Analyzing and understanding cultural differences: experiences from education in Library and Information Studies


HTML
077-155e.htm
Download (37kB)

English abstract

In the paper the need to understand cultural differences is discussed. The authors show how cultural differences can be analyzed. They also describe how cultural information was exchanged and analyzed during the library and information studies course that was taught via the Internet simultaneously in Finland and North Carolina. In addition, the authors discuss how libraries could use experiences of the common class when they act in a multicultural environment. In the paper, culture is defined to be a framework to our lives, something which affects our values, attitudes and behavior. In analyzing and understanding cultural differences it is important to pay attention to how members of various cultures see i) the nature of people, ii) a person's relationship to the external environment, iii) the person's relationship to other people, iv) the primary mode of the activity, v) people's orientation to space, and vi) the person's temporal orientation. These dimension will be explained in the paper. In addition, the authors pay attention to language and communication styles as a dimension of cultural differences. The paper describes differences in cultures of Finns, Sami People, North Carolinians and Cherokee Indians. Sami People and Cherokee Indians were chosen to represent minor cultures in Finland and North Carolina. An interesting similarities can be found on the one hand between major cultures (Finland and North Carolina), and on the other hand between minor cultures (Sami and Cherokees). The authors propose that there are a few lessons learnt in the common class which can be useful also for libraries and librarians serving multicultural populations. They are i) to understand people's behavior as a reflection of their cultural background, ii) to understand differences in language and communication styles between cultures, iii) to understand that collaboration across cultural boundaries and sharing cultural informations occur together, and iv) to take advantage from the Internet in crossing cultural boundaries but not to forget that people have various attitudes toward the Internet and therefore some clients continue to prefer books and face-to-face interaction with library professionals. The authors emphasize that cross-cultural communication and collaboration does not occur effectively without understanding other cultures.

Item type: Conference paper

Keywords: collaboration, culture, distance education

Subjects: F. Management. > FA. Co-operation. G. Industry, profession and education. > GH. Education.

Depositing user: Diane Sonnenwald

Date deposited: 18 Aug 2006

Last modified: 02 Oct 2014 12:04

Check full metadata for this record

References

"SEEK" links will first look for possible matches inside E-LIS and query Google Scholar if no results are found.


