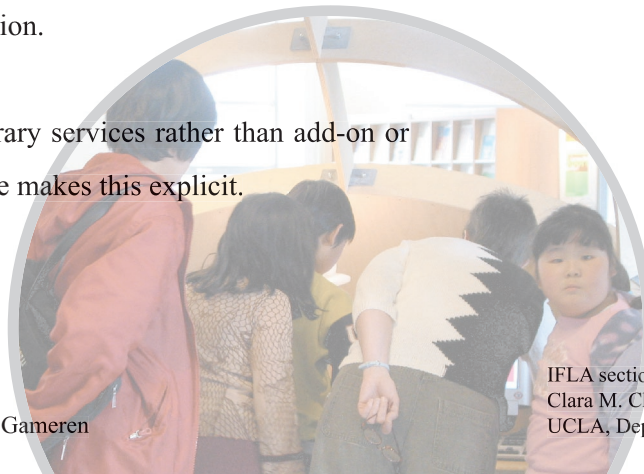


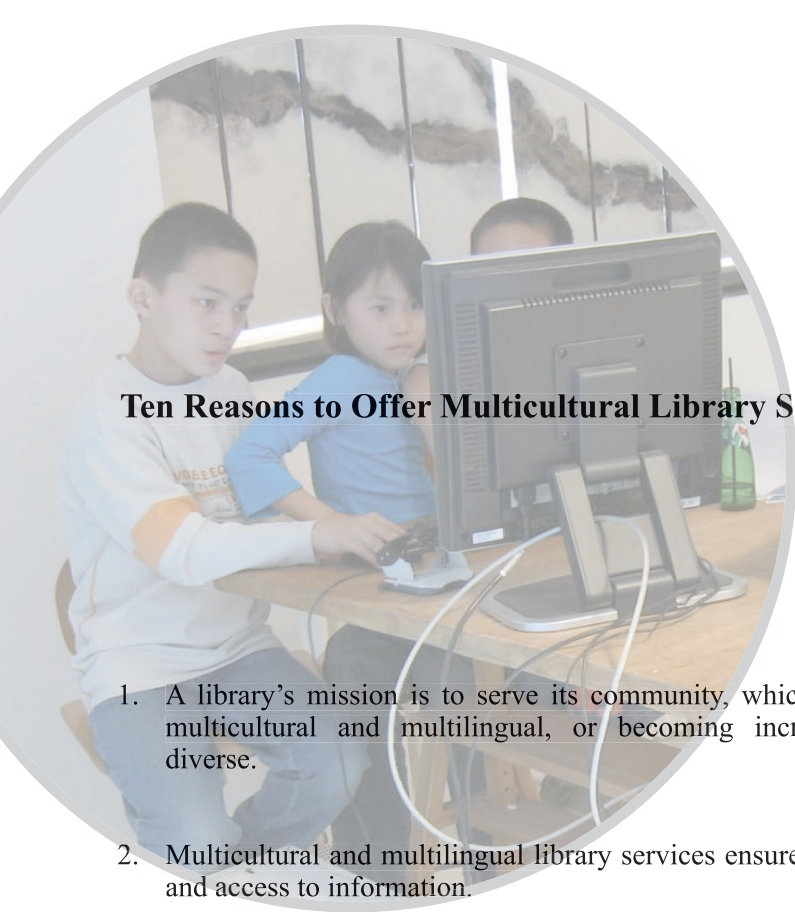
Raison d'être for Multicultural Library Services

What and why “multicultural library services” (MLS) continue to be questions asked by the library and information professions.

First, MLS include both the provision of multicultural information to all types of library users and the provision of library services specifically targeted to traditionally underserved ethnocultural groups. Often we consider MLS as mainly benefiting “minority” communities as it is these communities whose ethnocultural background is different from that of mainstream society and whose needs are often not or minimally addressed. MLS ensure equity in access to library and information services. However, multiculturalism is a condition that is related to the diverse make-up of a whole community so as such, the whole community should benefit from “multicultural library services.” Thus, the other half of delivering MLS is the provision of multicultural information that will benefit the totality of a user community. Members of a community can learn about each other’s respective cultures, languages, contributions to society, values, etc. The end result being increased understanding and communication.

Second, MLS should be the de facto library services rather than add-on or separate services. The following rationale makes this explicit.





Ten Reasons to Offer Multicultural Library Services

1. A library's mission is to serve its community, which in many cases is multicultural and multilingual, or becoming increasingly culturally diverse.
2. Multicultural and multilingual library services ensure equality of service and access to information.
3. In an era of globalization with more ease in transborder communication and travel, individuals need to learn about other cultures, languages, and peoples, which foster appreciation for different experiences and broaden one's outlook on life.
4. Information in languages and through channels accessible to diverse user communities enables their democratic participation in civil society.
5. Information on one's own heritage as well as others reinforces one's own culture and promotes understanding of other experiences and perspectives, respectively, and contributes in the development of a more harmonious society.



6. Information in languages and through channels appropriate to diverse user communities promotes multiple literacies, which facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills to ensure equality of opportunity in all realms of civil society.
7. The world's knowledge, creative forms of expression, and cultural practices are documented in diverse formats and languages, thus, the offering of a multicultural collection should be made available for all to access.
8. Learning of different forms of creative expression, work and problem solving lead to fresh insights and opinions which can result in novel ways to innovate, act and resolve situations.
9. Information about and for a library's multicultural community demonstrates that community members and their cultures are valued.
10. Libraries are spaces for intellectual and recreational engagement and libraries offering multicultural and multilingual services, and collections become a community space to bring people together.