**Type of Contribution: POSTER**

**Fostering Multicultural Library Programming**

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**Introduction**

New Jersey is a state of many contrasts. It has a population of 8.9 million people, and a median household income of $72,222 (USD) (Data USA, n.d.), but in 2016, 10.9 percent of the population lived in poverty (*Selected Economic*, 2016). New Jersey is ethnically diverse, with approximately 34 percent of its population identifying as a race other than white, and about 17 percent indicating Latinx ethnicity (*Race and Hispanic*, 2010). There are at least 147 different religious groups (*U.S. Religions*, 2010), and 2.5 million New Jerseyans speak a language other than English (Data USA, n.d.). Serving this diverse population are New Jersey’s 284 public libraries (*New Jersey*, 2010). Vårheim (2011), describes public libraries as universal service institutions because they are open to all, engender the sense that people will be treated fairly, and that they will get what they expect, i.e. information-related services. It is also a place, in many communities, where “diverse people meet and are treated as equals and with respect” (Vårheim 2011, 14). From this perspective, in many communities, the public library is an ideal venue for multicultural programs.

**Theoretical Framework**

Libraries in the United States often seek to create inclusive services. This focus is enshrined in the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Interpretation of American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights (American Library Association 2017). However, it is also true that without active efforts to engage diverse segments of the community, the reach of multicultural programming is shallow, and benefits often fade soon after the specific program ends (Beaulieu 2013, Pugh & Okuno 2017). To create sustainable programming, and “move beyond stereotypes and surface level commitments” (Pugh & Okuno 2017,18), librarians may need to partner with non-traditional organizations, and change the very nature of what we mean by a “library program.” As librarians move towards fuller engagement with the diverse cultures of their communities, it is also important that their efforts receive institutional recognition and support.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the elements that contribute to the success of multicultural public library programs?

RQ2: What types of programs have been the most successful in New Jersey?

RQ3: What community partnerships were most often used by New Jersey public libraries to support multicultural programs?

**Discussion**

In 2014, staff at the New Jersey State Library developed the annual Multicultural Program Award to “recognize those hard-working public libraries and their staffs in laying out the groundwork for successful cultural community coalition-building and carefully targeted cultural programming” (Lee & Chute 2014, [1]). From 2014 to 2017 twelve public library programs have been recognized, with each library receiving a $1,000 (USD) honorarium, a certificate, and statewide promotion as a model program. The winning programs included the collection of oral histories documenting elderly Latinx residents of Atlantic City, a program designed to explore relationships between the African immigrant, and African-American communities in Willingboro, NJ, and a year-long community-designed multicultural holiday celebration in Livingston, NJ.

**Conclusion**

Now in its fifth year, the Multicultural Awards Program provides statewide recognition to those public libraries who, in conjunction with their communities, have created high quality programming which not only serves diverse populations, but can also serve as a source of ideas and inspiration for staff at other libraries. This poster discusses sustainable multicultural library programming through the lens of the award winning programs, by identifying elements that made the programs successful, and highlighting community engagement strategies and ideas that may be useful to other libraries.

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