

# ARLIS/NA

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## **Approaches to Better Serving International Users**

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Presented by:

Andrea Malone, Foreign Languages & Ethnic Studies Librarian, University of Houston

Submitted by Moderator:

Carla-Mae Crookendale, Visual Arts Research Librarian, Virginia Commonwealth University

Slide notes:

- I. Introduction (Slide 1)
  - a. Houston being immensely diverse in its makeup of citizens, University of Houston being one of the most diverse institutions in the country, and me being the librarian for foreign languages and ethnic studies as well as liaison to ISSSO, I frequently come into contact with students and faculty from around the world. It is one of the most exciting parts of my job.
  - b. In this presentation I will discuss a few of my experiences and share methods for interacting with and overcoming barriers that so often present themselves when encountering international users so that we will have more successful outcomes when working with international patrons.
  
- II. General Thoughts (Slide 2)
  - a. All types of libraries have interactions with international patrons.
  - b. But while I will share my experiences in working with international students and faculty, we must remember that one size does not always fit all.
  - c. There are many factors that restrict or hinder our international users from having the best and most successful experiences in our organizations such as technology, navigating the spaces, understanding LOC classification, or simply approaching someone to ask for help.
  - d. And it should not be a surprise to anyone that language and culture are the barriers most encountered in serving this population.
  
- III. Language (Slide 3)
  - a. Learning the necessary languages — not realistic.
  - b. Do not hesitate to call on coworkers or staff who may speak the necessary language.
  - c. Hand out of library terms in other languages.
  - d. Mango Languages has a program for learning Spanish for librarians. Many public libraries have access to Mango if your institution does not.
  - e. Collection development — in addition to the necessary academic material, perhaps leisure reading in various foreign languages.

- f. Research consults/instruction — make students aware of the databases that contain foreign language content or have the capability of changing the languages of the interface.
  - g. Other help — be willing to assist even if the need is outside the realm of the library. (Example: Me with French, Irene with Chinese)
- IV. Culture (Slide 4)
- a. Whether they realize it or not, each of our international users leaves their mark on our organization.
  - b. Attend cultural events on your campus or in your city.
  - c. If you have the space and available resources, hold cultural events in the library.
  - d. Hold mixers in the library for international users. It is a much more casual atmosphere and shows how welcoming the library is which can alleviate many of the fears and much of the anxiety they have.
  - e. Be open to and mindful of different cultures. Some universities offer cultural competency training. If not, contact your local consulates. They are eager to have someone from their office share insights into their languages and cultures.
- V. Closing (Slide 5)
- a. There is a current initiative at UH to become more international and global. This initiative is two-fold. Our students and faculty are experiencing more learning and research abroad and recruiting students from other countries to attend UH. Just last week, I took part in the filming of a video that the Department of State is producing to recruit students from Indonesia.
  - b. The very nature of our profession is to welcome and assist any and every one with whom we come into contact.
- VI. Thank you. (Slide 6)