

**NYLA Annual Conference 2019 Saratoga Springs, New York
RASS Author's Luncheon Friday, November 14, 2019 12:30 p.m.
Andrew P. Jackson (Sekou Molefi Baako), Guest Speaker**

Theme: Diversity in Libraries

Good Afternoon,

It is an honor and distinct pleasure to be invited to share with you my perspective in *Diversity in Libraries* at this NYLA RASS Author Luncheon. Thank you for selecting this luncheon to attend.

I want to introduce myself differently than the little blurb in the program. It lists many of the awards and accolades I have received over my career. I want to share some things about the person who has worked in our career for 36 years, and who has received those awards.

I began my career in 1980 with Queens Public Library as a non-degreed library manager at the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center. I earned my undergrad degree in Business Administration at CUNY's York College (1983-1990) and later my MLS from CUNY's Queens College (1993-1996) as an evening student throughout.

I stand on the shoulders of my mentor, Dr. E.J. Josey and like him, am an *Activist Librarian*.

I provided extensive community outreach promoting the library, the profession, black history and culture, reading, the value of books and libraries and the life and works of Langston Hughes to local churches, civic and community groups, correctional centers, schools and colleges, senior centers, city, state and federal agencies, NYC Police and Fire Department

I am a Past President of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA, 2004-2006); serve as Co-Chair of the BCALA Affiliates Committee and serve on the President's Advisory Council.

I Co-Chair ALA's Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunrise Celebration at ALA Mid-Winter.

Under three administrations at the Queens Borough President's Office, I've served as Chair of the African American Heritage Planning Committee.

I am an adjunct instructor of Cultural Diversity and Black Studies at York College (CUNY) and Library Science in the GLIS Program at Queens College (CUNY), where I earned my Bachelor of Science and Master of Library Science degrees.

I have served on the Board of Directors of Queens Public Television; the Community Advisory Board of Elmhurst Hospital Center; the Advisory Board at the Rikers Island Otis Bantum Correctional Center and still serve on the Louis Armstrong House Museum and Archive and Lewis H. Latimer House Museum.

I am the leader editor of the award winning book *The 21st Century Black Librarian in America: Issues and Challenges* (2012).

My GLIS team's thesis project, *Queens New York: Towards Documenting a Cultural Identity An Annotated Bibliography* (1996) was published by Queens Library and was housed in the reference collections of 64 branch locations. That work was the precursor of my own authored work, *Queens Notes: Facts About the Forgotten Borough of Queens, New York* (2010).

I am an Advisor and Contributor to ABC-CLIO, Inc.

A Library Consultant and Advisor, I've worked on library projects in New York, North Carolina, Sarasota, Florida and Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

I am a lecturer and essayist. I created two annual cultural celebrations at the Langston Hughes Community Library, and hosted monthly inclusive *Open Mic* Nights for our community for eight years.

Upon my retirement in 2016, I was appointed by the Queens Borough President to Queens Library's Board of Trustees by the Queens Borough President. (The first librarian and former staff member to serve on the Board.) I remain active in the profession continuing to lecture, advocate and teach at the undergrad and graduate level.

My presentation *on Diversity in Libraries* is framed as a component of our role to provide Quality Customer Service to all we serve.

A. Quality Customer Service

What is Customer Service?

At a very basic level: Customer Service is ***Practicing The Golden Rule*** with ever customer we interact with - External customers and Internal customers.

****Treat EVERYONE the way you want to be treated.**

Serving the community **Be Professional!!!**

Who is your community? Academic, Public, School, Special- ALL/ANY

“The customer experience”

*No one leaves dissatisfied

*Providing a welcoming atmosphere

*Smile and greeting *Making eye contact *Positive body language

*Effective interaction with customers

*Providing a comfortable environment

*Have a good service attitude

*Good communication skills - Active listening skills. Speak clearly.

*Anticipating customer needs.

*Good telephone etiquette

*Cleanliness and Neatness of the library (inside and outside grounds)

* Collection development

Food For Thought:

B. *Quality Customer Service is what the customer's perception of what customer service is.**

**It is NOT necessarily what the staff member thinks it is.

**If a customer leaves dissatisfied with how they were treated during their transaction, whether they received what they came in for or not, then the customer service was not Quality.

C. Good customer service does **not** mean "*the customer is always right*". Customer service has nothing to do with whether a customer is right or wrong.

It's how we treat and speak with all of our customers.

D. Who provides customer service to the community?

EVERYONE connected to your library!

All staff. Paid and unpaid; Hourly rate. F/T and P/T. Volunteers.
Librarians Managers Directors. Board of Trustees.
Friends of the Library.

E. Having **A Customer Service 'Philosophy'**.

*Customer Service is **EVERYTHING** we do. Be Professional.

*****To see the library and role of library personnel, how you automatically approach your role and duties, through the eyes of customer service.** Having a philosophy of quality customer service in **THOUGHT and ACTION.**

*****Note:** The more difficult part, for a library to be effective, **ALL staff** must have and operate through a customer service philosophy throughout the entire agency, not just the staff person, manager or director interacting with a customer.

F. Steps to Effective Customer Service Challenges

- 1) **Appreciate** the fact that they have given you the opportunity to serve the customer or solve their situation.
- 2) **Acknowledge** and address the emotional needs of the customer before addressing any issues or concerns.
- 3) **Apologize** when appropriate and be sincere. Remember, you are apologizing as a customer service professional for your library, not as an individual or on a personal level.
- 4) **Ask** the customer what can be done to serve them or to remedy the situation.
- 5) **Be accountable.** See the transaction or matter through to completion. If solving an issue, verify what action will be taken and give your first name so they know who to contact or refer for any follow-up.
- 6) **Assure Satisfaction** by following up on the action taken or tell the customer what action you will take and verify that this action is satisfactory.
- 7) **-Control your emotions;** understand and know that when conflict begins, your adrenaline starts pumping. Realize this and control it before you become heated up and lose control of the transaction.
- 8) **-Smile**, nod or otherwise acknowledge the customer, even before the transaction begins.
- 9) **Always Be Professional.**

G. Tips

- _ Speak slowly and clearly. Make eye contact.
- _ Avoid making excuses or interrupting the customer.
- _ Choose your words carefully.
- _ Take responsibility to resolve the situation.
Indicate so by using “I” statements instead of “you” statements.
- _ Use the word “*situation*” or “*concern*” instead of problem. (The goal is to solve the issue or concern before it becomes a problem)
- _ Use positive statements instead of negative statements.
- _ Make eye contact.
- _ **Be Professional.**

Reminder: We all deal with a very diverse population.

Library’s Mission: To Serve the public. To provide a service.

*****Diversity – The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing and accepting our individual differences.**

“We need to celebrate difference, until difference doesn’t make a difference anymore.”

Library staff need to provide a consistent level of customer service whether the customer is similar or different from the staff member.

Staff awareness of behavior offensive to others enables them to plan ahead on how to react to it.

A reaction that is planned ahead is more likely to be a desired response (rather than something we will regret).

Convey confidence – **professionalism over personal feeling.**

G. Staff Development

Quality Customer Service

Diversity

Multiculturalism

- a. **Must be established as an essential part of agency's culture.**
- b. **New Staff Orientation**
- c. **Staff Training - Annual intervals. All staff. In person & online. Required as part of all staff members annual evaluation.**
- d. **Friends of the Library (orientation and training)**
- e. **Staff Meetings Include a discussion on these topics regularly.**
- f. **Consistency breeds habit. The more often we discuss and dissect these topics the clearer and second nature they become to staff and we normalize them as part and parcel of the library's culture and practice.**
- g. **Marketing for visibility (for both staff and the public)**
Website – Include in library's Mission Statement.
Motto
Signage
We celebrate Diversity We Celebrate Multiculturalism
Quality Customer Service is Our Goal
- h. **Be active in the profession. Mentor Attend conferences**
Blogs Be on committees Write your own story.
- i. **Active recruitment of diverse and multicultural staff and volunteers/friends.**

2nd Value The Importance of Reading and the Book

3rd Value Respect the Search for Truth

4th Value Tolerance

“...library collections should possess a variety of perspectives on a wide array of topics...” ‘that libraries must have the untrue on their shelves as well as the true...’ (Swan, 1986)

5th Value A Public Good (People’s university) libraries referred to as ‘workshops’, ‘laboratories’, even a ‘public utility’.

**Another implication of the public good is that LIS professionals actively reach out to the public regardless of age, economic status, or ethnic or racial group in order to provide library service to all.’

6th Value Justice ‘information equity is an underlying goal of our profession. (McCook, 2001) Meaning, Every person should have equal access to knowledge and be respected as an individual – providing inadequate service to anyone violates the value.’

7th Value Aesthetics Those that library collections serve will have access to the world’s cultural achievements (music, art, literature, philosophy)

Michael Gorman’s Five New Laws of Librarianship (1990s)

- Libraries Serve Humanity
- Respect All Forms by which Knowledge is Communicated
- Use Technology Intelligently to Enhance Service
- Protect Free Access to Knowledge
- Honor the Past and Create the Future

ALA Core Values (2004)

- **Equitable and open access to information**
- **Service**
- **Intellectual Freedom**
- **Education and Learning**
- **Commitment to the profession of librarianship**
- **Fair use**
- **Knowledge as an end in itself**
- **Conservation and preservation of knowledge**
- **Diversity (to all populations)**
- **Global perspective – preservation (ensuring that all types of information are preserved)**
- **Scholarly communication and research**
- **Professionalism**
- **Social Responsibility – ensuring that libraries participate in the amelioration of (*making something better, improving*) substantive social problems of the day.**
- **Global perspective**

Ethics

‘Ethical behavior arises not because particular actions might be unethical, but because certain actions, even when ethical, might result in undeserved outcomes for some...

Ethical Deliberations

- **Social utility** ‘libraries are among those institutions that have a socially desirable purpose...’
- **Social Responsibility** ‘...fulfill their specific purpose... to serve the larger society...’
- **Respect for the individual** (all individuals)

Ethical issues in the workplace (Rubin)

- * **developing training and education programs that sensitize staff to ethical issues.**
- * **disciplining individuals for ethical violations...**
- * **establishing an ethics code within the organizations**
- * **hiring and promoting individuals who demonstrate ethical behavior and understanding**
- * **developing a system of rewards that provide recognition and incentives for ethical actions and disincentives for inappropriate behavior.**

Cultural Competency

(Shannon D. Jones and Beverly Murphy *Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries A Call to Action and Strategies for Success*, 2019)

Definition: ‘a highly developed ability to understand and respect cultural differences and to address issues of disparity among diverse populations competently.’ Patricia Overall, 2009 (Shannon Jones, *Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries*, 89)

An essential skill for librarians...will be for libraries of all types to provide culturally relevant services and resources...’

‘White diversity among credentialed librarians remains stagnant, the demographics of the United States are changing rapidly...’

Recommendations

- * Libraries provide regularly scheduled professional development and experiences designed for cultural competencies.
- * Courses that delve into standards, workforce diversity, organization dynamics and cross cultural leadership
- * Library leaders ...require competence to effectively lead changes that will be necessary in the future
- * Library leaders will need to embrace diversity and develop and maintain cultural competence.'

Skill Builder: Cultural Competency (Donna Walker and Padma Polepeddi - *Becoming a Multicultural Library*)

- *Attend a religious or social ceremony of a culture different from your own.
- *Attend a fair celebrating a culture different from your own that is hosted by that culture.
- *Seek out a spot where you are the minority and spend time there. Blog or journal about your experience.

Example of Cultural Competency in Action

- a. **Queens General Assembly** – Hon Helen M. Marshall Queens Borough President's Office (The Marshall Plan 2002-2013)
Promotes cross cultural exchanges among ethnic groups in Queens, New York. Meets monthly. Discussions and exchanges ideas and cultural norms. Addresses issues that arise. Speak out on incidents and hate crimes that occur. Celebrates diversity of Queens, New York.
- b. Make your library **A Gathering Place**.
- c. Make your library the **Hub of Your Community**
- d. Seek to **serve the Unserved and Underserved**.

- e. Establish and increase **Library Visibility**
- f. Establish and maintain **Community Partnerships/Relationships**
- g. Give the Library a **Voice in Your Community**
- h. Design and Schedule: Multicultural Programs, Exhibitions, Film Screening/Discussions, Concerts, Discussions and Dialogue, Panels, Lectures, Cultural and Historic Celebrations, Inclusive Open Mic Night, Literature Readings, Celebrations and workshops, etc.
- i. Take the library to the people.
Parks, playgrounds, on the street in front of the library, senior centers, hospitals, Night Out for Crime, outdoor community events, church bazaars, campus events., etc.
- j. Host Intergenerational program.
- k. Extensive community outreach – civic/community groups and committees, police, block associations, senior centers, nursing homes, sororities and fraternities, elected officials, youth councils, recreational centers, barber shops, beauty salons, etc.
- l. Encourage staff to be more visible in the community.
Attend and participate in important community meetings, local activities, festivals, events, celebrations, etc. on behalf of the library.

Define Diversity (Josey and Abdullahi, 2002)

‘equal participation of men and women in an organization regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, physical ability or sexual orientation.’

It is important for diversity to be visible in libraries. Attention to visible diversity needs to continue so that libraries have adequate representation of the changing demographics and communities that are served. (Hudson-Ward, 2014)

The hallmark of diversity is... is where the commitment to diversity does not stand out but is integrated into the flow and movement of library service... (Carol Smallwood, Welcoming and Inclusive Library Environments)

**** Provide welcoming signage in languages that reflect the ethnic makeup of your library community.**

****Use universal graphics for basic amenities (rest rooms, elevator, kiosks, book drops, trash, etc., the website and catalog.**

Quote: *‘Diversity is not a box to check, but is a reality that should be deeply felt, held, and valued by us all. Diversity is not about one, two or three in the room, but true diversity is half the room.’*

-Ava DuVernay

Strategic Diversity (Mi & Zhang, 2017)

What can libraries practically do to be strategic?

5 Points

- Begin by developing an actionable minority recruitment plan
- Be intentional about awareness and recruitment
- Be willing to have uncomfortable conversations among library leadership and colleagues

- Listen intently to what minorities share as their needs.
- Take action, and move beyond talking to making effective changes.
- *“You can’t be what you can’t see!” Marian Wright Edelman*

In closing,

In this Democracy, Libraries were created to serve Everyone. Libraries are each person’s Primary Resource toward those ‘...unalienable Rights,... **Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness...**”.

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