work environment conducive to diversity looks like, and what quality and effective services look like. We learn and re-learn behavior and skills that will demonstrate respect, stewardship, and acceptance of what we don't fully understand.

The time and resources involved in learning and relearning new people skills compete with the time and resources required for ongoing technological training. Many librarians, library workers, library administrators, and library support staff "keep at it," and they choose not to avoid the risk, ambiguities, and tension, nor do they avoid the expenditure of their time because diversity requires ongoing learning—continual education—not learned in one swoop, with one handbook, with one set of guidelines. Essentially we arrive (again at the crossroads) and ask ourselves: How do we put into practice this value called diversity? This value suggests that, for a library system to be effective, we as librarians must allow for, encourage, and invite people that are unlike ourselves. Is it a better "business" decision? Is our profession "enlightened?" If we can't be enlightened, can we at least be selfish? (Gardner, 1996). Do we want more completely designed services, programs, and collections? Are we bored or dissatisfied with and diminished by homogeneity? Do we want to mirror the latest demographics? We must be able to articulate why we in our profession would want someone distinct from us to work with us, not for us. To work alongside us, not beneath us. To create with us, not duplicate us. To reciprocate with us, not assimilate to us. To mentor us, not intimidate us. To be an equal, not a box in the organizational hierarchy. To be a colleague. Susan Kotarba (1998) uniquely expresses what it means to work "alongside" her potential peers: "I have met the librarians of the future that I want to be working with and they are the high school students from diverse backgrounds that I work with currently" (remarks from a panel discussion).

OPENING THE LIBRARY FROM WITHIN

Some library organizations are attempting to implement various stages and levels of organizational transformation. Robert Quinn (1996) indicates the "many ways in which bureaucratic culture proves to be a barrier to change, including multiple layers of hierarchy, a tradition of top-down change, short-term thinking, lack of top-management support for change, limited rewards, lack of vision, and an emphasis on the status quo" (p. 134). Municipalities, universities, libraries, departments and, if necessary, "one's own work unit," have moved to flatten out hierarchies without losing accountability and to increase participation without being threatened by a truly free-flow of information, risk-taking, and creativity throughout the organization. Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner Rogers (1996) observe:

> In fear-filled organizations, impervious structures keep materializing. People are considered dangerous. They need to be held apart

> from one another. However, in systems of trust, people are free to create the relationships they need. Trust enables the system to open. The system expands to include those it excluded. More conversations—more diverse and diverging views—become important. People decide to work with those from whom they had been separate. (p. 83)

On paper, most of us agree. When the rubber hits the road, however, we feel the ground shifting. Something does not "feel" right. Some enthusiastic library directors open the gates and invite expression of creativity and culture, front-line input, opinion, and expertise. Some staff jump at this opportunity and thrive in it. Others may enjoy the idea but find the practice of sitting on teams and committees with supervisors and administrators new and uncomfortable. And sometimes they have good reason. Trust is not obtained overnight and to "speak one's truth" may have catalyzed retaliation in the past or people have been discouraged from being themselves. Some librarians of color claim how ironic it is to be hired to serve their ethnic respective communities yet are told that they act "too ethnic on the job." Thomas and Ely (1996) highlight the case of an African-American executive whose effective style of leadership outside of the company and in her church "works well if you have the permission to do it fully . . . . I know if I brought that piece of myself—if I became that authentic—I just wouldn't survive here" (p. 88).

Credibility has built upon the application of basic outreach principles: repeatedly visible presence, active listening, follow-up and accountability, consistency, integrity, and development of "your word." Some library administrators who may be excited about the new tenets of participatory management may have a rude awakening when they fully comprehend their staff's expectations of what it means to be at the table, participate at the table, and to be interested in designing the menu for the next meal. Following a few bumps, bruises, and sometimes big mistakes, the organization begins to explicitly clarify if participation means giving input, making recommendations, or making decisions. Empowerment is then more deeply reconsidered as a complex concept when it is understood that "true" empowerment involves giving up and giving away authoritative power. Quinn (1996) makes an intriguing distinction between the mechanistic (which starts at the top) and organic (starts with the needs of the people) views of empowerment (p. 223).

In an attempt to obtain the expertise of front line staff, to "open" the organization, there is a call for the formation of committees with membership from all job classifications (library administrator, library aide, library assistant, librarian, and support staff) and departments within the library (technical services, support services, cataloging, children's service, reference services, and so on). A good faith effort is made to ensure gender and ethnic diversity on the committee but quite often

one may look around and find that the "visible" diversity in their workforce is limited or non-existent. Other times they may find that the few people of color or diverse "representatives" they know have sat on one too many committees and have no desire to sit on "one more." Most importantly, organizers must ask "who is missing?" in terms of skill, competency, and contacts, regardless of library classification, and focus on the desired outcome. But these committees take shape, have energy, and pursue the outcome of at least organizing a group. They liaison with the front-line staff and with the executive teams. Oftentimes, armed with a budget and decision making capabilities, they are charged with developing and/or researching, designing, planning, and implementing a program or a project for a year or two. Sorting out how to begin and carving out time to begin are the biggest challenges, and often the committees will survey the staff and/or pick an obvious issue to start with. It appears, however, that the committees often find the wealth of the work in the process of building a "team" among themselves while sharing definitions and stories, accountability, and the uncomfortable resistance from their fellow staff and others. Ultimately, after the sorting, deciding, and disagreeing, the actual "pulling together" (regardless of ethnicity, gender, classification, accent, or any other label) of the program, project, or event on the day it is scheduled to debut is when a team is built. As Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) describe: "Only when we join with others do our gifts become visible even to ourselves. We witness emergence any time we are surprised by a group's accomplishments or by our own achievements within a group. We expected a certain level of behavior, and instead we discovered unknown abilities" (p. 67). Collegiality is enhanced at a deeper level, and the work of diversity happens within the group regardless of the outcome of the day.

Aware of the history, issues, trends, and ambiguity, these librarians and library workers are pushing forward with a willingness to disrupt the boundaries of outdated procedures and to ask themselves not "if we" or "should we" but "how will we?" They examine well-intentioned policies and strategies that no longer serve their purpose. They are stretching and asking themselves about their own privileges, biases, and comfort zones. They ask themselves "is there a gap between what we say and what we do?" They have also discovered—given the pattern of short-term initiatives and less than desirable results—that diversity issues are not truly isolated or cut off from any system of inter-relationships. When you follow the roots of an issue, you are bound to reach the root system which consists of intertwined attitudes, comfort zones, policies, structures, and past practices.

An organization, and all of its players and members, does not get a rest from shared accountability on behalf of a committee. It is essential

that participating staff are recognized for their participation in, and contributions to, system-wide efforts beyond their specific job responsibilities, and that their coordination, project management, public relations, technological, risk-taking, and interpersonal skills are acknowledged formally in performance appraisals and informally by one another. If the work to be done in order to meet the "vision" of the organization requires stepping out of daily operations, then staff must be recognized for this participation. The projects and outcomes will need ongoing attention and follow-up in order to build "from" what was started. Longer-range effectiveness of the work will involve a required interplay between all employees at every level of the organization. Sampson (1999) asks us: "Indeed, how can any person of good conscience maintain the shallow hypocrisy that equality can be granted by oneself alone? He or she cannot. Until each citizen in society achieves full equality then civility requires our commitment to work for change toward that end" (p. 94).

THE ISSUES

As the American Library Association's first diversity officer, I am entrusted with, and take heed of, the frustrations, dreams, and opinions of members from all walks of life that represent different aspects of library work. Many pay their association dues but cannot always choose not to attend conferences or participate in ALA governance. Their work is local. They have an eye on the national but their urgency is "at home" and with immediate service to tangible users—i.e., those at the front door of the library building when it opens and those yet to be met at the door or out on campus or in the neighborhood. "The ALA Diversity Officer will coordinate resources and information to foster diversity initiatives at the grassroots level of the ALA membership" (job description, *American Libraries*, June/July 1997). I have been invited to see and hear what public libraries and some university libraries, state associations, and work groups are doing and what they are becoming; to converse in a frank manner; to offer and obtain feedback, tips, guidelines, and key questions; and, most importantly, to offer connections, contacts, and resources. These are their issues:

- recruitment of students of color to library school
- recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of librarians of color
- recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of library staff of color
- interpersonal and cross-communication skills training
- creation of a workplace and an organization conducive to, and respectful of, diversity
- effective outreach to diverse communities in rural, suburban, and urban service areas
- personal leadership, personal mettle as related to diversity initiatives

STAFF DESIGNED

Staff development days and staff institutes devoted to diversity are designed, planned, and implemented by staff committees throughout the country or by library systems and cooperatives. The Staff Development Committee of the Metropolitan Library System (serving Oklahoma county) organized "We Are Family" on October 12, 1998. Staff was offered an array of sessions to attend—everything from working with stroke survivors (of all ages and ethnicities), to learning the multicultural history of Oklahoma, to strategizing for outreach to the Spanish speaking, to discussing the video "Bill Cosby on Prejudice." Discussion and dialogue at each session was encouraged and facilitated. Library trustees were also invited.

The Staff Concerns Committee of the Indian Trails Public Library District (Illinois) organized their Eleventh Annual Staff Institute Day on May 7, 1999. The theme was "Adapting to a Multi-Cultural Community" and the focus was to learn how to effectively serve the multi-lingual and newcomer populations in their service area. Latino, Korean, Japanese, and Russian community members were invited to tell their own truth, speak in their own words about their own perspectives on cultural protocol, about their experience with libraries in this country, and make suggestions about how to communicate with elders, children, and families when there is a language barrier. The library staff developed frank and practical questions based on everyday occurrences at the reference desk, the circulation desk, and at the public computer stations.

At the Cuyahoga County Public Library (Ohio), an all-day training session entitled "A Workplace of Difference" was carefully prepared and implemented by the library's diversity committee. The intent was to explore the cultural differences and similarities among the committee members, the administrative team, and the library board.

At the end of the staff development day or institute, there is pride and exhaustion but the beginning of another level of work. Administrators, trustees, and all staff share in the accountability of evaluation, application of the knowledge and/or skill objectives, and opportunity for ongoing dialogue. Simply, but very importantly, with diversity, people often want to talk about what they learned, what they heard, and what they are processing. They must also be convinced that it is not a "one-shot" deal. Formal and informal opportunities must exist at the closing of the day and later on in the week or month for those who choose to reflect and ruminate before proceeding with dialogue.

OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY

"Public relations," "marketing," "partnering," "networking," and "collaborating" are terms which intertwine with, and occasionally replace, the tried and true term of "outreach." Whether or not library service to diverse populations is collectively shared by all library departments, a few

library organizations have identified the need for a coordinated effort to reach outside of the library building and into the library service area. "Out there" it is predicted that allies will be identified, resources will be shared, partnerships will be made, and potential users will be introduced to the wonders of library and information services. Quite often, the job is self-defined, and the person who holds it may enjoy working autonomously. Usually the person is trusted and counted upon to do what they do best— to use their interpersonal, cross-cultural, and people skills to enter another person's "home" and "community" and to positively influence potential users of the library by building and replenishing rapport, trust, and credibility. Boulder Public Library (Colorado) provides a fine example of a public outreach librarian position as well as the W.E.B DuBois Library at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

This strategy, like the other, depends on systematic support. Quite naturally, when potential users are convinced to go to the library, they will look for the "welcome" of the outreach librarian who is "out in the field." While working autonomously and with discretion is invaluable to many outreach librarians, administrators and library colleagues must be aware of the nature of outreach work. It requires stamina, persistence, and focus. It requires entering new environments on a consistent basis. It requires ongoing communication, visits, follow-up, and establishment of one's credibility about what the library is and what it can offer. It may take from six months to three years to convince a new patron, student, or family to enter the library, and/or an academic department or social agency to partner and collaborate with the library. Nothing can sabotage the work of outreach staff more quickly than an outdated policies and procedures English-only flyer on basic registration and check-out information, rude and judgmental attitudes on the part of staff and/or administrators, and an overall invisibility of significant appreciation of multiculturalism as demonstrated in collections, displays, and staffing. Instead, colleagues working in the library must be ready to receive the baton and to proceed with the respectful customer service every new patron deserves regardless of any visible differences. The skills implemented within the library building complement the skills implemented outside the library building. Effectiveness can only occur with seamless reciprocation and interaction between the two.

PERSONNEL

Personnel and recruitment committees also result from participatory management, empowerment strategies, and flattening of the library organization. They usually consist of librarians who are charged with looking at the recruiting, hiring, and retention processes or at least one of these areas. Sometimes they participate in the reviewing of applications and the interviewing and hiring processes. Depending on the local personnel

procedures, regulations, and policies, whether or not there is a union or staff association, and how involved is the library's or the home institution's human resource department, the approach and the required partnerships will vary. Most often, the common thread is that the library director, library trustees, and/or staff are not satisfied with the diversity of the applicant pools, the interview panels, the finalists, and every classification of the work force but especially the professional levels. Some public and academic libraries are working hard to analyze and detangle the processes that hinder or facilitate effective recruitment and hiring. The journey of these committees begins with assessing the library's current status, deciding on its future direction, and strategizing how to get there. The committees also examine the gap between what the library has been saying and what it has been doing with regard to diversity. This often means rewriting job descriptions and announcements to reflect an organization's new and genuine interest in a potential workforce with diverse skills, competencies, contacts, and potential. Simply put, it means explicitly identifying the work to be done to get where the library wants to be. James Williams (1999) suggests that libraries creatively use vacancies and strive to break the cycle of crisis hiring: "[T]he hiring opportunity should be looked upon as a means to move the library to the next level of excellence by creating a post that is broad in scope, flexible, and based on requirements that are likely to change over the length of the assignment, instead of posting for the traditional assignment held by the person who just left the organization" (p. 44).

Another crossroads occurs when a committee unveils the obstacles to diversifying their workforce. At this point, there is an opportunity to disrupt, stretch, and destroy the once effective, and very often beloved, traditions, past practices, procedures, and even job descriptions. Quinn (1996) captures the urgency of these crossroads:

> Overcoming our fears and facing the challenges of change can be a painstaking process. To champion our vision, we must be willing to deviate from conventional methods, strive through the seemingly endless series of hurdles and roadblocks, and continue confidently and with courage toward our goal. We must accept the fact that we have the power and the ability to change. (p. 217)

Here is when and where a diversity initiative, vision statement, and organizational value has the potential of transforming from paper to reality—or not.

Regardless of what area of the country and what the salary, personnel, recruitment, and human resources, committees must ask what their library organization, their community, their city can offer a candidate. The library organization and its advocates must build trust with the targeted audiences by being consistently visible with the message on the net,

at the conference placement centers, at the schools, in journals, and so on. This reflection, articulation, and delivery impacts the authenticity and effectiveness of the recruitment message. Because many personnel committees do not feel that their organization (colleagues, administration, the union, and/or human resources) is ready for the financial, time, or human commitment (not to mention a look at organizational transformation), they begin, as individuals, with placing job announcements on the ethnic affiliate electronic discussion lists. This is a worthy start. The personnel committees, just as with outreach staff and diversity and staff development committees, need to be able to call on shared accountability from throughout the organization when what needs to be done to make change might be unpopular.

THE WORK OF DIVERSITY

What is our responsibility in the process of implementing strategies? What is our responsibility when we each sit as individuals on a committee, at the executive table, or at the local potluck and potlatch? Once we have the rationale, the reasoning, and the justification about "why" our profession, our organization, our association, our workplace, and even our life must honor diversity, then what is the work? The work has a backdrop of affirmative action backlash, hate crimes, individuals who now claim the right to self-identify as they see fit outside of any labels and boxes, the relationship between civil rights and equal access in contemporary times as exemplified by information technology and universal access (Evans, 1999) and, finally, the relentless dissemination of diminishing images and stereotypes. Neely (1998) provides the answer to those of us who ask, "What does this have to do with librarianship?" "The practice of librarianship, in the aggregate, mirrors the lack of diversity that is reflected nationally, everyday, in media representation, news and sound bites, and by major players in the political arena. It reflects the national dominant culture and therefore, has the tendency to share and echo similar ideologies and biases about diversity, race, and affirmative action" (p. 590).

REALIZE THE POWER OF STORY

Paula Wehmiller (1998) powerfully states:

> When there are walls of ignorance between people, when we don't know each other's stories, we substitute our own myth about who that person is. When we are operating with only a myth, none of that person's truth will ever be known to us, and we will injure them—mostly without ever meaning to. What assumption did you make because she's a woman? What assumption did you make because he is black? What myths were built around the employment of the father or the absence of the mother? What story did we tell ourselves in the absence of knowing this person's real Story? (p. 96)

The story and experiences accompanied by trauma, joy, devastation, and survival must be acknowledged, listened to, respected, and sometimes acted on behalf of. In this way, diversity does not trivialize discrimination or, more importantly, we as librarians do not. Patrick O'Neill (1998) articulates: "The meaning of the word 'respect' is 'to look again.' By suspending our assumptions, we recover the ability to extend respect, to look again. This creates an opening for another person to be seen and understood on his or her own terms, not on our own rigid or fixed terms" (p. 141). The stories, many of them disseminated through our information systems, our own collections, and our own work in this profession, impact self-esteem, cultural-esteem, and community esteem. When a person, a community, a history, a culture, a story, a poem, a song is "named" (i.e., displayed, sung, invited, hired, recited, "called out to"), then it is treated as having "equal value" in a diverse community. This demonstration shores up confidence and encourages self-determination, not insecurity and defensiveness. Author and poet Luis Rodriguez (1999) has suggested that when young people are given the opportunity to learn their stories and traditions and are given the opportunity to create their own future, they are less likely to do harm to one another, or perhaps they will stop for a moment before acting with violence. Maybe from a more inclusive and complex sense of self we can see another "whole" person. This whole person works with us and comes into the library for the first time. This whole person dresses differently than us, speaks a different language, carries an accent from Kentucky, and moves in a wheelchair. This whole person may resemble us on the surface until they speak or write or share their political or religious views with us. This whole person may be in the fourth grade and carry the pressure of being the family translator, the family navigator. This whole person may appear to cling to their language, their culture, their traditions because they feel just "too old" to "let go" of yet one more piece of their lives. This whole person may just want some time and space in our library to be alone, to reflect, to read, and to rest. This whole person may hesitate to ask for help because just as we judge "them," they judge "us." And what of a "whole" much larger, more expansive, more mysterious than ourselves? After observing the vastness of the skies, the constellations, and the nebulae, one may understand the placement of the human being "and yet we have the nerve to think we are superior to another man because of the color of his skin?" (C. Moralez, personal communication, 1999).

REALIZE THE POWER OF INTERCONNECTIONS

For any diversity initiative to be achieved, we must see the interconnectivity, the inter-relationships. Diversity will remain cosmetic if not addressed holistically and systematically. Both the technical and so-

cial, the technological and interpersonal, the human processes and quan-
tifiable measures must be equally weighted, continually integrated, simul-
taneously balanced, and acted upon in parallel ways. By excluding the
intellectual diversity of ethnically diverse peoples in the design of techno-
logical access and content, sustainable and adaptable infrastructures, pro-
active and creative organizations, ongoing performance and procedure
improvements, relevant programming and collections, and new models
of leadership, diversity strategies will remain "toothless" and even arro-
gant. When we take an ostrich's approach to the impact of inter-depen-
dence on institutional change or by not looking at the root system of orga-
nizations, diversity initiatives remain short-lived or at the first-step level.
Just as we apply our cross-referencing skills to organizing information, we
must apply these skills to the cross-referencing of diversity with education,
strategic planning, intellectual freedom, personnel procedures, techno-
logical design and access, organizational transformation, continuing edu-
cation, publishing, association development, leadership tenets, equity of
access, and twenty-first century information literacy.

THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION

Effective diversity dialogue at a "real" level is most often non-neutral
and includes the expression of well-placed emotion based on one's pas-
sion, trauma, hurt, anger, joy, triumph, perspective, and essentially one's
experience with what one is speaking about. Wood (1997) states: "Within
Western culture differences are not regarded as neutral—that is, as sim-
ply different. Instead, we view them as better or worse, and better is usu-
ally our way and worse the other person's way!" (p. 15). Regardless of the
causes of non-neutrality, appropriate tension and constructive conflict can
occur if we are willing to go through it rather than around it. George
Jackson (1998) inquires: "[A]re we really afraid of the constructive con-
flict that can attend alternate viewpoints, because we do not want to hear
about different ways to do things or think about things?" (p. 585). Per-
haps active listening is a place to begin. Deborah Triant (1998) looks at
the power of listening within communication: "Why not have listening
classes as well? [For some] debating is easy; listening with an open mind is
not" (p. 98) and in any domain conducive to diversity, "individuals are
allowed to tell of their experiences without listeners interrupting, com-
forting, or inserting anything of their own" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 11).
The work of diversity requires listening—a slowing down of one's own
thought, agenda, story, and time—and, when tension arises, Wood (1997)
contends that one must claim "a responsibility to sustain the tension in-
herent in opening ourselves to multiple perspectives and in recognizing
diversity and commonality as an intertwined dialectic" (p. 21). If we are
ready to do the work of diversity, are we willing to "hang in there with" the
inevitable tension and conflict in public discourse that is so necessary?

Josina Makau (1997) suggests that: "Responsible and responsive pedagogy inspires as it embodies a will and ability to participate in a process of inclusive, reciprocal, open, equitable, respectful, dynamic, empathic, caring dialogic interaction" (p. 49). For those who prefer to listen rather than debate, what are the consequences of silence, if any? Sometimes it is regarded as mere deferment to the designated or appointed authority of the group (a chairperson, a president, a CEO) or to the group (the committee, task force, association). At other times, we are not viewed. We are invisible. Sometimes this is a strategy (Linda Hogan). Sometimes, as Goff (1998) describes, exclusion can also take the form of "abrupt silent withdrawals from membership or a refusal to engage" and thus "devaluing the significance of contact" (p. 24). This type of exclusion is exacerbated when the individuals collude in the hallways "after" the forum and not at the table. We find in this true diversity that exists without a mainstream, the necessity to expend energy and time on determining what is public and what is private, when to listen and when to speak, when to stretch outside of one's parameters without losing one's self and when to maintain cultural and social behaviors that one respects and treasures. Many of us may have experienced something similar to author and poet Pat Mora (1993), "raised as I was, to value courtesy, warm interpersonal relationships, family, education. We were taught respect for authority and the importance of celebration, to listen to the elderly and delight in the newborn, to express our feelings: to laugh with enthusiasm, to cry with abandon, to take time with people" (p. 16). Who of us has not been afraid of losing our identity and becoming someone "new," not because we are conforming or assimilating or losing but because we are creating new and different skills, competencies, and contacts to increase our capabilities for effectively interacting with people different from ourselves and who are now merging (each of us is demanding respect, inclusion, reciprocation, and exchange)? A part of us feels as if it is dying in order to make room for something new. Finally, the role of acknowledgment is critical to communication in diversity. Just as with the respect for the storytelling and for that which we don't understand, O'Neill (1998) reminds us that "acknowledgment is the speaking that generates inclusion—actively cultivating people's involvement by recognizing that their presence and contributions are important. We have underdeveloped and underutilized our skills of acknowledgment" (p. 144).

REALIZE THE POWER OF DISTINCTION

> As a child, as you're growing up. . . you leave your community without knowing where you're going to go because you don't know. You had no control of all that time and when they send you off and you learn about the outside world from a different family and you come back to your people again and you don't know nothing. So you have to seek information all the time and you say "Go back. Go Back. Go back to your roots, to your great grandfather." (Putomayo World Music, 1998)

What makes us distinctive individually is what brings our greatest strength to the forefront and what impacts the design of programs, collections, and systems. Sometimes we cannot teach diversity, enforce diversity, or "convince" diversity. We can only live it, be it, become it. Integrity paves a way. Heritage, culture, family, schools, and society all play a role in determining how we decide to fit in, to succeed, or not. There is often a livelihood at stake. Many of us are often told and asked: "What you say is fine and good but what about when I go 'out there?'" "Out there" is where it has been known to be unsafe and unwelcoming. These questions are not easy, and the answers are not easy. How we approach this often depends on perspective, integrity, self-determination, and the energy and courage for the day. Ian Frazier (1999) describes the story and legend of a young Lakota teenager and high school basketball player who takes on the hecklers from the opposing team who are shouting out racist statements before the scheduled basketball game: "She unbuttoned her warm-up jacket, took it off, draped it over her shoulders, and began to do the Lakota shawl dance . . . . SuAnne began to sing in Lakota, swaying back and forth in the jump-ball circle, doing the shawl dance . . . . 'All that stuff the Lead fans were yelling— it was like she *reversed* it somehow a teammate says'" Frazier goes on to say that "it showed that their fake Indian songs were just that—fake—and that the real thing was better, as real things usually are" (p. 81).

What are the benefits of non-Western cultures that incorporate silence, repose, and reflection before taking action or speaking? Where is the place for acknowledging an elder's experience, survival, and wisdom and yet respecting youth's open and free spirit and new ways of doing things? Without a mainstream, there is appreciation of visual, aural, and oral expression. There are intonations, ranges, and blending of sounds. Jerry Tello (1989) suggested at the very first Transition into Management Institute targeting ten librarians of color that many of us return to the memories that include the sounds and smells of that which gave us comfort as children. For some it is the sound of grandmother humming on the porch as she embroidered or the story of a great uncle who was a Tuskegee airman. For others it is the smell of the tortilla toasting on the comal (hotplate) or the story of a grandmother who ran away from home in an effort to live her life in her own way. Tello suggests that we return to familiar sounds, smells, and images for courage and strength before entering an environment that feels unsafe.

In a diverse society, without a mainstream, there is striking use of color and color combinations. There is a use of ceremonies that begin and end with gratitude and acknowledgment. There is protocol about entering another's domain. There is use of metaphor, a first language, home talk, code-switching, and bilingualism. Decision making and action

often flow not from assumption but from intuition, mother wit, one's conscience—the places where processing occurs in a far deeper place than logical processing (Triant, 1999, p. 98). Nair (1997) describes this as "feeling" the needs of the people, not just intellectualizing them (p. 84). As we restrain the traits that make us unique, we also restrain our capabilities for design, decision-making, creating, serving, and working. Our health is often impacted. If one's own unique distinctiveness is stymied by a work environment that is not conducive to diversity, what then? What are the options for the employer? For the employee? Or, rather, what are the options for colleagues who share issues of significance within librarianship? What are the options for the profession and those who are served by our profession? We know that the product, the service, not to mention the spirit, of the person is diminished. Will library organizations continue to maintain and value homogeneity, the status quo, and the separation of what goes on in the library from what occurs outside? Too many times it has been said that: "It is ironic that I have been hired because I am (fill in the ethnic group) and they want me to reach out to the (fill in the ethnic group) community, yet I am criticized for acting "too ethnic" on the job. The planners of the first Annual Spectrum Leadership Institute (1999) included in their operating principles and leadership tenets cross-cultural, non-mainstream, and non-traditional models and values. It was an absolute to ensure that all speakers modeled ethnic diversity and diversity of library specialty.

The Spectrum Scholars, one hundred of whom are in place at the time of this writing, clarify the issues of distinction. There are no complexities when we see their humanity before us. Every argument, every critique, every bit of applause fades away as we meet the Spectrum Scholars who symbolically and realistically take us into the new millennium. They were targeted because of their representation of the largest underrepresented groups within our profession. They were selected because they spoke to the issue of how they planned to incorporate the work of diversity in their career. They come from all walks of life and ages as they approach their studies in their own unique ways based on their own unique circumstances. Contrary to some beliefs, the Spectrum Scholars do not come packaged and labeled neatly. They name themselves as whole beings with their own lifestyles, their own approaches, their own abilities and disabilities, and their own choices. They identify themselves ethnically, culturally, and religiously on their own terms. Some of them have crossed the country to go to library school, others stay near their hometown, and others commute to the nearest city. There is a chess champion. There is a film-maker. The scholars walk their lives in their own way, and there are some of us who pray that they will be appreciated for the distinctive "whole" that each of them offers our profession.

REALIZE THE POWER OF CREATING

Kyle (1998) offers: "Creativity comes from the Sanskrit 'kar,' meaning 'to make, to originate, to bring into existence'" (p. 118). With diversity, what must we do creatively and differently? Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers (1996) suggest that: "An emergent world asks us to stand in a different place. We can no longer stand at the end of something we visualize in detail and plan backward from that future" (p. 75). Many of us have participated in the re-creation and duplication of that which we critique. Upon gaining positions of designated authority, we often gain a reward, begin to take the paths of least resistance, and forget about the stewardship we once believed in. Nair (1997) reminds us to ask ourselves what we are willing to do to be "successful": "You can exercise power through control or through service. Control motivates people through their attachments. Service motivates people through their sense of personal obligation and a moral imperative" (p. 90).

Based on the strategic choices of how we want to work and how we want to be alive in a diverse society, we make decisions, design systems, mission statements, invite, and discard. Is it possible to craft new frameworks? Creating involves risk-taking, disruption of boundaries, living new models of leadership, stretching, and courage. Once any of us understands the "lies of history," the toxicity of superiority, the boldness and nuances of racism, sexism, and homophobia, then what? Do we partner with a system or work within a system? Do we take risk and create anew, create something that may be essentially unknown and unpredictable? While we honor the traditions of our cultures, it is incumbent that we be responsible for creating a new future that accommodates all cultures. We begin by seeking out and highlighting nontraditional models of community and leadership and thus provide ourselves and forthcoming librarians with more options and choices.

REALIZE THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP: PERSONAL AND SHARED

Nair (1997) speaks to personal power: The greatest source of power in any organization is personal power—the character, courage, determination, knowledge, and skill of the individual members of the organization (p. 91). The personal leadership skills required of each of us is vital to the effectiveness of any diversity initiative. No matter how finely scripted, how inclusive, and how progressive any organizational vision or mission statement is, its intent can be devalued and even sabotaged at the reference desk, in the children's story hour, at the employee application review table, at the senior management table, and in the break room. Again, we each stand at the crossroads of how we will work and how we will live. Strategic choices and courageous decisions bring the value of diversity to life—no matter where we are within a library organization.

Supportive directors help. Supportive staff helps. Strong and vocal trustees help. Strategic plans with goals and objectives help. Ultimately, however, our own personal decisions, choices, and actions impact how diversity is hindered or facilitated in the larger organization. Not to mention that one of the highest forms of leadership is to simply "live out" our own integrity and principles. Whether referred to as quiet "modeling" or simply going about one's own business of the day, these actions have great influence. Perviz Randaria (1998) encourages groups to profess a shared commitment "to understand and accept the fact that their influence and impact upon others result from their conscious choices and their personal responsibility for those choices" (p. 131).

While we honor our champions and our heroes, many of them among us and many of them gone before us, some of them assassinated, some of them "locked away," some of them as young as SuAnne Crow Dog, and some who have paved the way before us—e.g., Albert P. Marshall, E.J. Josey, Lotsee Patterson, Arnulfo Trejo, and Ching-chih Chen. We must also realize how easy and comfortable it is to applaud and throw stones from the sidelines. A designated leader, particularly the ones who have earned respect and trust, take great risk and often ask us to risk "with" them and to share the accountability. Do we? It is easier to label a leader as "the one visionary" and the "sole expert" while simultaneously diminishing our own role and responsibility. By not sharing leadership or cultivating new leadership we are often left without successive leadership or we do not allow for new leadership at the same time that we have a "favorite" leader. These patterns diminish the power of shared multi-generational and multi-ethnic leadership. This type of leadership, which claims shared accountability and responsibility, retains the seed of potentially gathering around any issue of significance. The circle expands and retracts as people come and go and is appropriate. The circle expands with new leadership and non-librarian leadership—i.e., the partnerships, the collaborations with schools, churches, and boys and girls clubs. The circle keeps moving and does not remain in one place. There is no beginning or end and this is appropriate, much in line with the stresses and benefits of ongoing learning and continuing education. There is an agelessness and presence with this type of leadership.

CAMINANTE NO HAY CAMINO; SE HACE CAMINO AL ANDAR (ANTONIO MACHADO)

"Traveler, there is no road; You make the road by walking." This quote was shared with me by a colleague named Alma Garcia whose contacts, competencies, and skills as a library assistant, mother, sister, daughter, self-learner, teacher, "techie," and community library advocate led her to her present role as a systems administrator in a college library. I am sure that her story might be yours or mine. It might be the story of someone we

have just met. It is the story of a whole person who is walking her road. This quote has stayed with me, however, because it speaks to the simplicity and complexity of the diversity journey. There are often no fixed templates or guarantees. There are some guideposts, guidelines, advice, and suggestions along the road that we decide—strategically decide—to create on behalf of how we want to work and how we want to live as people who are committed to the profession and the work of library and information studies.

I am honored to hold the position of diversity officer for the American Library Association. This article speaks to pieces of a two-year journey that began in 1998. It also speaks to pieces of an intertwined personal and professional journey.

At the center of diversity in librarianship are the factors, stories, and experiences that motivated us to enter this work, this profession. I am nearly certain that each one of our motivations to enter the profession of librarianship will reveal a commitment to something larger than ourselves— service to others; equity of access to information, ideas, and stories; the delivery of relevant and quality library and information services; the idea of "the people's university," the power of intellectual freedom, and the awareness that "information management has everything to do with cultural and political survival" (Patterson, 1998). These are shared issues that represent a shared commitment that remains unsatisfactory until we are all equally contributing our ideas, expertise, potential, and distinctiveness.

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