

Cooperative collection development ventures in NSW

Two successful cooperative collection ventures are happening in NSW – the Multicultural Purchasing Cooperative run from the State Library of NSW and a partnership between five public libraries in Western Sydney called WESCOL.

WESCOL or the Western Sydney Cooperating Libraries is a partnership and a joint initiative of the Auburn, Bankstown, Fairfield, and Liverpool City Libraries. It consists of a rotating collection of three significant community languages: Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese. The cooperative started with a \$200 000 Library Development Grant and the collection was launched in 2004. In 2007 Canterbury Library joined the cooperative and another \$160 000 grant was received. In addition to the grant funding, each library contributes \$10 000 per year plus cataloguing and processing costs, towards the co-op. This is in addition to the amount they would spend on each of these collections for their own library. This means each year on an ongoing basis \$50 000 is spent on developing the WESCOL collection. The collection includes book and non-book material and is now in excess of 10 000 titles.

The Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese languages were chosen because an analysis of our communities showed that the most common languages spoken at home other than English are Arabic with nearly 77 000 people, Chinese with over 56 000 and Vietnamese with more than 54 000. Each of these populations is significant and larger than many individual local government areas across the country. By cooperating in addressing these common demands, we are able to allocate more resources to other languages, thereby benefiting other multicultural communities as well.

The collection is colour-coded and, at first, was rotated between the libraries every six months. This has now been increased to eight months. It required lots of discussion followed by compromise to establish the cataloguing and processing requirements because, as you can imagine, all five libraries did these processes differently. Another challenge was the different library management systems and the requirement to upload and delete records every rotation. All challenges have been overcome and the WESCOL project can be judged a success on three levels:

- Customer satisfaction: Each library receives an injection of approximately two hundred new books in each collection every eight months. As one of my staff said, it is like a special occasion for our customers when the new WESCOL collection arrives. In eight months the circulation of the collection was 87 304. With a stock of 10 746 items this has meant an average turnover of 8.12.
- Effective and efficient selection: The selection is completed by staff with language skills and cultural knowledge from the participating libraries. Canterbury and Liverpool have also had successful community selection meetings. Selection profiles have been developed and there is a collection development policy for WESCOL.
- Best value for money: The cataloguing and processing costs are reduced as they are outsourced and done to agreed common specifications. This means more funds for resources. All records are on Libraries Australia and the resources reach the public shelves in record time.

The WESCOL collection is giving a greater choice and range of library materials for Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese speaking people. By minimising duplication, there is the potential to provide our customers with five times the choice. Perhaps more

significantly, the rotating collection establishes a cooperative resource sharing initiative, which has the potential to be expanded to other languages and to other formats. While it is not possible to add any more libraries to our partnership, there is the potential to add other common languages, and, of course, other libraries can form partnerships and benefit from the WESCOL experience.

The Multicultural Purchasing Cooperative is managed by the NSW State Library. This cooperative was set up in the early 1970s and located at Wollongong Library and transferred to the State Library in 1991. It was established to overcome the difficulties public libraries were having locating and importing materials in Languages Other Than English (LOTE). Over time the cooperative has changed to respond to the needs of the public library network, including the State Library, and coordinating purchasing, cataloguing, and processing can be obtained. Approximately 30 libraries purchase more than 42 languages through the cooperative.

This paper is adapted from a presentation given at Public Libraries Metropolitan Collection Development Forum at Blacktown City Library, 11th November 2008.

Anne Hall

Manager, Library and Museum Services, Fairfield City Council
ahall@fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au

Working in a multicultural community: engaging a diverse workforce

Fairfield City is one of the most culturally diverse communities in the country with 133 languages spoken and 72.5% of the population speaking a language other than English at home¹. Offering a library service to this population is certainly a challenging and exciting task. One of the key considerations when engaging staff is the ideal of employing local people, with suitable qualifications and experience, who also bring a wealth of cultural understanding and language skills. A recent staff survey showed that 57.1% of staff speak a language other than English and about the same percentage were born overseas².

Having staff that can speak the languages of our customers and explain the complexities of dealing with a missing item or booking into a computer class is an obvious advantage.

Our Languages Other Than English (LOTE) team help select and manage our multicultural collections and resources, promote them through displays and visits with community groups, and provide the liaison between the Library Service and the volunteer tutors of our English Conversation Classes.

On the social side we have some amazing cooks and fairly regularly hold luncheons where each brings in their cultural specialty.

When you have a culturally diverse staff, different approaches to management, team work, and individual work are needed. Cultural IQ is the term given to understanding cultural differences and making good use of the potential provided³. For example, it helps when working in teams to understand that some people come from a collectivist culture, where decisions are made jointly and others from an individualistic culture, where individual contribution is considered important. Understanding these distinctions helps in the communication process and in broader staff satisfaction and morale. The organisational culture is obviously healthier if the cultural backgrounds of the team members are given recognition and value.