

It is a pleasure to be able to share my thoughts with you regarding Vision for the SJSU Library Multicultural Resource Center, one of the showcase departments that will be located on the 5th floor of the Joint Lib.

Vision is an interesting thing. One man might have a vision and end up wandering aimlessly throughout the desert for years.

A good place to begin to focus on “**vision**” starts with a **plan** or “**mission statement**”. To the best of my knowledge,

there is no mission statement for the Multicultural Resource Center.

There may be mission statements for the Africana Center and the Chicano Library but none exists for the SJSU Library Multicultural Resource Center. If such statement exists, it needs to be vetted and reviewed by administrators, interested members of the faculty, staff and student population and by each of the Advisory Committees that will guide and monitor the development of the Center during the coming years. A good mission statement identifies the target audience or audiences, and sets the direction for the enterprise for the near and distant future.

With that said, I will continue with this presentation regarding Vision for the SJSU Library Multicultural Resource Center.

I will address a number of different themes in this presentation and hopefully they will mesh together into a cohesive “vision” statement...

It was fun to do research the term “**vision**” in the library literature to see what leads might be out there regarding the future of libraries and multicultural resource centers. I found a number of curious titles including

“That vision thing: do we need it?” in *Long Range Planning*, June 98

“When vision encounters reality: a professional dilemma” in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, May 99

“A vision of the past for the future” *LAMA*, Spring 99

“The Academic Library of the future – one student’s vision”

Nebraska Library Association Quarterly, Summer 2000

and perhaps best of all, an article titled **“Refreshing”** from the *Australian Library Journal*, February 1999.

Vision is an interesting thing. And the vision for the SJSU Library multicultural resource center has been an interesting thing to monitor as plans have progressed for the Joint Library.

Getting back to vision. I have a vision, you have a vision and you have a vision and I would bet that each of our visions would be somewhat different.

One person's vision for the multicultural center might have lead it to be nothing more than a few ranges of bookstacks and little more...

This leads to partnerships, collaboration and networking.

The joint library provides a variety of opportunities for partnerships, fundraising and collaboration.

This is also true for the **Multicultural Resource Center**.

Just as a university is composed of many different groups with differing needs, backgrounds and interests there is a common focus, a common purpose for being and working here.

What services the Multicultural Resource Center will provide?

It is first and foremost it is a space. And spaces have their own unique attributes, some good, some not so good. My vision would be that this space would be magnificent, a gem of sorts, a source of pride for the campus and broader communities. The Multicultural Resource Center is also a

A place to centralize and showcase materials, artifacts and cultural resources
a place to host specialized lectures and receptions, a facility
that highlights the contributions of persons of color to this university, region,
country and the world.

More on space and "quality space" later...

The Multicultural Resource Center is not just a place, it is a place filled with people. And the people that work and do their research there are also what makes it unique. These are the people that come to this university to get an education, people from differing backgrounds with different language abilities and different learning styles. These are the people we help on a daily basis. And unfortunately, there are many more that we do not help, because they are unfamiliar with libraries...

insert Kathy Lu quote here?

Many students of color on this campus (and these will not be the only people using this facility), but many students of color on this campus do not participate in the mainstream. They create their own support systems.

This is why we see so many groups coming together to tutor and help one another throughout their educational process. This is why there are separate fraternities and sororities for students of color, because they feel most familiar with people with similar backgrounds.

Kathy Lu quote here?

What this facility needs to be successful is collaboration... and -
planning for collaboration has begun. Each of the centers will have an advisory committee with representatives from different constituencies, but collectively they will have a vision – one vision that will help guide us

in the delivery of services and programs and expansion and change.
and that vision will help guide the development of each of the centers from
the present, to the time of occupancy and beyond,
hopefully for many years to come.

It is interesting to note historically how **campus and community support
and activism** brought about the establishment of the ethnic studies
departments at this campus. The same is true for the creation of the Chicano
Library and the Africana Center. A few of us here remember those times...
Without continued community and campus support via the advisory
committees and the broader networking efforts, the facility may become
nothing more than a place with books, without links to the campus it
serves, providing only linkages to electronic resources and
dead cultural icons.

The Multicultural Resource Center is a facility filled with people,
people and ideas. This will be a facility that is heavily used,
and sought out. Without people and a talented and dedicated professional
staff, it would be just a museum – *comment about learning without people?*
People are what it will be all about.

What I see in the future for the multicultural resource center is a vibrant place, a place that is used by campus and community users and the broader world of researchers and scholars. The Chicano Library had an active Advisory committee during the first 12 to 15 years – but the advisory committee's purpose and focus was lost due to dwindling resources and diminishing administrative support.

Martin Gomez in the December 2000 issue of *American Libraries* attempted to dispel some myths about library services to ethnic-minority communities. He reported that:

The most successful models have employed people who are committed to serving the ethnic-minority community; have found ways to ensure community representation in the development of services; and, perhaps most important, **received the administrative support needed to carry their missions forward.** 12/2000 p. 39.

I would hope that with a renewed demonstration of administrative support, the Multicultural Resource Center will be a quality service center as the library changes in the years ahead.

The Multicultural Resource Center is unique to SJSU and the CSU for that matter. It is may be more analogous to the Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California.

A few comments on “space” and the facility.

It is imperative that this “space” be as attractive, inviting and welcoming as possible. We have a responsibility to ensure that this is the case.

A facility – any facility that has an “institutional” presence or veneer, has the appearance of that of “hand me down’s or “stepchild” status, even during the next three years of transition will be apparent to users, will not be all that it could be...and will discourage users from coming to do research.

We also need to widely promote the facility and the services it provides.

The worst thing that could happen would be to keep the Multicultural Resource Center the “best kept secret” on this campus.

Marketing research suggests that people tend to like to read and study in comfortable, familiar and inviting environments. That’s what makes

Borders Books and Barnes and Noble such wonderful places to visit. My vision for the aesthetics, the look and feel, if you will, of the

Multicultural Resource Center would be more consistent with the ambiance one might encounter in a high quality bookstore, rather than some highly institutional facility, say, like the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The Joint Library will be intimidating to many persons of color by the nature of its size and scale. Some consideration needs to be made to

make the entryways to the facility more inviting and less institutional to the campus community and the City's borrowers.

Significant improvements have been made here at SJSU when the Africana Center and the Chicano Library moved from their drab and dreary locations in Wahlquist into their temporary locations in the Modulares.

For the past three years I have had the good fortune to teach a summer Multicultural Library Services course in the School of Library and Information Science. One of the assignments I have had the students investigate, in addition to the quality of services, or lack thereof, is the nature and feel of the library they must evaluate.

I encourage the students to go to the library and experience it as though it is the first time you've ever entered the building. What are your first impressions when you enter the door? Are materials arranged logically? Is signage clearly available and easy to understand? Are handouts available? Would you be able to locate materials without asking for help?

If you had to ask for help, what was the outcome? Was the response you received from the staff courteous and helpful?

Again, what is your first impression when you enter the library?

Many libraries have done a terrible job of “merchandising” their collections, and the maintenance and the state of the facilities is quite frankly, the pits.

There are exceptions. One example is the first floor of the Martin Luther King Jr. Library just down the street. When one enters that facility the first things one sees is colorful displays – childrens books, flags of the nations, photographs of native Americans, and lots and lots of multicultural resources, sound recordings, videos, etc. This is a very welcoming site. Indeed, it is like walking into a candy store.

In contrast what is it that you see when you walk into this building? Very poor illumination, and a bunch of drab and dreary colors. This I hope will change in the Joint Library and the Multicultural Resource Center will showcase the collections it houses in tasteful hues and tones...

I challenge you the next time you enter this building to consider that it is the first time you’ve ever been here. Does it encourage you to come back again? Were it not for our paychecks I doubt that we’d return day after day.... The multicultural resource center should be as attractive as possible. And it must also match and complement its surroundings.

I see the Multicultural Resource Center as a tremendous opportunity for

enhancing mentoring efforts in the library and the university. Just as the Center may serve as a training ground for new professionals, Center staff also serve as mentors to campus and community members. I can see a number of opportunities for partnerships in this regard.

Mentoring requires a level of commitment and responsibility that carries on and on. It requires the commitment of a dedicated staff that is well aware of the needs of its users.

Years ago one of my colleagues made an analogy regarding work styles of reference librarians and breeds of dogs. He observed that there are three types: pointers, sitters and retrievers. I would envision that the multicultural center would be filled with the “retriever” sort, and the most active of that type. This will be essential if we are to provide quality outreach efforts and are responsive to the needs of our users.

Staff in the facility must be well aware of different learning styles of people and be aware of cultural differences and nuances regarding interpersonal communication. But most of all, staff should realize that One cannot make generalizations about persons from different ethnic or cultural groups. Each person is unique.

The Multicultural Resource Center will be a vibrant place, and actually I see that it will experience growing pains regarding its popularity,

It will be very heavily used especially by high school and elementary school students.

There will be nothing like it in the downtown area. For that matter, there will be nothing like it in the South Bay. Due to the centrality of collections, it will be the choice of many students doing research in ethnic studies – especially latch key kids - after regular school hours and on nights and weekends. The success of the MRC will be a very very good thing. It will be curious to see how this plays out...

The resources in the Multicultural Resource Center will be logically arranged. This will enable the user to come in and investigate at their own pace. Spaces need to allow for quiet study and group instruction and interaction. Tour groups should be easily accommodated through the area. without disrupting researchers.

The Multicultural Resource Center will be a showcase, just like the other showcase centers on the fifth floor. Displays will be prepared for holidays and other events and unique resources in the collections will be highlighted in special display cases. These events will draw members of the broader communities.

The Multicultural Resource Center will provide access to **electronic resources** and the world is changing very quickly.... wireless?

I would not like to venture to say where we'll be at 2003 or 2005 regarding technology, but it will be impressive. I can envision a time in the not too distant future in which holographic resources may be displayed almost anywhere in the world.

The Multicultural Resource Center houses a classroom that will be utilized for library and classroom instruction, receptions and library related activities. Scheduling for this facility, like those of the other meeting places in the Joint Library requires clearly defined policies and procedures.

The current arrangement in the Chicano Library/Africana Center is such that we have two meeting places, so there is little competition for the use of these spaces. Nevertheless, there have been times during the past year when we were not able to accommodate library and campus community related requests to use the facilities.

fundraising...

Fundraising is one area where tremendous growth and opportunity might occur. With a dedicated professional staff, it will be possible to draft and receive grant support for research and collection development. Where no history exists, or where there is limited documentation available, it is

incumbent upon the librarian to also wear the robes of historian. I can envision a time where grant support is available to support preservation, oral histories of local communities, The Multicultural resource center could evolve to the extent where is similar to the other specialty centers on campus, the Beethoven and Steinbeck centers. I can envision a time when publications are released from multicultural resource center bearing the SJSU library imprint.

There are numerous opportunities for fundraising and grant support for center services and peripheral projects.

is logically arranged

maintains a sense of community

changes to meet the needs

maintains physical and electronic linkages..

Focus-!

About two years ago the SJSU's American Library Association Student Chapter and several of the ethnic library associations in the Bay Area sponsored a reception to encourage library school students to get involved in national and regional professional organizations.. At that event Mengxiong Liu represented CALA and spoke on behalf of the Spectrum Initiative.

I represented and spoke in behalf of Bibliotecas Para La Gente and Reforma. The event took place in the Chicano Library in Wahlquist.

One of the invited speakers for that event was John D. Berry, then President of the American Indian Library Association. John was unable to travel from Oklahoma to attend the event, so his statement was read by one of the Co-chairs of the ALA Student Chapter. I would like to paraphrase and read part of John D. Berry's statement because I believe that it is timely and appropriate as we plan for the Multicultural Resource Center.

There was an article in Saturday's Mercury news in which a psychologist reported that it is in fact a good thing that we are having brownouts... people are slowing down a bit and stopping the rush.... I believe that Barry's observations and advice – directed at individuals entering the profession are indeed sage advice, to take a moment to reflect on our ethics, what are we doing and what is important to us.

I would like to consider that the following statement would be read by all of the workers in the Multicultural Resource Center.

The following is said for your education and professionalism.

1. LISTEN – at work, speak little unless asked what you think – be very selective about what you say. Eventually, you will be listened to – make it

worthwhile for others to listen to YOU! “Listen to your Patrons” – remember the REFERENCE INTERVIEW, when asking questions, be brief and re-phrase their question to clarify what is wanted, be clear, don’t be afraid to ask again in another way. You can use this on your co-workers and supervisors too – DO IT!

2. EDUCATION – you don’t get to stop learning. Learn the procedures and policies – written and un-written for where you work! ! Learn from you co-workers, other professionals, and your patrons, and continue to train and educate yourself wherever possible. Study your community where you find yourself working and living – not much can complicate your life more than working, or acting inappropriately towards the community you are supposed to be serving. This may be one of the hardest things for you to do. By virtue of who you are professionally – you will be an educator, people will look to you for answers and learning – do this well.

3. DO THE RIGHT THINGS – by this I do not just mean the things at work. You were hopefully taught what is right and wrong by your parents. In addition, you will have been taught some core professional ethics and values. You may be asked by individuals, supervisors or groups, within your working environment or elsewhere, to violate some of these ethical

values at some point. If it is at work, get it in writing – always. Document what you do, how you do it, and who asked you to do it and if necessary, make very clear why you WILL NOT DO IT! Protect yourself. If worst comes to worst – there are other places to work. If this happens you DID NOT FAIL – you will walk away with your head up, knowing you did the right thing and you will have learned.

This issue can arise in many venues – from the community asking you to CENSURE or BAN materials; to allowing things in your personal life to go out of control. Take personal responsibility seriously.

4. EXPLOITATION – Do NOT exploit others, do NOT allow yourself to be exploited. This is important for both those of you of minority ethnic heritage, and for those of you in the dominant culture. If someone asks you to participate in projects or grants, ensure that you have a say, ensure that you can participate in the direction of the project and/or the expenditure of the resources that may come along with it. Be polite about it – but again – get verbal promises or guarantees in writing.

You may think it strange that I repeat this issue – one burned twice wise! If it happens once shame on them, if it happens twice – shame on you!

5. PARTICIPATION – It is part of your Profession to participate. To participate in your own education, your professional organizations, your

community. You will be busier than you ever thought possible.

Prioritize, but participate when and where you can. You have a voice, use it wisely, use it selectively, but USE it.

6. PLAN – Plan for your future and set goals. Do those things necessary to achieve your goals, whether educationally or professionally to enable you to be where you wish to be, doing those things which YOU choose. Plan for yourself, your communities, and the future generations to come.

Work towards these goals.

Those are powerful words and guiding principles. By following them the vision of the Sometimes it is important to look back before we

move ahead...

thank you for your time
