Deconstructing Multiculturalism: How Government Policy Is Reflected In Current Education And Practice

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ABSTRACT

Canadian multicultural policy background, history and recent changes in emphasis is reviewed, and implications for LIS practice and education are considered. Definitional problems are identified. Information gained from interviews with practitioners in two cities provide a current snapshot and will guide future research on multiculturalism practice in Canadian public libraries. In addition, preliminary findings are presented from an ongoing study of Canadian LIS faculty documenting changes and current developments with respect to multiculturalism and diversity in the curriculum

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude passe en revue le milieu socioculturel, l'histoire et les changements récents de la politique multiculturelle canadienne. Des interviews avec des praticien-ne-s dans deux villes donnent une photo actuelle et guideront la recherche de l'avenir sur la pratique du multiculturalisme dans les bibliothèques publiques canadiennes. De plus, les conclusions préliminaires sont présentées d'une étude en cours de la faculté *LIS* canadienne en documentant les changements et les dévéloppements actuels à propos du multiculturalisme et de la diversité dans le curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Canada prides itself on being the only officially multicultural nation, which is not to say that it is the only multicultural nation. Fleras notes that Australia and New Zealand have been also "reordering society along pluralist lines...[but that] none have ventured as far as Canada in formalizing a multicultural agenda, in the process validating its claim as the world's first and only official multicultural society.." (Fleras 1994, 267}. This paper looks briefly at the policy history, changes over the years in policy interpretation , and the current state of public library practice and of education for multiculturalism in Canadian LIS schools.

DEFINITIONS

Various terms are used in the literature to cover the "multicultural" concept. One finds multiculturalism, diversity, cultural diversity, ethnic diversity ethnicity, multiethnicity, pluralism, polyethnicity, racial diversity and others. There is much ambiguity and some ambivalence in the choice of terms used in particular contexts. Some Canadian scholars state that the terms 'ethnicity' and 'culture' are among the least stable in the academic

vocabulary, and note that no single definition of "culture" appears to have acceptance at this time (Berry & LaPonce 1994, 4-6).

In Canada, the original multiculturalism policy introduced in 1971 (see below) did not identify English, French or Native persons as "multicultural". The term was used to identify "new Canadians" and older ethnic immigrant communities. LaPonce takes the position that from a research point of view it is advantageous to consider that everyone in Canada is ethnic. Others feel that those who consider themselves to be "Canadian" are not ethnic. or that anyone who is not a member of a dominant group is an ethnic. "Diversity" is used increasingly to capture a much wider concept than "multiculturalism" and "definitional lines between diversity and multiculturalism have become somewhat blurred" (East & Lam 1995, 200). A frequently used definition states that diversity is "a composite of racial, sex, ethnic, national origin, cultural, attitudinal, socio-economic and personal differences in every human being" (Dominguez 1991-1992, 16). The "diversity population" is thus much more inclusive than that associated with the term "multicultural". In Canada, as noted below, "multiculturalism" is being interpreted broadly, moving from the narrow focus on ethnicity to an inclusion of multiple diversities. The term "multicultural" is simply being redefined so as not to exclude many groups in society who were not initially included in that rubric. The terms "multiculturalism" and "diversity" need to be disentangled at the level of library practice as well. Lorna Peterson writes that "careless language weakens equity" and "librarians need to clarify what they mean by "multicultural" before continuing with diversity plans and programs" (Peterson 1995, 30).

POLICY HISTORY

Scholars consider the most significant precursor of Canada's multicultural policy to be the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Bi and Bi Commission) created in 1964. It is seen as a landmark because it "set in motion a chain of events which led to Canada's current policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" (Schafer 1998, 27-30). The Bi and Bi Commission was "predicated on the conviction that Canada was basically a bilingual and bicultural country involving two founding peoples– English and French." however, "while many people were prepared to accept that it was a bilingual country, they were not prepared to accept that it was bicultural." (Schafer 1998, 27-30). Leslie Pal (1993 114) writes that "ethnic groups were politicized" and "mobilized in an effort to ward off what they considered an essentially dualist vision of the country." Recognition of this fact eventually caused the Commission to abandon the notion of biculturalism in favour of multiculturalism (Schafer 1998, pp. 27-30). Pal suggests that a significant result of the Commission process was that ethnic dissatisfaction was recognized, and future policy makers sought to design policy to respond to that dissatisfaction (Pal 1993, 114).

MULTICULTURAL POLICY

On October 8, 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau announced the "official policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" in the House of Commons. He said:

cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context. To say that we have two official languages is not to say we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more official than another (cited in Pal 1993, 116).

Trudeau's comments "were the sole basis of Canada's policy of MC until passage of the MC Act in 1988 (Pal 1993, 115)

Two reasons are put forward as to why the policy emerged in 1971. First, it's thought that by that time, the ethnic population was of sufficient size to have both economic and political impact. Second, some believe that in 1971 federal politicians wanted a third force to ameliorate the struggle between the French and British/English cultures. Berry and LaPonce (1994, 8-9) write that the policy of protecting and increasing the status of minority groups reflected both the demographic shift in composition of the Canadian population and the political recognition of the value of bringing new groups into the electorate as a strategy of nation building. Immediately it became apparent that the statement that there were no official cultures "gave status to cultures other than French or English." (Berry & La Ponce 1994, 8). But multiculturalism embedded in bilingual framework led some observers "to wonder, from the outset, if some enduring difference between the status of allophones (the others) and that of English and French was to be enshrined" (Edwards 1997, .8)

Since 1971, government has "consistently reinforced the policy of multiculturalism" (Shafer 1998, 27-30). Government activities included creation of a Multiculturalism Directorate (1972), and passage of the Citizenship Act(1977). In 1982. the Constitution Act came into effect along with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Article 27 states that "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." In1986, the Employment Equity Act was passed. All of these activities further entrenched the Multiculturalism Policy which was still based solely on Trudeau's comments in the House of Commons in October 1971 (Pal 1993, 115).

Finally, in 1988, An Act for the Preservation and Enhancement of Multiculturalism in Canada, commonly called the Multiculturalism Act, was passed. The Act placed the government's policy commitment to multiculturalism in a legislative , as opposed to merely a programmatic context (Pal 1993, 139). Until the Act was passed, any later government could have rescinded the policy which had first appeared seventeen year earlier. The Act states that the federal government "recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society. The Act requires the federal government to "recognize and promote" multiculturalism and to " foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures" and "advance multiculturalism throughout Canada."

Almost as soon as the Act was passed, the government began to cut its commitment to the multicultural policy. if not in theory then in fact, as budget cuts ensued. In 1988, the federal government "announced that it would spend an additional $62 million over five years on multiculturalism in Canada, but this was cut in 1989 to $54 million including explicit reductions of 15% per year for at least three years to the operational funding of ethnocultural advocacy organizations (Pal 1993, 140). In the 1990s there were further budget cuts and multiculturalism is now a program within the Department of Canadian Heritage.

EVOLVING POLICY AIMS

Essentially the original policy called for public support and encouragement to various cultures and ethnic groups (Schafer 1998, 17-30). It is worth remembering, however, the multiculturalism policy is embedded in a bilingual, *not* a multilingual framework (Edwards 1997, 8). Thus the multicultural support is not designed to encourage a multilingual society. According to Edwards (1997, 8), the aims of the 1971 multiculturalism policy were four-fold: (1) to assist cultural groups to develop and to contribute to society; (2) to help them overcome cultural barriers to "mainstream" participation; (3) to promote "creative encounters"; and (4) to encourage the learning of French and/or English. Pal (1993, 116) notes that most of the initiatives had been tried before and suggests that the only substantially new one was"funding for ethnic associations." The goal of the original policy at this point was "cultural retention" (Pal 1993, 138). The intent was to provide for a multicultural society that recognized the "new Canadians". that is, various immigrant ethnic groups of the period. As such it did not provide funding for First Nations peoples, mixed racial and cultural groups such as the Metis, or the long standing Black populations of Nova Scotia and south-western Ontario.

Pal (1993, 138) notes that after 1981, a departmental reorientation shifted the emphasis from "cultural retention" to social issues, in particular, racism. The 1988 Multiculturalism Act expanded policy coverage to include Aboriginal people and racial groups as well as the original ethnic groups. It was not then meant to provide funding for people with disabilities, or other "diversities" such as gender, sexual preferences, the aged, etc.

In 1995, a strategic review of multicultural programming activities was launched, the first comprehensive review since the policy was adopted in 1971. The review's purpose was given as "to ensure that [the program] keeps pace with the needs of our evolving and increasingly diverse society." The renewed program has three main goals: identity, civic participation, nd justice (Canada 2000b). Interestingly, the renewal description goes on to note that it was recognized that "the government needs to respond to the public's desire for better management of limited resources, ensuring the delivery of efficient and cost-effective programs that show results"(Canada 2000b) Here clearly one can see that funding priorities were expected to change. As indeed they have. The beneficiaries of the policy are seen today as a much wider group than the "new Canadians" originally designated. Additionally funding has moved into areas other than

direct funding to groups representing the population served. There is no money today for folk dancing.

The renewed program mandate resulted in revised funding criteria that increasingly result in funding support for such activities as Black History Month (February), the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21), and the World Conference Against Racism (August-September 2001). Funding is made available for the Multicultural Information Network and Clearinghouse (MIC) which is run by the Canadian Ethnocultural Council to enable interactive communication among various groups. Research funding is available for proposals which would support multiculturalism objectives. In addition, multiculturalism is seen increasingly as an asset in a global environment and Canadian companies are being urged to "draw on the cultural and linguistic diversity to their competitive advantage in international markets" (Canada Information Office 2001).

Today the policy is interpreted to apply to all aspects of "diversity." A departmental document states that "Canada's concept of what constitutes diversity is expanding. Diversity is moving beyond language, ethnicity, race and religion to include cross-cutting characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, and range of ability and age" (Canadian Diversity 2001). Thus, there has been a redefinition and redirection of multiculturalism policy, broadening it and funding it more selectively. This policy re-definition has implications for library education and practice, which is the focus of the following pages.

PRACTICE: CANADIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND MULTICULTURALISM

An examination of the literature shows that the Canadian library community was very active on the multicultural front from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. In the early years, Canadian librarians were active on a number of fronts within Canada and also had an international presence at IFLA and other venues. Librarians such as Harry Campbell, Leonard Wertheimer (1980), and Marie Zielinska (1992) were widely known at the international level. Today only Stan Skrzeszewski, current President of CLA, is active on IFLA's Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations. There has been much less activity in the last decade, certainly since 1994. Meanwhile, the literature shows that the Australian and American library community is more active in its attention to multiculturalism and diversity issues.

A highlight of the the early years was the 1973 establishment of the Multilingual Biblioservice at the National Library of Canada. The MBS selected, acquired, catalogued and distributed multilingual books to public libraries across Canada on a rotating basis. In 1993/1994, it acquired books in 32 languages, and that year more than 400,000 titles were available to libraries across Canada (Scott 1995). This commitment to rotating multilingual books was appreciated, and it was recognized that without this service most public libraries "would be unable to meet the multilingual needs of their users" (Skrzeszewski 1990, 20). However, as a result of government-wide budget cutbacks, the MBS was reoriented and beginning in 1994/95, no further acquisitions for the rotating

collections were made (National Library of Canada 1995) The books in the MBS collections were donated to public libraries with large populations in the specific languages in return for making them available on interlibrary loan (Scott 1995). The books would "provide a supplementary foundation for locally supported multilingual collections across the country" (Bell 1995). The National Library redefined its role in relation to multiculturalism and now sees the MBS in a liaison, advisory and consulting capacity (Scott 1995). As the MBS folded, the National Library published *World of Information: Creating Multicultural Collections and Programs in Canadian Public Libraries*, a guide designed "primarily for librarians in towns and small cities" (Godin 1994, 3).

There is evidence that a commitment to multiculturalism in libraries is waning. Examples put forward by Skzeszewski (personal communication with author) include the fact that by 1990, the multicultural library consultants, who were funded mostly provincially, were "all gone" and very few public libraries still engage librarians who manage multicultural collections.

The Canadian Library Association has produced a number of statements and guidelines to assist multicultural collection and service development. Nevertheless, it appears the association membership's commitment to multicultural issues is declining as the emphasis on technology has increased.One librarian noted that "there are not many sessions on multiculturalism in either federal or the provincial association [OLA], and there are few if any interest groups focussing on multiculturalism" The attitude seems to be, "been there, done that."

At the library level, commitment to multicultural services essentially rested on multilingual collections rather than any strong acknowledgement of multicultural services, staffing, or in-house training. Skrzeszewski (1990, 20) argued that beyond multilingual collections, "multicultural services encompass wider aspects of library services including policies, staff, recruitment and training, programming and resources reflective of the cultural, linguistic and racial composition of local communities." He also noted the need for a strong commitment of the chief librarian to multicultural services, which is critical, as this individual "plays a key role in animating the board and the staff."

AN ONTARIO-CENTRIC PRELIMINARY LOOK AT PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

In a study of the situation in Ontario, Skrzeszewski (1990, 23-24) found that in the Toronto area commitment was high however, "most public libraries outside Toronto are poorly positioned to offer anything beyond a very rudimentary multicultural service." In 1990, he wrote that Ontario multiculturalism services were almost non-existent.. He stated that the problem "stems partly from the fact that while public libraries are municipal institutions, multiculturalism has not generally become a municipal goal or issue," and further, that, as a profile of Ontario Library Trustees indicated,. library boards are not representative of the Ontario multicultural community, but are primarily middle class and of Anglo Saxon ancestry

Despite this gloomy picture, there is some multicultural library activity in larger cities. In a very limited and preliminary look at current practice, in December 2000, this researcher conducted telephone and email interviews with two librarians designated as "multicultural librarians" by their respective libraries. Each filled out an email questionnaire as well. Their responses are providing a base for a planned study of multiculturalism practice in public libraries across Canada.

The designated multicultural librarian at a large metropolitan city library noted that the library uses the term "multilingual" to refer to its language collections (which exclude English and French materials). "Multicultural" refers to various ethnicities, including Black Heritage, Jewish Heritage, etc. Current statistics reveal that the library has 700,000+ volumes in the multilingual collections. In 2000, it purchased materials in 32 languages other than French or English. In total there are 140 languages in the collection. The criteria for selection include demographics, circulation, immigration, demand, and library space. The focus is popular materials in high demand: fiction, nonfiction, CDs, videos and periodicals. Translations are purchased, as are mass market formats where they are available. The multilingual children's collections include books and some audio/video materials. About 18% of the multilingual budget is devoted to children's materials. Library multilingual services include materials in print, audio and video formats; pathfinders to international newspapers, programs for adults: book talks, income tax assistance, and dial-a-story telephone service in five languages for children. Story-times are held for children in some languages. The library maintains an AT&T language line, and provides service pamphlets and booklists in various languages. The librarian stated that the multilingual budget is 12% of the total budget, which is higher than it was ten years ago. Staffing is described as adequate.

The multicultural librarian at a mid-size Ontario city library indicated that at the central branch in January 2001, there were 28 languages represented in the multilingual adult book collections, with the highest numbers in Chinese (1735) and Vietnamese(1107) and the smallest for Welsh (25). The criteria for selection are local immigration statistics and user demand. There is heavy demand for videos, and that collection includes materials in 13 languages. Children's picture books and juvenile fiction are available in 23 languages. The librarian feels that the collection is adequately funded and staffed. Funding has not declined in the last ten years. Multilingual services (pathfinders, book talks, etc.) are not provided.

These two preliminary surveys suggest that the emphasis is on multilingual collections, rather than any wider focus on multicultural programming, supporting Skrzeszewski's concerns noted above. Neither librarian emphasized a broader framework beyond the language collections. The diversity that the multiculturalism policy is now addressing was not apparent in their responses. Given the constraints on public library budgets, the fact that the multilingual budgets are still intact at these two Ontario libraries is very encouraging. Staffing to provide enhanced multicultural programming is simply not available Addressing other "diversities" is not seen as part of their role as "multicultural librarians" and might, in fact, be handled by other staff.

EDUCATION FOR MULTICULTURALISM AND DIVERSITY

There is considerable literature on the education of librarians for work in an increasingly diverse society (Belay 1992; Chu 1994; East & Lam 1995; Welburn 1994). An emphasis on knowledge, skills, attitudes and issues is recommended (Freiband 1992). The reasons for covering multiculturalism/diversity issues in LIS education rest on the undeniable statistics revealing increasingly diverse communities at the local level, and the wider globalization imperative. Belay (1992, 298) argues that information theory building has been ethno-centric and that present-day information and communications theories hardly account for non-Anglo and non-European cognitive styles. Therefore, she argues that students need a grounding in the role of culture in human informational and communication behaviour because of the internationalization of the information industry, the international nature of new information technologies, the need to recognize that nations are not just jurisdictional entities, but also cultural systems, and because communication between countries involves people that operate in accord with different cognitive styles and information behaviours (Belay 1992, 297-198). Grover *et al* argued for a multicultural perspective noting that information professionals need to be educated "to understand the impact of change on both the macro and micro levels, i.e. the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the global information infrastructure and the customization of information services at the local level" (Grover *et al.* 1997, 273-274). Skrzeszewski (1997) has advocated for educating "global librarians" with advanced training in multiculturalism , people skills, languages and global interaction and networking. Clearly, there is increasing interest in educating librarians for a level of international activity beyond the local multicultural service model. How best to educate librarians for both the local and "globalized" experience they will encounter?

LIS instruction in multiculturalism and diversity has pedagogical and content related dimensions, according to Belay (1992, 298-299). The pedagogical dimension relates to need for methods of instruction that take into account culturally diverse classrooms. The content related dimension concerns the cross-cultural applicability of the skills and theories taught. This paper is concerned primarily with the content related dimensions of LIS curricula.

One can identify two curriculum models: (1) multiculturalism and diversity can be "infused across the curriculum", or (2) individual courses can be devoted completely to the topic. Belay argues the infusing diversity across the curriculum is preferred to offering single courses. She writes that "the dichotomy...implies a distinction between standard course topics and multicultural course topics. Developing special courses would "mean that existing courses do not require multiculturalism perspectives." She argues that multiculturalism does not introduce new topics but rather new approaches to teaching old topics" and by infusing multiculturalism across the curriculum an instructor can "problematize" topics (Belay 1992, 302). Nevertheless, she notes that developing specific courses on the international and cultural dimensions of information exchange can also be

useful. The Toronto and London librarians interviewed by the author both noted that they felt that specific courses would have been of value to them.

SURVEY OF LIS FACULTY AT CANADIAN LIBRARY SCHOOLS

In December 2000, using an electronic questionnaire, this author surveyed 24 LIS faculty at all seven of the Canadian library schools. The persons chosen to be surveyed were faculty teaching courses that were likely to cover the topic, after email discussions with their Deans or Directors. Because of variations in responses (especially in terms of courses that did not at first appear to be likely loci of multiculturalism topics), it was ultimately decided to eventually survey all faculty members. The data presented here cover only the initial survey responses.

The questionnaire was brief (11 questions) but elicited very full and useful replies. Faculty provided helpful information about their courses, some forwarded course outlines and other related information. The questionnaire used the word "multiculturalism" and did not suggest the broadened "diversity" concept.

FINDINGS

The data have not been fully analyzed, however some quantitative information is provided in Appendix A. The two programs in Western Canada (Universities of Alberta and British Columbia) appear to be the most active at the moment, and the multiculturalism and diversity issues tend to be infused across the curriculum as well as appear in separate course. In addition UBC offers a First Nations Concentration. Some schools offer other school activities that are related to the topic. For example, at UBC there is a Students for Social responsibility group which has a different focus each year. At McGill there are many foreign students, and they are asked to participate in lunch-time brown bag conferences on the status of information and documentation in their own countries. Comments and opinions were provided, some examples include:

"I find space for these issues in all the courses I teach."
"Multiculturalism issues should not be ghettoized, but a specific course can synthesize."
"There are faculty now who integrate multicultural issues into their teaching of other classes, something that did not happen a decade ago."
"If we really think we're advocating a client-focussed approach, then we need to address diversity issues."
"I am not a proponent of multicultural, ethical, etc. type courses. I prefer to deal with these issues as they come up."

CONCLUSION

In the rapidly changing globl environment, librarians need to have an inernational perspective which addresses all diversities. With Canadian multiculturalism policy expanding to cover other "diversities", librarians need to be aware of the many facets of multiculturalism/ diversity. This preliminary look at practice and education suggests that

much needs to be done. The course offerings should be examined at the individual schools to guarantee that students are being exposed to the issues, both "across the curriculum" and through specialized courses.

APPENDIX A

Preliminary Quantitative Findings

Question 1: In which courses do you incorporate any aspects of multiculturalism?

<u>In Core or Traditional Courses</u>

5 schools:	Foundations/Perspectives; Reference (Introduction and/or Advanced)
4 schools:	Children and &YA Materials and Services; Collection Management
2 schools:	Cataloguing and Classification; Organization of Knowledge and Information; Indexing and Abstracting; Research Methods
1 school:	Public Libraries, Bibliographic Instruction, Management

<u>In Specialized Courses</u> (1 School for each course)

Canadiana
Digital Libraries
Electronic Access to Information
Feminization and LIS
Globalization Diversity and Information
Health Services Literature & Information Sources
History of Books and Print Culture
Human Computer Interaction
Information Policy
International and Comparative Librarianship
International Perspectives
Language and Information
Legal Issues for Information Professionals
Marketing
Media Interests of Adults
Public Library in a Diverse Community
Publishing

Question 2: To what extent do you cover the topic (i.e. one lecture, one hour, more?)

a.	Recurring/ Throughout the course: 4 schools (at least one course each)
b.	One lecture (3 hour class or diffused but not more than 3-4 hours) Canadiana, Collection Management, Foundations, Public Libraries, Reference, Young Adults
a.	1/3 to ½ of course
b.	Adult Services, Digital Libraries, Young Adult & Children's Services
c.	One Half or more: Three specialized courses.

Question 3: What aspects do you cover? (e.g. collections?, services? , issues?)
Most courses named cover at least two of these areas.

Question 4: Do you focus on teaching skills needed by LIS grads: (e.g., do you focus on intercultural communication skills, and/or do you focus on information skills (such as resources on ethnic groups)

       Communication skills: Adult Services, Reference, Management, YA & Children, and   many of the Specialized Courses

       Information skills: Children's & YA, collection Development, International & Comparative Librarianship

Question 5: Do you focus on attitudes ? knowledge about the ethnic groups?

       Most respondents indicated this is done implicitly rather than explicitly. It is infused throughout the curriculum.

Question 6: Do you look at user needs and information seeking behaviour of diverse or specific groups? A wide variety of the core and specialized courses do this (of those listed in question 1)

Question7: Do you use a text? If so, which one?

       Mostly no. Only two titles were named (*The World of Information; Print Culture in a Diverse America*

Question 8: Do you have any specific assignments which focus on multiculturalism? If so, can you tell me about the assignment, or forward a copy of it to me?

       Most do not. Those that do are optional essay or presentation topics, evaluations of thesauri or web sites, or book talks.

Question 9: Do you focus on Canada, or do you cover other countries?

       Most focus on Canada

Question 10: Has emphasis on multiculturalism in your school increased/ decreased/ stayed the same over the last decade?

       Increased (2 schools); Increased slightly (2 schools); Stayed the same (2 schools); Declined (1 school, at which another respondent said stayed the same)

Question 11: Has a specific course ver been offered on the topic?

       Two schools indicated that former courses had been folded into other courses.

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