

Lesson 9 Discussion

As I mentioned in the housekeeping notes for this week, we will have a reduced posting requirement this week to give you a bit of time to work on your practice questions and your pathfinder. Thus, please post just once this week by Monday, and your post can either be a response to the questions below or a substantial response to one of your classmates' posts. Of course, you are welcome to post more than once, you do not need to do so. Because there will be fewer posts, our discussion is not split into two different forums this week.

1. Many of you likely encountered reference interactions that were complicated by factors such as language difference, disability, or age in your observations. Others likely witnessed rude or odd behavior among reference patrons. For the benefit of the class, briefly describe the interaction that you witnessed (either during the observation assignment or in other parts of your life) and relate this experience to the articles or to the RUSA guidelines for service from this week. How was the person treated? How could the service have been improved?
2. In urban libraries especially, homeless people or patrons with antisocial behavior can be a major problem for the library staff to manage. Even though the Library Bill of Rights indicates that libraries are for all people, it is very difficult to balance the rights of these groups with the rights of other patrons to feel safe and comfortable in a library environment. In light of the articles that we read for this week, reflect on how would you ask your staff to deal with so-called "problem patrons" if you were a library director writing policy? What behaviors are not acceptable in a library? How can we librarians create an environment that is safe and welcoming to all?
3. How do our patrons' social, cultural, and economic statuses affect their information use? How should librarians consider patrons' social, cultural, and economic statuses when designing programs and services? How does this topic relate to the ALA documents (such as the Code of Ethics and the Bill of Rights) that we studied early in the semester?
4. Respond to any other idea from the readings or lecture notes that struck you.

To develop services and programs in our libraries for the diverse residents of our communities, it is imperative to consider not just the customs and languages of the various different groups but also the socioeconomic make-up of these communities. RUSA's *Guidelines for Library Services to Spanish-Speaking Library Users* includes the following:

The Spanish-speaking populations served may consist of a mix of economic and social factors that combine to form a very diverse culture. Each represented culture must be considered in the development of programming and should be accurately reflected in the program content. (Guideline 2.2.3, 2007)

I believe this guideline presents libraries with the right perspective in order to outreach to Spanish-speaking non-users of the library. Language is excellent to consider when designing programming and services, but culture also encompasses socioeconomics--what people do for a living. I was also very pleased that RUSA's *Guidelines for the Development and Promotion of Multilingual Collections and Services* includes Guideline 3.3.2: "Present outreach activities in non-library, but familiar, alternative locations, *such as factories*, meeting rooms of ethnic

organizations, and places of worship” (2007; italics mine).

I live in California’s Central Valley. Not very many people who live here have college degrees or make very much money. The Central Valley also has a large Hispanic population. For example, my mother is originally from Jalisco, Mexico and came to the U.S. in the mid-1970s. She has 12 other siblings who live all over California, particularly in the Central Valley and southern California, and Mexico. In Stanislaus County, factory work is king. The Del Monte and Gallo factories, both in Modesto, the city where I live, are among the largest employers for the entire county. Many Latinos, like my mom, work in these canneries. (Both of my parents actually work in canneries running machines). Factories operate on three shifts. Depending on the company, first shift starts at 6 or 7 A.M. and ends at 2 or 3 P.M. Swing shift, or second shift, starts at this time and ends either at 10 or 11 P.M. The night shift picks up at this time and ends either at 6 or 7 A.M.

For many years, one of my parents worked the day shift, while the other worked swing shift, but anything could change; they frequently were called in to do a different shift. Sometimes, a few months would go by in which one or both of my parents worked the night shift. Then there’s what’s called double-back, which means that someone worked from, say, 6 A.M. to 2 P.M. and has to come back at 10 P.M. until 6 A.M. You can imagine the physical exhaustion; I have no idea how my parents did and still do this, although, with more seniority, the craziness does dwindle. On this type of schedule, it is easy to see how using the library is not a number one priority. Learning English or how to use a computer at the library, for example, gets pushed to the back-burner because of the time constraints and physical exhaustion of factory workers. The only reason my mom was able to learn some English was because for many years, she only worked at the cannery during the busy summer season (she has worked full-time at the cannery since I was in high school). During the rest of the year, she worked as a cashier at a Mexican bakery and specialty store. I remember when I was younger that she would go to her ESL class (she was already in her 40s at this time) at the community college at 6 or 7 A.M., go to work, and then come home to take care of the three of us kids. She wouldn’t have been able to take these classes had she been working in the cannery, where schedules can change at whim.

At the local library, there is a basic computer fundamentals class in Spanish being offered later this month from 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. Many factory workers who predominately speak Spanish are working at this time, and even for those who start work at 2 P.M., this means they would have to be ready in work gear (with their hard hats and lunches in hand) to be able to clock in on time.

I start training as a substitute library assistant at the local library this next week. When I become more familiar and comfortable with this new job, I think it would be a good idea to share my knowledge about this portion of the Spanish-speaking community. I also need to ask for materials to distribute to the canneries!

