Bridging Deaf Cultures in America

Part of the Bridging Deaf Cultures Series

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Presented by

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2011 ALA Annual Conference

American Sign Language Literature Programming @ your library

Sponsored by

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Noted Statements from *"Cultural Programming for Libraries: Linking Libraries, Communities and Culture*," by Deborah A. Robertson with the Public Program Office of the American Library Association: © 2005

Culture *is the name for what people are interested in, their thoughts, their models, the books they read and the speeches they hear, their table-talk, gossip, controversies, historical sense and scientific training, the values they appreciate, the quality of life they admire. All communities have a culture. It is the climate of their civilization.*

Walter Lippmann Preface

For our purposes, we define the following terms:

Deaf is a generic term referring to various hearing levels.

Deaf Community (also; The Deaf, Deaf Diversity) consists of people with various hearing levels and their family members. Some of them have various seeing levels.

Deaf Cultural Program is a kind of library activity that is designed to entertain, enlighten, educate, and involve audiences with interests in deaf cultures

Deaf Culture refers to arts, customs, folklore, traditions and/or values carried forward by the deaf diversity to local communities

Organizations Serving the Deaf (OSD) consists of nonprofits, for profits, government-supported programs, public services, and social groups having interests in promoting library access and quality deaf resources for all.

Outline

1. Define America
2. Deaf Cultures in America
3. What do Librarians, Library Workers and Friends Need to Know about Bridging Deaf Cultures?
4. What are Deaf Resources?
5. Conclusion

1. Define America

A short word for the United States of America (USA) which consists of 50 states, DC, two commonwealths and three territories; 56 Jurisdictions. *(Source: IMLS)*

District of Columbia

Two commonwealths: Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico

Three territories: American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands

2. Deaf Cultures in America

Deaf cultures have their attributes; there is no way to list them all.
Statuses appropriate to deaf cultures include the following:

A. People with various hearing levels

i.e. born deaf, early/late deafened, hard of hearing, hearing impaired, deaf-blind, having hearing losses, and others...

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1. Core dimensions

- Age on onset of deafness
- Gender or biological dictate
- Race or biological descent
- Ethnicity or cultural heritage
- Nationality or belonging to a particular nation by birth or naturalization

2. Secondary dimensions

- Communication style
- Educational level
- Preference for language
- Preference for auxiliary aids and services
- Lifestyles: Career / Work / Leisure
- Challenges: Physical / Life functioning / Learning
- Geographical location
- Faith affiliation
- Others

3. Deaf diversity

- Children
- Young Adults
- Post-secondary students
- Older Adults
- Members of Ethnic Groups
- Members of faith traditions
- Rural populations
- Homeless populations
- Gender (male or female)
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals
- People at leisure
- People in need of health care
- People recovering from various kinds of abuse
- Others

B. Families

The Deaf Experience has its impact on every family structure.

1. Hearing Children of Deaf Adults (H-CODA)
2. Deaf Children of Deaf Adults (D-CODA)
3. Deaf Children of Hearing Adults (COHA)
4. Hearing Siblings of Deaf Adults (H-SODA)
5. Deaf Siblings of Deaf Adults (D-SODA)
6. Hearing Spouse / Partner of Deaf Adults (SPDA)
7. Hearing Relatives of Deaf Adults (RODA)

C. Ethnic groups

The deaf community *may mix cultural experiences from various ethnic groups, including the following*

1. American Indian and Alaskan Native Populations
2. Asian Americans / Pacific Americans
3. European Americans
4. African Americans
5. Hispanics / Latinos
6. Caribbean Americans
7. Arab American
8. Deaf Ethnic Americans (1)
9. Others

1. Deaf people, who do not consider themselves “disabled”, are likely to be members of linguistic and socio-cultural community. They do not want to be limited to a particular class.
2.

Jennifer Dans-Willey, editor-in-chief of SIGNews, recently made a comment on the deaf being an ethnic group on the front page of her newspaper. (June 2011). Her topic reads, “Should Deaf be an Ethnic Group? The book Says, “Yes.” The title of the book she referred to is ***The People of The Eye: Deaf Ethnicity and Ancestry***. *It was published by Oxford U*niversity Press and is written by co-authors: Harlan Lane, Richard C. Pillars and Ulf Hedberg.

D. Deaf people living with circumstances

Laws will never be the only solution to access and full participation; there have to be community alternatives to meet specific needs of deaf people who live with or in circumstances which include:

1. Rural areas
2. Urban areas
3. Careers and Job
4. Leisure and hobbies
5. Sports
6. Institutions
7. Others

3. What do Librarians, Library Workers and Friends Need to Know about Bridging Deaf Cultures?

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2. They need to respect their choice of communication technologies for access to library resources. *Not all know sign language or benefit from listening assistive devices.*

3. They need to be knowledgeable about ongoing controversies that are related to language and communication issues, such as appropriate methods for educating deaf children

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4. They need to inform the public via various media outlets (i.e. TV using captioning and deaf personalities using American Sign Language) about deaf resources, especially deaf cultural programs held at the library.

Most organizations serving the Deaf have limited tools for reaching out to their members and supporters as well as to the general public.

4. What are Deaf Resources?

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a. Organizations Serving the Deaf (OSD)

Four types: Academic, Public, School and Special

Special OSD's include:

- Auxiliary (communication access, technologies, others);
- Consumer (membership, advocacy, others)
- Services (human, social services, others)
- Faith (religious,spiritual, others)
- Media (publishers, producers, distributors, news services, others)

b. Books and other materials by or about Deaf Persons

- Fiction, non-fiction, Children Book
- ASL Literature and Deaf Literature
- Book Discussion Groups
- Deaf Experience / Deafhood
- Print, E-books, DVDs and others

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c. Speakers and Storytellers Bureau

- Authors, writers, leaders, achievers
- ASL Storytellers
- Adventures, Arts, Biography, History and Technology
- Vlogs and Blogs, i.e. You Tube
- Sign Language interpreters and CART

d. Deaf People at Work

- Librarians, allied professionals, staff, workers, retirees
- Mentoring
- Advocacy training
- Job training

5. Conclusion

No library can pick or choose to whom it provides services, the government must serve everyone.

With thanks to improved communication technologies and the availability of federal funds, the time is right for the ALA to work on the solution of the nation's libraries in their effort to successfully provide cost effective and efficient services to the deaf diversity in the DC, 50 states, two commonwealths and three territories; 56 separate and distinct jurisdictions.

As you may know, there are no existing national library services for the deaf that are similar to the National Library Services (NLS) for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (founded 1934). The NLS does not provide direct services to deaf people unless they have problems with vision and mobility that prevent them from reading. NLS does not have the staff trained to communicate in ASL with such patrons.

According to several sources, a large number of service men and women have been coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan with hearing losses; this represents a new class and a new culture.

Helen Keller National Center has reported that people 55 years of age and older, especially “Baby Boomers,” are the largest growing demographic to experience both vision and hearing loss. They have a great need for additional supports and services. Many of them are still working, have active lifestyles, and don’t think of themselves as “deaf-blind” or are otherwise able to contribute to society.

We believe the library, and particularly one modeled on the DCDL, is the best vehicle for the integration and assimilation of our people.

For more information and to participate, visit:

http://IMadeAmericaGreat.webs.com/

Thank You for being with us this evening!