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The Library-Community Convergence Framework for Community Action:

Extending the Library as a Catalyst of Social Change

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The Library-Community Convergence Framework for Community Action:

Extending the Library as a Catalyst of Social Change

Abstract

This paper presents a library-community convergence framework (LCCF) to extend the library's role to participate more fully in community action and enhance its role as a proactive catalyst of social change, as compared to a sometimes perceived role of bystander. The LCCF for community action is relevant in the contemporary context of changing public demographics and an increasing need for library interactions with ethnic and multicultural publics. It provides a holistic approach for libraries to extend their existing functionalities and serve as catalysts for community-wide advocacy for people on the margins. The paper discusses select application of the LCCF for community action in two qualitative research studies with local immigrant communities and sexual minorities, that use methods pioneered in ethnographic outreach and participatory action research (PAR) respectively. We briefly present our field-based research in these two cases and connect them to our advocacy of the LCCF.

Ethnographic methods in the first study provide understanding of cross-cultural issues and uncover how local immigrant classifications can be induced from an ethnographic perspective to generate library classifications and information services that are locally relevant and empowering. PAR ideologies in the second study underlie implementation of library and information interventions and community action while partnering with local sexual minorities and their allies, to address specific and

contextualized community facets in ways that may promote community-wide social changes. Points of intersection from the two studies help identify key elements in the LCCF framework that extend the role of libraries as leaders and cultural planners of progressive community-based action.

Introduction

The metaphor of the librarian as a "midwife to the birth of knowledge" (Herold, 2001) accurately reflects historical perceptions in American society that consider both the traditional and modern library as institutions (physical or virtual) dedicated to the organization, representation, and communication of global knowledge (Taylor, 2003; Shera and Cleveland, 1977). Libraries have also been charged with the responsibility of disseminating information and providing access to relevant information services based on the needs of local community constituencies (Rayward, 1994; Abbott, 1988).This includes the expectation of the library to act as a referral agent to local community information resources and support services that makes them directly relevant and situated in the everyday contexts of American communities across urban, semi-urban, and rural settings (Rodger, Jorgensen, and D'Elia, 2005; Middleton and Katz, 1988).The responsibility justifies the support libraries receive from local funding agencies (Usherwood, 1996) and provides the library a status that is unique and at a distinct advantage over competing commercial, governmental, and other information service providers (Comedia, 1993). The community referral-focused conceptualization of libraries has been liberating for the profession since it has insured the continuity of the library's role in public recognition as a storehouse of knowledge and information provider, irrespective of changing socio-cultural, socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and socio-technological advances over time (McCook and Jones, 2002; Van Fleet and Raber, 1990).

However, the rigidity of the library in only a "referral service" mode at times has compromised practitioners and researchers' vision to conceive of libraries as active leaders in the provision of proactive services that directly engage multicultural and marginalized community publics (Muddiman, 1999). We point to the following arguments:

- The library image as a referral agent at times has prevented hands-on involvement of libraries in the everyday happenings of local communities that might have enhanced its empowering role to help people help themselves (Maack, 1997; Mehra, Albright, and Rioux, 2006);

- Libraries have been subsequently associated with public institutions of power and agents of social control (Ring, 1993; Harris, 1973), that cater to the changing attitudes of a homogenized middle class (Venturella, 1998), at the cost of ignoring the needs of people on the margins of society, including ethnic minority communities (Roach and Morrison, 1998). Moreover, libraries dedicated to serve those on the margins are often not fully equipped, financially and methodologically, to understand the realities their constituent communities face in their own worlds and terms (Chu, 1999).

- Beyond roundtable discussions in professional groupings such as the American Library Association and the like, the general public has not always viewed libraries as beacons of social change, or significant players in

community building and community development efforts since libraries are still viewed as "distinctly biased toward property, wealth, bigness, mainstream "culture," and established authority" (Berman, 2001, p. xi);

- Library representatives have been largely left out of decision-making and legal and political policy development that impacts intellectual freedom, surveillance, and other critical issues faced within American society (Cieszynski, 2002).

We argue that because of the presumed community-focused referral role of the library, it has at times been marginalized in terms of being identified as a leading force in the public sphere with respect to significant community issues of diversity and intellectual freedom (Sumerford, 2004). Additionally, though libraries have been moderately proactive in promoting social change, they have done so "only within the limits permitted by a collective of community values" (Wiegand, e-mail communication dated 7/4/06), perhaps owing to their dependency on public funding and public opinion that exert significant influence on the development and support to library services and programs around the country (Ditzion, 1947; Anders, 1958). One historical consequence of the embedded library monies in the community's tax base is a lack of library conceptualization, and its systematic and aggressive marketing, in terms of a proactive involvement in community engagement (McCook, 2000) that remains dispersed and specifically targeted in isolated areas of impact (Osborne, 2004; Wiegand, 2000). This paper attempts to build upon (and extend) past library

involvement in service and outreach-oriented efforts by presenting the Library Community Convergence Framework (LCCF) of proactive community action that consolidates and markets the image of the library as a social catalyst, rather than the sometimes perceived role of a mere bystander passively observing the community dynamics enfold and enact.

We believe that since libraries are passively involved in empowerment initiatives (or actively participating in isolated attempts), they have at times only been seen as *passive supporters* of social change that only indirectly contribute towards changing the disempowered status, experiences, and realities of people on the margins (Chatman and Pendleton, 1995; Dervin, Harpring, and Foreman-Wernet, 1999; Bishop, Mehra, Bazzell, and Smith, 2003). This issue is accentuated with the introduction of new digital library technologies that are created in environments fundamentally removed from the population of users which they aim to serve (Seyfarth, 2003; Srinivasan, 2007), leading to a lack of significant focus on the cultural priorities of marginalized communities (Shapiro, 2003). Instead of actively probing into the behaviors, classifications, and priorities of their multicultural publics, these information systems have been advertised to focus on user-interface, receiver-type issues (Komlodi et al., in press; Marchionini and Fox, 1999) that have dwelled into systems design and resource development, without as direct a concentration on the impact or change brought about in the user or community's experiences. Therefore, while library information collections, resources, and programs have recognized the information seeking behaviors and needs of various user populations (Durrani, 2001; Chatman, 1985; Metoyer-Duran, 1993), their

involvement with disenfranchised groups has often been limited (and represented as such). Only in the last few years, libraries have now been forced to recognize, and represent, the need for greater *proactive involvement* in social change via community building efforts that consider culturally diverse constituencies (Long, 2000). This has occurred owing to unexpected consequences of:

- Contemporary changes in local community demographics that have expanded in terms of ethnic diversity (Gonzalez, 1999), making the issue of empowering marginalized publics more visible (Hernandez, 1997);

- Political, economic, social, cultural, and technological effects of globalization on American society (McLuhan, 1964; Bender, 1996; Appadurai, 1996), highlighting the need for representation of cultural plurality in order to effectively compete in a global networked supply chain for services and manufacturing (Friedman, 2005).

However efforts such as community librarianship (Black and Muddiman, 2005) civic librarianship (McCabe, 2001), and service learning initiatives in library education (Mehra, 2004) that connect the library (in intellectual discourse and physical representation) to the multicultural publics in a heterogeneous community via bridging social inequities, remain unevenly represented (McCook, 2000).This paper addresses the missing gap of a lack of cohesiveness in conceptualization of the library as a proactive place involved in ongoing and continuous advocacy by presenting a

consolidated and holistic framework that exemplifies the library role as an agent for social change, going beyond constructions that presented the library as solely a container of world knowledge and an information provider. This community action framework (presented as the LCCF for community action) recognizes that libraries are social and information hubs in American society, and acknowledges that the library has been involved as community agents, participating in social change, yet that its role can further expand. The framework assumes that the communities library serve are dynamic, diverse, heterogeneous, and ever-changing (Orange, 2004), particularly in an age of rapid technological and cultural migration (Appadurai, 1996). Our approach calls for an understanding of the complexity of local community constituencies, and for a greater awareness of the cultural factors that mediate the development within, and information flows across community members. This paper therefore urges libraries to venture into non-traditional domains of community understanding to develop and extend community outreach strategies and forge new partnerships and collaborations in order to become "rocks" that may provide foothold to people on the margins (McCook, 2002). Such efforts will not only result in progressive social change, but also re-create public awareness and understanding about the library's role as a leader that can significantly impact information and cultural policy-making (Hillenbrand, 2005).

We argue that this paradigm of the library as a proactive community agent (represented in the LCCF for community action) must recognize relevant findings within methods pioneered in participatory action research (PAR) and ethnographic outreach. These methods are discussed in later sections of the paper in the context of our

fieldwork experiences while working with local community members representing two disenfranchised populations and their allies. Qualitative research involving local immigrant communities and sexual minorities are shared to respectively highlight two key goals in the LCCF for community action, namely, of accommodating local priorities and ontologies, and, developing PAR initiatives to partner with various representatives of underserved populations. In the first study, an ethnographic approach has been useful towards understanding cross-cultural issues and uncovering how local immigrant classifications can be induced from an ethnographic perspective to generate library classifications and information services that are locally relevant and empowering (Srinivasan, in 2007; Srinivasan, 2006a; 2006b). In the second study, PAR ideologies underlie implementation of library and information interventions and community action while partnering with local sexual minorities and their allies, to address specific and contextualized community facets in ways that may promote community-wide social changes (Mehra and Braquet, in press; Braquet and Mehra, 2006). Points of intersection from the two studies help identify key elements in the LCCF framework that extend the role of libraries as leaders and cultural planners of progressive community-based action (Boaden et al., 2005). We believe that understanding the cultural perspectives, values, and priorities of a multicultural public via ethnography can be transformed into a participatory action agenda that shall enable the library to serve as an active agent to serve the goals of otherwise marginalized populations.

Goals of Community Action for Libraries

An examination of the historical development of American libraries provides a clear and simplified (yet miscast) understanding of the idea of community as a homogenous construct, equated with the formless "public" (Wiegand, 1999). This paper asks scholars and library leaders to re-consider the topic of community, and instead re-conceptualize it as a multicultural, ever-changing, and highly complex entity. It asks librarians to actively engage with these constructions of community and recognize local community dynamics, reflect upon them as they may interact with the goal of praxis, and establish a self-reflective dialogue that dissipates the power dynamic of teacher-student (Freire, 1968), in lieu of a philosophy that asks the librarians to learn from, and respond to, issues and realities articulated by their diverse publics. Without this approach, the danger exists of reifying historical patterns, whereby librarians may negligently continue to homogenize the construct of community, and only serve governmental or commercial interests in lieu of multicultural community partners. Without this philosophical shift, libraries at worst may also run the danger of eroding the possible learning and cultural exchange held within this multicultural scenario, and more mildly, may simply become less relevant to these communities.

There are two significant goals in this framework of community action for libraries to re-engage with a changed notion of community, in terms of library meanings and the reality of library practice in local contexts: First, it is important to develop an ideological and positional shift in library conceptualization and to acknowledge value and understanding of community-conceptualized classifications and distinctions, and

assimilate those in terms of the development and structuring of the library's own information services and thinking. This involves exploration into how a culture classifies its own knowledge (Srinivasan and Huang, 2005) and looks at its own oral (and written) histories (Ong, 1982) reflectively (Srinivasan, 2006b), to understand its perspective and viewpoint of itself, so as to guide how the library can become an active mirror of these social forces, and subsequently, of the community as the community evolves. Second, we believe it critical to answer the "how to" question of providing direction for real outcome-based actions and activities that the library may undertake to achieve the following agendas (Mehra, Albright, and Rioux, 2006):

- Bring the multicultural, complex, and dynamic dimensions of community into its folds;

- Equate the historical imbalances that have at times existed between the library and marginalized elements in society.

This calls for libraries to apply PAR efforts in community building activities, for example, in implementing neighborhood asset mapping, that will help to: 1) understand needs and realities of local communities, piece-by-piece (i.e., neighborhood by neighborhood); and, 2) identify strengths and potentials of individuals, social networks, organizations, agencies, institutions, and others, in order to proactively involve them in building equitable partnerships and collaborations with the common goal of community development, i.e., to bring into focus, issues of how might such efforts lead to

empowerment and improve the real-life social, political, and economic experiences of marginalized individuals (Mehra, 2005). These types of activities shift the discourse from attempting to bring community members "into the library", or attempting to loan information out. Instead, it sees the library as an agent that weaves information and knowledge in praxis with local community discourses and participants. The information initiative is shifted to one of emergence—one wherein the library and community mutually gain and produce realities that are greater than the sum of their individual parts.

An Ethnographic Perspective to Understand Immigrant Ontologies

Ethnography, a field-based method of expressing and acknowledging the beliefs of a community or cultural group from the perspective of its own actors (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), provides a possibility to explicitly allow library and information professionals to directly engage their multicultural publics and understand the subtleties of complex belief systems, priorities, and classifications they may hold. The history of ethnography has emerged from positivist methods of describing culture (Keat and Urry, 1975; Giddens, 1976), which attempt to emulate the priorities of scientific measurability, to naturalistic understandings (Blumer, 1969; Lofland, 1967; Matza, 1969; Denzin, 1971) of culture that attempt to describe a culture or community as untouched and within a "natural", primeval state. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) reasonably argue that these approaches must be put aside to more realistically and productively recognize that cultural realizations emerging from ethnography are reflexively co-produced (Gouldner, 1970) via the praxis (Freire, 1968) of researcher and community:

"The first and most important step towards a resolution of the problems raised by positivism and naturalism is to recognize the reflexive character of social research: that is, we are part of the social world we study. This not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact. There is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it; nor fortunately, is that necessary" (pp. 14-15).

Can this methodological breakthrough enable library professionals to acknowledge and engage the multicultural and dynamic publics which they serve? We assert that as the librarian moves toward a reflexive approach of practicing ethnography s/he begins to place community members as equals in a dialogue and participatory process that can then impact the library on multiple levels, including but not limited to programming, collection development, outreach services, acquisitions, educational activities, technology usage, and potential classifications and standards utilized.

Extending the ethnographic perspective towards building community technologies around collective ontologies, or culturally-specific representations of priorities and topics, Srinivasan has researched the design of information systems that are based around the articulated priorities of an ethnic community (Srinivasan, 2004; Srinivasan and Huang, 2005; Srinivasan, 2007). The community's articulation of relevant topics and their interrelations has served as the ontology of the information system, or the structure of themes and topics around which submitted information has been represented and retrieved. The Village Voice and Tribal Peace projects were both community-designed information systems created with a set of Somali refugees in the

Boston Area and 19 dispersed Native American reservations in Southern California respectively (Srinivasan, in press). In this research, community members submitted video, image, and sound information across several public meetings and viewed these to create an ontology representing their collective contributions. Community members who submitted information to the system could identify their content as correspondent to any of the themes within the ontology and could change these annotations at any time they wished. Moreover, members could navigate and retrieve information associated with any of the ontology topics simply by selecting them. The ontology was considered a fluid structure of community priorities, and via a consensus at a community meeting, could be continually re-shaped.

Srinivasan and Huang (2005) have observed that immigrant-authored and designed information systems can allow ethnic groups to re-connect around shared visions. They observed a significant shift in how the Tribal Peace system had impacted local reservation schools and economic institutions, for example, by allowing community leaders to directly access the voices of their peoples who were dispersed across the reservations (Srinivasan, 2006a). Similarly, in the Village Voice project, Srinivasan (2004) observed the possibility of the system to allow community members to present themselves cohesively to outside governmental and educational institutions. This approach toward the use of "fluid ontologies" (Srinivasan and Huang, 2005) presented a method of community engagement that allowed members to build their own locally and culturally-specific structure for an information system, thereby incorporating an evolving participatory process in the representation of the information they authored (Crabtree,

1998; Gregory, 2003; Srinivasan and Shilton, 2006; Schuler, 1994). This work builds on past research that has tried to engage marginalized publics to participate in the process, and influence the design of systems and technologies which otherwise would have been largely impositional (Puri and Sahay, 2003; Harrison and Zappen, 2003; Kanungo, 2004). Such an approach towards supporting communicative action (Habermas, 1984) in the design of information services/initiatives, as articulated by Hirscheim and Klein (1994), values open communication between community members and researchers. It is based around the following four major paraphrased principles:

- Equal opportunity to all participants to raise issues, points, and counterpoints to other views in discussion;

- All participants are on an equal footing with respect to power positions;

- All participants can question the clarity, veracity, sincerity and social responsibility of the actions proposed;

- All participants can have an equal opportunity to articulate feelings or doubts or concerns.

We assert that libraries can follow the lead of the methodologies the above examples embody. We also believe libraries can actively become agents that serve their multicultural and non-homogenous communities by:

- Assessing community needs (as articulated by communities themselves);

- Reflexively engaging in ethnographic processes that attempt to uncover community goals, visions, and priorities;

- Following participatory and praxis-based methods that empower community members to actively articulate their own ontologies, classifications, and value systems.

Participatory Action Research to Represent Sexual Minorities in Community Facets of Power

PAR involves seeking relevant outcomes for disenfranchised members in society (Whyte, 1991; Park, 2000; Bishop, Bazzell, Mehra, and Smith, 2001) by actively involving them not as "research subjects" identified in traditional research, but as co-investigators and co-researchers who are intrinsically involved as equal partners in the research process (Reardon, 1998), understanding their own experiences and viewpoints (Bishop, Mehra, Bazzell, and Smith, 2003) during every phase of research development (Hall, Gillette, and Tandon, 1982), from analyzing their needs to creating relevant design outcomes (Merhra, Bishop, Bazzell, and Smith, 2002), that are meaningful to them in their everyday lives (Mehra, Merkel, and Bishop, 2004). Having roots in Freire's social justice philosophies (Freire, 1968) that advocate strategies of liberation of oppressed peoples via action and engagement with them to resist forces of

dominating powers (Mehra, 2004), PAR framework gives an opportunity to "actualize and operationalize the notion of equality in our practical work and personal lives by empowering all people who interact within settings that adopt the underlying PAR philosophy" (Mehra, 2005, p. 34).

Often practiced under different names—action research, collaborative research, community-based research, amongst others—PAR manifestations with their specific nuanced variations of application, share the following common over-arching threads (Stoecker and Bonacich, 1992):

- Democratization of knowledge processes where society's "marginalized" analyze their own experiences to develop new understanding and new knowledge;

- Social action becomes a focus of research whose aim is to balance inequities in distribution of power, information, services, and/or resources.

Essential characteristics of action research include decentralization of inquiry into understanding local contexts to solve real problems, deregulation of reliability-based research measures towards outcome-based evaluation measured in terms of changed situations in people's experiences (Greenwood and Levin, 1998), and cooperativeness in execution via equitable partnering initiatives between the "researcher" and the "researched" (Stringer, 1999). Use of PAR-related strategies fulfill social equity agendas and help gain participation of disadvantaged individuals (Mehra, 2006) in organization of

local resources and community development (Chavis, Speer, Resnick, and Zippay, 1993) since they provide opportunities to the historically identified "marginalized" to "validate and reframe information provided by their own life experiences to enable them to take control of the surroundings and better determine their future" (Plaut, Landis, and Trevor, 1992, p. 57). The potential of PAR in community development is highly relevant to those researchers and library and information professionals interested to further such a service mission in their activities towards community building since it allows for the possibility of building equity in relationships and challenging traditional imbalances in power discourse between the multicultural publics and the stakeholders who are provided with a mandate to represent and serve them (Mehra, Albright, and Rioux, 2006).

How can we as library and information professionals apply these PAR principles into praxis to develop partnering efforts with disadvantaged constituencies and their local allies and agencies involved in social justice work? How can we use PAR to initiate community action that may promote and proactively contribute in the process of bringing a progressive social change on the behalf of the "marginalized" multicultural publics? We share some experiences from an ongoing study conducted by Mehra and Braquet (in press, 2007, 2006, in press) that is applying PAR strategies to address specific and contextualized community facets via implementing library and information interventions for sexual minorities living in the City of Knoxville and adjoining areas located in East Tennessee. These community facets include (Mehra and Braquet, in press): institutional policy development, political lobbying, creation of culturally sensitive training workshops,

promotion of safe-space programs, advertising and promotion for positive visibility, development and access (print and electronic) to appropriate information and resource collections (local and non-local), and development in use of community-based social and digital communication technologies. These community facets are significant because each one of them reflects a specific power discourse historically embedded in its conceptualization and construction that is relevant to address community-wide social changes for sexual minorities in the local geographic area under study. As participant researchers and library and information professionals, we are applying some PAR strategies in these community facet domains to introduce progressive social change interventions for LGBT individuals that may lead towards equating some existing power imbalances currently detrimental to the lives of LGBT individuals in the community.

Institutional policy developments are an important community facet and definitely a huge source of power imbalance in terms of identifying those who are legally protected within the sanctioned boundaries in given contexts and those who are "left out" within these jurisdictions (Israel, Schulz, Parker, and Becker, 2001). As a response to an initial lack of the University of Tennessee's (UT) institutional commitment for legal protection of sexual minorities in its non-discrimination policy reflected in the UT's Equal Employment Opportunity (Affirmative Action) Statement and Tagline (see URL: http://oed.admin.utk.edu/docs/tagline.doc), Mehra and Braquet initiated PAR efforts to communicate, collaborate, and network with UT LGBT and equity-based groups/individuals and members of local LGBT community-based groups and social justice agencies to promote advocacy for representation, inclusion, and policy change

that would insure a wider campus and community-wide legal support for sexual minorities in the region. Efforts have led to the recent authorization and creation of the Commission for LGBT People by UT Chancellor Loren Crabtree (e-mail notification received on 27 April, 2006) and the authorization by UT President John Petersen for inclusion of sexual orientation in the UT non-discrimination policy (news received via e-mail from UT Chancellor on December 8, 2005).

Similarly, Mehra and Braquet have applied PAR in building collaborations and networking towards specific outcomes with local LGBT activists for political lobbying at the city/county levels, an important community facet that embodies a significant power discourse ethics since political support/sanction for sexual minorities is important for the enactment of local community dynamics to work in the favor of LGBT individuals in this conservative East Tennessee region, located in the heartland of the "bible belt." For example, Mehra played a PAR-inspired partnering role with LGBT allies to prepare pro-LGBT resolution statements and refine vocabulary constructs to represent sexual minorities in a city ordinance non-discrimination clause, presented and discussed during fall 2005 with local Councilmen Bob Becker and Chris Woodhull. Another community facet example applying PAR is ongoing work in the creation of culturally sensitive training workshops to rectify historical power imbalances and/or existing injustices melted out against local LGBT individuals. Under the auspices of the Diversity Experience Workshop (DEW) Advisory Group created by UT's Office of Equity and Diversity (OED), Mehra, Braquet, and several faculty/staff/students across campus have been identifying appropriate and accurate LGBT content for reflecting and representing
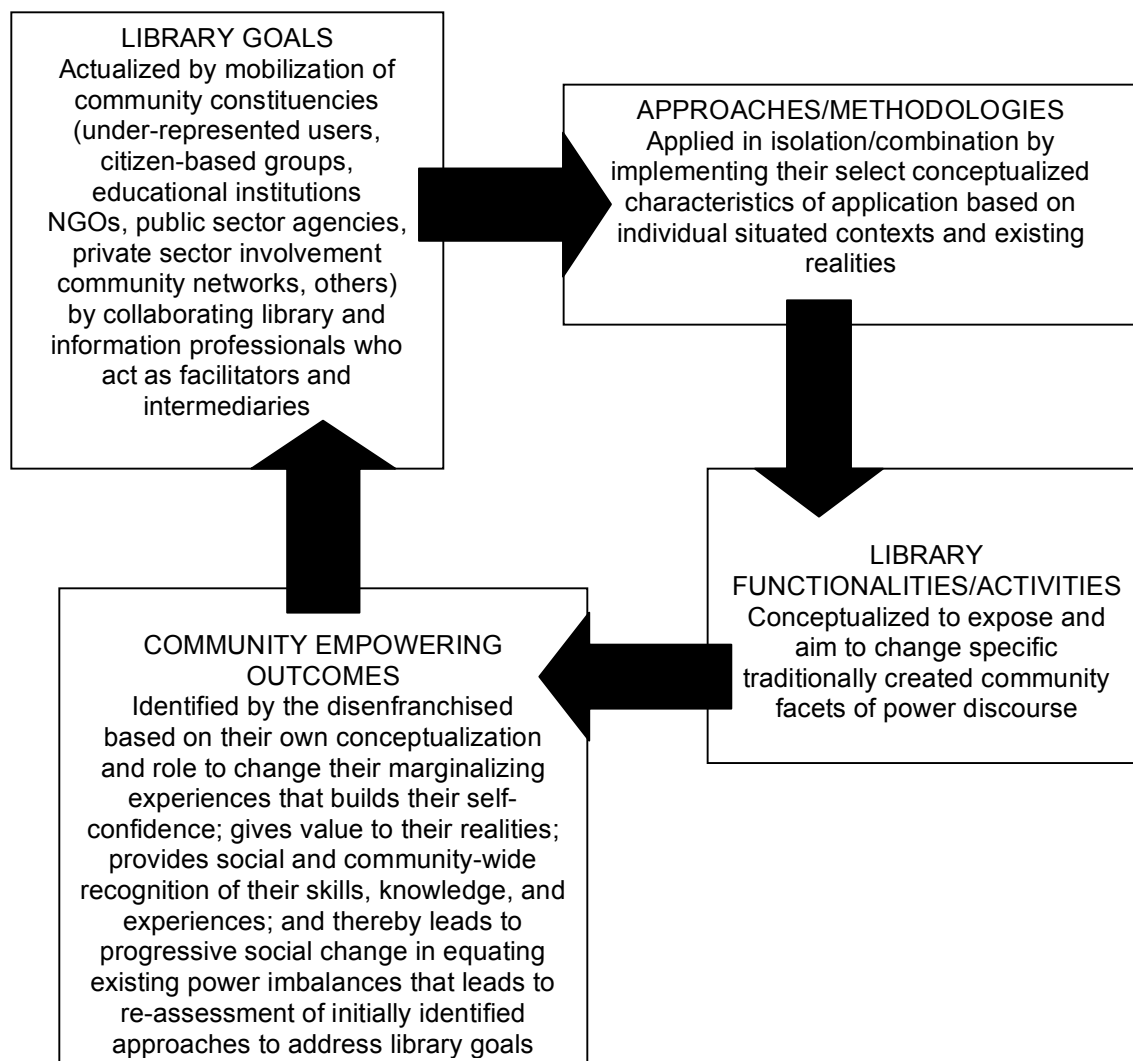
LGBT needs. Such LGBT materials are being incorporated into OED's diversity experience and training workshops that now, owing to suggested changes by local LGBT participants, focus on LGBT as "special populations" as well as represent LGBT issues in general workshops on diversity. Components from these workshops are being (and will be in future efforts) delivered during various events on campus, new student and faculty orientations, discussion forums in fraternities and sororities, departmental diversity evaluation sessions, amongst other avenues. Incorporating case-scenarios or discrimination stories experienced by local LGBT individuals may form a significant element in these workshops that give acknowledgement to local marginalized experiences as well as provide ways to improve existing services and resources in order that such negative experiences do not occur in the future.

PAR has played a significant role in our experiences as library and information participant-researchers engaged in ongoing efforts for sexual minorities to address imbalanced power dynamics embedded in specific contexts, representing these and other community facets. Building equitable relations and recognizing value to all participants' contributions, knowledge, and experiences in development of concrete outcome-based activities are key PAR criteria that are helping us promote social change, and will hold us in good stead towards future progress in support of sexual minorities in our local community.

The Library-Community Convergence Framework

The above two case descriptions, when considered jointly, present a compelling framework for potential library-community convergences that libraries can incorporate in their quest to continue to extend their role as proactive agents of community-wide changes. Our search for concrete approaches/methodologies to implement the two goals of incorporating local priorities/ontologies and building equitable partnering relationships in proactive community action lead us to elements from three intellectual constructions as explained—reflexive ethnography, participatory design, and action research. Elements from these three methodologies have been applied in various degrees of application and overlap during different times in the ongoing work from the two case examples described above. They have also been applied in previous community informatics projects (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993; Pinkett, 2003; Shaw, 1995; Beaulieu, 2002. Suffice to say, what is missing across the range of past community informatics projects is a holistic methodology that explicitly focuses on the role and activities of libraries in the context of the problematic of engaging multicultural publics. The proposed LCCF for community action fills these missing gaps.

Diagram 1: Conceptual Library Framework for Proactive Community Action

LIBRARY GOALS
Actualized by mobilization of community constituencies (under-represented users, citizen-based groups, educational institutions NGOs, public sector agencies, private sector involvement community networks, others) by collaborating library and information professionals who act as facilitators and intermediaries

APPROACHES/METHODOLOGIES
Applied in isolation/combination by implementing their select conceptualized characteristics of application based on individual situated contexts and existing realities

LIBRARY FUNCTIONALITIES/ACTIVITIES
Conceptualized to expose and aim to change specific traditionally created community facets of power discourse

COMMUNITY EMPOWERING OUTCOMES
Identified by the disenfranchised based on their own conceptualization and role to change their marginalizing experiences that builds their self-confidence; gives value to their realities; provides social and community-wide recognition of their skills, knowledge, and experiences; and thereby leads to progressive social change in equating existing power imbalances that leads to re-assessment of initially identified approaches to address library goals

We present two illustrations of the LCCF for community action. Diagram 1 presents a schematic representation of the proposed framework for libraries to engage in proactive community action as leaders to promote social change. There are four broad and intertwining components in this framework, namely: library goals, approaches/methodologies, library functionalities/activities, and relevant community empowerment outcomes. Conceptually, library goals are actualized via application of appropriately identified approaches/methodologies that are implemented in enactment

of specific library functionalities/activities to bring about relevant community empowering outcomes.

Diagram 2: Details of Library Framework for Proactive Community Action

Library Goals	Library re-definition of "knowledge" to value disenfranchised ontologies, experiences, & contributions	PAR in library efforts to enable/empower the disenfranchised to make positive changes in their everyday realities

Approaches/ Methodologies

Reflective Ethnography
- Reflexively produced experiences
- Equals in dialogue
- Community articulation of project

Participatory Design
- Community engagement
- Communicative action
- Equal opportunities to shape process

Action Research
- Decentralization
- Deregulation
- Cooperativeness in execution

Library Functionalities/ Activities

Emerging New Community-Based

Fair policy development → Political lobbying → Sensitivity training → Safe space programming → Proactive social justice advertising

Traditional

Collection development — Services & outreach — Literacy — Technology use

Programming & events — Acquisition — Classification & standards development

Community Empowering Outcomes

Defined & conceptualized by the underserved community

Equate power imbalances

Lead to changes in local contexts & experiences

Build on local capacity

Meaningful to everyday disenfranchised experiences

Promote inclusiveness

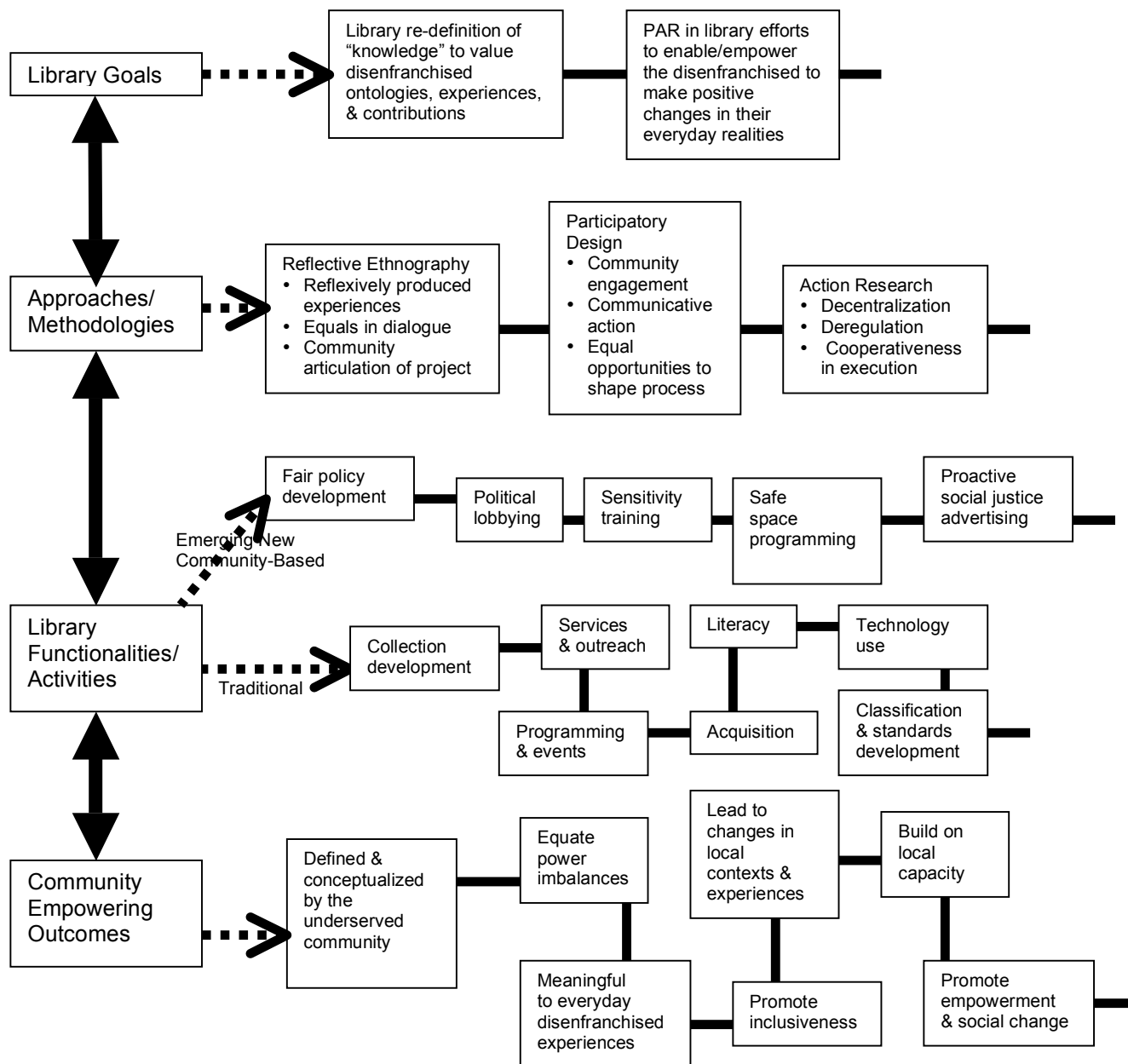Promote empowerment & social change

Diagram 2 explores the proposed library framework for proactive social change in greater detail. The two goals of library action (as discussed in the earlier sections) are

identified in terms of: library re-conceptualization of what it considers "knowledge" in order to acknowledge, provide equal value, and represent the classifications and ontologies, language constructs, and knowledge experiences of disenfranchised populations; and, expanded PAR initiatives that equitably partner library and information professionals with local "marginalized" constituencies to enable and empower them to make positive changes in their everyday lives. The proposed LCCF for community action therefore attempts to equalize localized community facets of power to achieve community-desired relevant outcomes. Library functionalities include efforts to "explicate and implement activities related to information creation, organization, and dissemination processes" (Mehra and Bishop, 2007) and encompass library collections, services, programming, outreach, acquisitions, educational and literacy workshops, library training, technology use, classification and standards development, amongst others. They also include new and emerging community-based efforts that libraries must seek to incorporate in their traditional activities as well in newly (and creatively) identified directions or community applications. These library functionalities/activities are directly conceptualized to expose and aim to change various specific traditionally created community facets of power discourse so as to equate power imbalances that may exist in local communities. Desired community outcomes are those that lead to empowerment of disenfranchised individuals and populations based on their own conceptualization and role to change their marginalizing experiences. Our LCCF for community action accommodates a vision for future growth in recognizing potential additions of new criteria and conceptualizations for the elements of library goals, approaches/methodologies, library functionalities/activities, and community empowering

outcomes, as indicated in Diagram 2 by the open-endedness of the horizontal solid black line.

Conclusion

Our LCCF for community action discussed in this paper presents a holistic approach for libraries to extend their existing functionalities and programs as well develop new initiatives for becoming catalysts for community-wide progressive social changes in favor of people on the margins. Our goal here was to present qualitative data gathered from two field-based studies to show how select elements from the LCCF for community action are being implemented in our ongoing work as library and information professionals with specific disenfranchised members in our communities, followed by a visual and descriptive explanation of the LCCF for community action. We hope to continue applying elements from the LCCF for community action in the two projects described in the paper and will report progress in future publications. For example, it is our endeavor to merge select aspects in new and emerging community-based library functionalities/activities with traditional library functionalities/activities (two streams from level 3 in Diagram 2, top to bottom) towards balancing existing power dynamics in our ongoing community action work for sexual minorities in the Knoxville area and immigrant populations in the Los Angeles region. The following are the some project examples of library initiatives that reflect such efforts:

- UT library and information professionals are partnering with local LGBT individuals and groups such as the Lambda Student Union (URL:

http://web.utk.edu/~lambda/) to promote safe-space programs for LGBT in local

public places and initiate social justice advertising of LGBT library collections and

library programming and events in outreach by going out into the community

where people are, as compared to waiting for people to come to the library.

During the New Student Bash hosted by Lambda at a local club during fall 2006,

a contingent from UT libraries presented LGBT promotional display materials,

networked with local LGBT activists, and discussed future participation and

collaboration between library and information professionals and community

leaders to promote social change in support of sexual minorities.

- Local LGBT people are helping staff at the UT library coordinate awareness of

  LGBT efforts across the community via proactive advertising of local LBGT-

  related events and activities to generate positive visibility and awareness of

  LGBT issues. For example, the Diversity News Channel (URL:

  http://www.lib.utk.edu/news/diversity/archives/glbt/**)**, hosted on the UT library

  server, presents current LGBT happenings and programs related to LGBT

  themes.

- Mehra and Braquet (2006) conducted qualitative interviews with 21 self-identified

  LGBT individuals in the community to elicit their suggestions and participation to

  implement appropriate library interventions in areas like development and access

  (print and electronic) to appropriate LBGT information and resource collections

  (local and non-local). The need for accurate, honest, and fair LGBT information

resources has led to a current focus on LGBT issues in the UT library's Cultural Corner (offline and online) (URL: http://www.lib.utk.edu/diversity/culturecorner/springlist-06.html), a library effort to demarcate a visible physical and virtual space on issues of contemporary relevance. Another related effort has been as a result of an analysis of the information needs of local LGBT individuals (Mehra and Braquet, 2007) that has contributed in the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Guide (URL: http://www.lib.utk.edu/refs/glbt.html#local) that provides online access to local LGBT resources and services via the UT library's website.

- In order to use social and digital community-based information and communication technologies for support of LGBT issues, Mehra and Braquet created a listserv "LGBTANet" in October 2005 as a means for information sharing, communication exchange, and building institutional memory for LGBT individuals and allies (URL: http://listserv.utk.edu/archives/lgbtanet.html).

- Srinivasan and fellow researchers have begun developing a digital library system, described as the South Asian Web, within the South Asian community of Los Angeles. The goal of this effort is to follow the LCCF to uncover ontologies, priorities, and culturally-relevant information to help unite a largely dispersed immigrant community (Srinivasan and Shilton, 2006).

- With the sponsorship of the National Science Foundation, Srinivasan and Bravo have begun an ethnographic digital museum project with the Zuni Native American tribal communities of New Mexico, wherein the Zuni will adopt and generate their own ontologies around digitally repatriated objects provided from Cambridge University's Museum of Anthropology (Boast, Bravo, and Srinivasan, in press).

These are but a few of the activities from the proposed LCCF that we are currently trying to orchestrate with the goal of promoting proactive community-based interventions via extending traditional library functionalities and introducing new kinds of activities that our local libraries may not have participated in during the past. Based on our experiences in the two projects, some challenges for libraries to proactively serve minorities and underserved populations include: 1) Long-term efforts in trust building and promoting participation of individuals and groups representing the multicultural publics; 2) Lack of awareness and use of the library by underserved populations; 3) The library's inertia towards outreach, and its lack of awareness about various local underserved populations; 4) Society's lack of recognition of the library as a significant player in catalyzing social change; 5) Local politics and identification of key stakeholders and potential partners.

There is need for future research to further examine the validity of various elements in the LCCF for community action in other kinds of social justice projects involving different kinds of underserved populations in order to identify variations and

details of categorizations and applications within the larger framework. There is need to also check ongoing validity of the LCCF for community action in existing projects via gaining and documenting feedback from various segments in the community (including the partnering disenfranchised communities). This will allow researchers and professionals to authenticate different library-community convergences to various outcomes, as expressed by a combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

The LCCF for community action is an approach that provides the possibility and the methods of extending libraries and their relationships with marginalized communities and dynamic multicultural publics to a deeper and stronger level of engagement and involvement. It potentially allows for promoting proactive social changes towards building vibrant, engaged and locally sustainable communities where libraries are no longer viewed as minor players in bringing socio-cultural, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic changes in people's marginalized lives and disenfranchising experiences. In order make that happen, there is a need to accept, adopt, and practice the LCCF for community action and its variations at a library-by-library level, in addition to its acknowledgement at the larger regional and national levels. In this way, the LCCF for community action may provide a new mode of practice related to interactions between libraries and marginalized community stakeholders and the changing multicultural publics that is democratic and equitable, participatory and sustainable, and contributions of all involved are supported in ways that lead to the empowerment of people on the margins and build on their abilities to make major and minor changes in their everyday lives in terms of what is meaningful to them.

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