

Running head: SERVICES FOR FILIPINOS IN THE BAY AREA

Library services and information needs
of the Filipino community in the San Francisco Bay Area

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Abstract

In order for a library to serve a special group, simply adding a couple of books and videos is not good enough. There needs to be comprehensive research done about the group so the library's collection and services are at the best quality. The Filipino community is the second largest Asian group in the Bay Area; yet nothing has been written about their library needs and what kinds of materials and services should be offered to them. This paper takes a look at the Filipino demographic data, some cultural points of the Filipino community, and lastly, some suggestions for library materials and services followed by a list of resources. This will hopefully provide librarians and other information professionals ideas of how to meet the information needs and serve this large population.

Introduction

Amidst the clouds and fog, the Serramonte Main Library in Daly City, California sits on a hill in Gellert Park, overlooking the rest of this suburb of San Francisco. The library is not very big, but the staff does a great job with the amount of space available; packing every shelf with books, videos, CDs, and DVDs. Lolly Pineda, supervising reference librarian at DCPL's main branch, tries to find the variety of materials that are available for the Filipino community, but has a hard time doing so. She looks in the DVD section looking for movies in Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines: nothing. She tries the periodicals: one issue of *Filipinas* magazine is there, but the newspapers and other magazines are off the shelves. She does find a few books in the children's section about famous Filipino leaders. "As you can see, the collection is always being used," Pineda says.

This should not be a surprise to the Daly City Public Library. The Filipino community represents almost 32 percent of the total population of Daly City (Area Connect, 2000). In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Filipino population is at about 315,000, or 24.9 percent of the total Asian population; they are the second largest Asian group in the area (Asian Pacific Fund, 2003). What are the information needs of this community? How can libraries like Daly City Public and librarians like Lolly Pineda make the library a welcoming and useful place for this population?

Just like serving any other special group, we have to understand and be sensitive to their culture and information seeking behaviors. We then need to create programming, develop collections, reach out to the community and find resources outside of the library

that will attend to the needs of this community. By looking into the Filipino population of the Bay Area, we will begin to recognize what should be done in the library to serve their needs.

Short history of Filipinos in the Bay Area

The first records of Filipinos coming to the United States start in the late 1880's, soon after the U.S. acquired the Philippines from Spain (Pido, 1985). During these years, most of the Filipinos who came over were students from different missionary schools (Pido, 1985). After the turn of the century, Filipino males started coming to the U.S., primarily Hawaii and California, in search of work as laborers in the farming industry (Lott, 1997). The population continued to grow during the early 20th century until the 1940's and 1950's when anti-immigration laws prohibited having anyone come into the U.S. (Lott, 1997).

The Civil Rights movement in the 1960's helped the Filipinos and other non-White groups fight against discriminatory practices and in 1965 the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed which allowed more immigrants to come into the country (Lott, 1997). Since then, Filipinos that have come into the U.S. are different from the beginning of the century. There were more females and families coming in and many of the adults carried college degrees. By 1990, almost two-thirds of Filipinos in the United States were in "managerial, professional, and technical occupations" (Lott, 1997).

Statistics of the Filipinos in the Bay Area

The San Francisco Bay Area has 17 percent of the total Filipino population in the United States and it has grown 23 percent from 1990 to 2000 (Asian Pacific Fund, 2003). Some of the higher concentrations of Filipinos include Daly City, Milpitas, and Union

City (Kaplan, 2004), but there are smaller communities scattered throughout the Bay Area. The median family income is a little over \$75,000 and 14.4 percent have incomes of over \$150,000 (Asian Pacific Fund, 2003). 12.6 percent of the population is living in poverty and 6.2 percent receive government assistance (Asian Pacific Fund, 2003).

If it is assumed that the Filipino population in the Bay Area closely reflects the total Filipino population in the United States, then it is safe to say that the average age is 35.5 years with 70 percent of the population between the ages 18-64 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). The smallest age group is the elderly (65 and older) and 8.7 percent. About 60 percent are married and 61 percent of family households are with a married couple (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Population data is very important when looking at how to serve a special community, but it should never be the only source of information. Looking at the Filipino American culture is also critical in order to provide the best services possible.

Filipino-American Culture

Understanding Filipino American culture is important when looking at what kinds of library services they need. Social (family), professional, educational, language and religious cultural characteristics will be looked at in this paper, but this is not to say that these are the most important or only elements that deserved to be looked at in Filipino American culture.

Social (Family)

The center of Filipino American social activities is the family. While many think of family as immediate relationships (mother, father, sister, brother, etc.), the Filipino family includes extended family members (aunts, uncles, cousins), in-laws, and even very

close friends of the family (Cimmarusti, 1996). Social gatherings like simple birthday and graduation parties can become grand affairs when it comes to making up the guest list. Marriages within the family are treated as an extending of the original group of people and it is not uncommon for members of the family to be extra critical of who someone marries and whether that “new member” will help keep the family together or separate them (Cimmarusti, 1996). Like most Asian cultures, the eldest of the family is regarded with the utmost respect. At gatherings, even if the celebration is for someone else, an elder will always get the center of attention if necessary. Families also are a big networking tool Filipinos use in regards to professional and employment matters.

Professional

As mentioned earlier, many Filipinos who come to the U.S. are in professional, technical and managerial positions. In the Filipino American Chamber of Commerce in Santa Clara County, some of the participating businesses include real estate, law, finance, retail, and hospitality (T. Bernardo-De La Vega, personal communication, July 12, 2005). Many of the inquiries the commerce gets from Filipinos interested in starting a business include how to get a loan and how to create a business plan (T. Bernardo-De La Vega, personal communication, July 12, 2005). There is no notable difference about who are starting businesses (first-generation vs. American born generations).

Government jobs are also very popular with the Filipino community. Jobs with the postal service seem to be very popular. Doing a search on Filipino American websites will lead you to links on information about the U.S. Postal Exams. Some of the parts of the website that would seem to be appealing for job hunters include: you don't have to be a U.S. citizen to apply, you can take exams in any city, you don't need a

college education, and getting hired mostly depends on how well you do on the exam (FilipinoAmericans.net, n.d.). It is also a government job so the benefits are going to be much better than most other service-oriented jobs. Another popular profession among female Filipinos coming into the United States is nursing. In a demographic profile of registered nurses (RNs) in 1990, about 30% of foreign-born nurses were from the Philippines (Berg, Rodriguez, Kading, De Guzman, 2004). Many females found nursing as a way to get an education and a good paying job somewhere outside of the Philippines.

Education

Education is a high priority among Filipino Americans. Those with a higher education (bachelors' degrees and above) are highly regarded in the community and it is not uncommon to see Filipino American publications, websites, and other media types with articles about the latest student graduating, winning a scholarship, or any other academic achievement. Yet, many times in the U.S., Filipinos don't receive equal compensation for their education level compared to Whites and other Asian American groups like the Chinese and Japanese (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). Many of the statistics that show high percentages of Filipinos with advanced degrees come from those who went to college in the Philippines, the post-1965 immigrant population. Second and third generation Filipino Americans are underrepresented in universities and tend to have a higher high school drop out rate compared to other Asian American populations. (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). So despite the strong cultural value Filipinos have with education, there are still issues regarding academic achievement that must be addressed.

When it comes to how Filipino Americans learn, Griggs and Dunn (1996) looked at various studies on the learning styles of Asian Americans and found that Filipino

American students preferred learning environments that had high motivation and persistence. They also tended to learn better under conditions where there was high, organized structure and where there was an authority figure present (Griggs & Dunn, 1996). Filipino American students also tended to be more visual and kinesthetic learners. As far as physical environments, Filipino American students preferred studying in rooms with brighter lights and they also tended to study better during the late afternoon and early evening hours (Griggs & Dunn, 1996).

Language

Tagalog is the national language of the Philippines and there are about 90 different dialects, but most of the schools teach in English; it is not surprising to see post-1965 Filipino immigrants who are literate in both languages. But those who have not had very much education in the Philippines will probably not be able to speak English. Second and third generation Filipino Americans do not use Tagalog or other Filipino languages as much as the first generation community. There are also very few Filipino language classes offered at the college and university level and no Filipino language schools like the ones the Chinese and Japanese communities have formed in the United States (Revilla, 1997). But there is still a need for Tagalog language materials. There are still Filipino immigrants of all ages coming into the country who cannot speak English and for those who want to learn Filipino languages need materials in those languages as well (L. Pineda, personal communication, July 20, 2005).

Religion

Eighty-five percent of the population in the Philippines practices Roman Catholicism (Burgonio-Watson, 1997). Major Catholic holidays (Christmas, Easter, etc.)

are usually practiced with large family celebrations with plenty of food and entertainment. Religion also plays a large role in community cohesion, with church-sponsored gatherings and celebrations as well.

With a demographic and cultural understanding of Filipino Americans in the Bay Area, creating library services for this community can now become more productive rather than just a guessing game.

Library services

The following lists suggestions of how a library can accommodate to the Filipino community. Everything does not have to be done in order to serve the Filipino community completely. Depending on the size and needs of the community, a few or more of these suggestions can be used. This list is also not complete and although the Filipino community is one ethnic group, services at individual libraries will be different.

Reference Materials and Services

The reference desk should have materials ready or know where to go for materials for information requests that many Filipino patrons may ask for. Many of these suggestions may also help other patron groups besides the Filipino community.

- **Newcomer information packets** – Many times, Filipinos in the U.S. will suggest to new Filipino immigrants to go to the library for information (L. Pineda, personal communication, July 20, 2005). Having packets with information about immigration, citizenship, English learning classes, Filipino community centers, local churches, shopping, library card applications and other daily needs is a good way to give newcomers to the country starting information.

- **Citizenship** – U.S. Citizenship information should be available. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website now has a Tagalog site:
http://uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship/imm_guide_tg.htm
- **Employment resources/Postal Service exam information** – A list of local and online places where Filipino patrons can find jobs. There should also be a link to U.S. Postal exam information (<http://www.usps.com/employment/>).
- **Learning Express Library** – If the library has a subscription to this service, Filipino patrons should be shown how to use this website (<http://www.learningexpresslibrary.com>). There are various sample exams for citizenship, SAT, GED, postal workers, real estate, and many other professional and educational exams.
- **English classes** – Local English classes offered by colleges, community centers, churches, and other organizations should be available. Price, times, and location should also be noted.
- **International degrees** – Filipino immigrants with college degrees from the outside of the United States may want to know if their degrees are valid in the U.S.
- **Tagalog language classes** – Tagalog language is not taught in very many schools despite the high number of Filipinos in the Bay Area. A list of places where Tagalog classes are offered will be helpful. Skyline Community College is one place where Tagalog is offered:
<http://smccd.net/accounts/skyline/la/forlang.html#anchor71851> (L. Pineda, personal communication, July 20, 2005).

- **Local directories** – Contact and address information for local businesses and organizations that will be of interest to Filipino patrons (shopping centers, churches, publications, non-profit organizations, etc.) The Filipino American Chamber of Commerce of Santa Clara County is a great resource for listings of Filipino business owners and other “Filipino friendly” businesses. (<http://www.filchamber.org>). Directories need to be updated regularly.
- **Staff development** – If the library staffs employees who can speak Tagalog, they should be known to the rest of the staff and possibly compensated for their help. Many cities offer extra pay for city employees who can speak, read, and write a language other than English; there may be a proficiency exam that needs to be taken. As many employees should also know some Tagalog greetings and other basic phrases.
- **Bi-lingual resources** – All of the above mentioned resources should be offered in Tagalog and English when possible. If there isn’t anyone in the library who can write in Tagalog, ask the community if someone would be willing to do this service. It is crucial to make sure the Tagalog resources are well written in order to gain respect and trust from the Filipino community. Signage within the library should also be in both languages whenever possible.

Programming

- **Feature Filipino authors** – Both adult and children’s programs can have Filipino authors come in and talk about their books. It’s a good way to bring Filipino leaders and role models into the library and it also exposes these authors to the non-Filipino patrons. KabayanCentral.com has a good list of Filipino book

publishers (<http://www.kabayancentral.com/book/publisher.html>); these publishers can help find local authors.

- **Helpful workshops**
 - *For adults:* Workshops that show new Filipino immigrants some basic information about living in the U.S., citizenship Q & A workshops, and job/career information workshops would be helpful to the Filipino community and would allow for networking among community members.
 - *For children and teens:* After school and summer tutoring programs can be offered to children and teens. Teens and their parents may be interested in workshops regarding college applications, financial aid/student loans, and scholarships.
- **Cultural celebrations** – Celebrating Filipino holidays are a great way to bring in those who are nostalgic about the Philippines and those who are curious to understand more about Filipino culture. The following website lists religious, national, tribal, and cultural holidays as well as a monthly calendar that shows when the celebrations occur (http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Cynthia/festivals/philippine_festivals_fs.htm).
- **Book club** – Instead of having a Filipino book club that may seem more exclusive than helpful, make sure some of the books that are read feature Filipino authors or Filipino subjects. If it brings the Filipino community into the discussion, it will allow more community networking and they can create their own book club outside of the library if they wish.

Materials

- **DVDs, Videos, and CDs in Tagalog** – There is a huge demand for Filipino movies and CDs; these are *not* U.S. movies and musicians that have Tagalog as a language choice. Movies and artists from the Philippines are what the community wants. This may be because the larger video stores do not carry Filipino movies and they can be expensive to purchase. Just like the English-language movies in a public library, the Tagalog movies are extremely popular and so whatever a library can purchase will be a guaranteed hit.
- **Tagalog language books and audio** – Since there are not very many Tagalog-language classes, having language books and audio materials are important. There are second and third generation Filipino Americans and even others who feel that learning Tagalog is important to learn. These resources could also supplement those who are taking a Tagalog-language class.
- **Periodicals** – Filipino newspapers and magazines in both Tagalog and English are important to have in the collection. In the Filipino community, there are those (mostly older) who feel that their true home is not the United States, but still the Philippines, so they like to read about what is going on in their “home country” (L. Pineda, personal communication, July 20, 2005). Magazines are important because they offer information about current Filipino culture. If there are newspapers in the collection, magazines about entertainment, women’s issues, sports, fashion, etc. should be considered. A magazine that is popular with the Filipino American community is *Filipinas* (<http://www.filipinasmag.com/index.php>). Doing a search in an online directory

such as Yahoo will generate a good list of newspapers and magazines to start with:

http://dir.yahoo.com/Regional/Countries/Philippines/News_and_Media/Newspapers/ and

http://dir.yahoo.com/Regional/Countries/United_States/Society_and_Culture/Cultures_and_Groups/Cultures/American_United_States/Filipino_American/Magazines/.

- **Book collection** – When starting any collection for a specific ethnic/racial group, there are three main categories of the kinds of books that should be purchased: reference, history/culture, and literature (J. Paul, personal communication, June 17, 2005). Books about Filipinos in the Philippines is just as important as books about Filipinos coming to the United States and Filipino American culture. There are many websites to start looking at different books about Filipino culture. One of the more comprehensive sites is Philbooks.com (<http://www.philbooks.com/>). Looking online at books can be difficult because you have to depend on the book cover and usually a brief summary to make a buying decision. Luckily, for the Bay Area, there are Filipino bookstores in the area where librarians can go and look through materials. Arkipelago (<http://www.arkipelagobooks.com/>) is a Filipino bookstore in San Francisco that has books in English and Tagalog by Filipino and Filipino American writers. There is a wide variety of genres and the store can also become a good contact for programming events. Use resources like bookstores to find out what kinds of books in Tagalog are of good quality;

especially if you cannot speak the language. There are more suggestions for book purchasing in the Online Resources section.

It is also important to talk to the community and ask them what kinds of books they would like to read. Books about starting a business (business plans, marketing, loans), citizenship, applying for colleges, and health issues may also be important for the Filipino community.

- **Children's books** – Books for children should feature prominent Filipino leaders and role models. Many times schools will require students to research about their own culture so there should also be books about Filipino and Filipino American cultures. Children's librarians should collaborate with teachers and school librarians and know what their curriculums require. The non-fiction books should have lots of visual appeal and be easy to understand without skimping on the factual information. Fictional books should be written by Filipino/Filipino American writers or be about Filipino culture. Folktales are always a good way to start a children's collection about a culture. Bilingual books are also good to have in the collection. Displays featuring these books are a good way to promote them to all patrons.
- **Physical facilities in library** – There should be facilities in the library that allow for quiet studying with adequate lighting and comfortable chairs. If there is a community room in the library, it should be promoted to the Filipino population and community leaders so they know they can use the library for local events.

Community Outreach

- **Know local “Filipino friendly” organizations** – Organizations that cater to the Filipino community should be known by the library to help patrons and as a resource when information is needed about how the library can improve services for Filipinos. Churches, advocacy groups, networking organizations, business associations, and consumer businesses are some of the groups that can be researched.
- **Meet with community leaders** – It can be uncomfortable to just go up to a Filipino patron and ask them, “What kinds of materials and services do you need in the library?” They may not know themselves if they are new to the library. Meeting with community leaders is a great way to find information about the Filipino population. Community leaders don’t have to be people in high positions; librarians, student organizations, store owners/employees, teachers, priests, bank tellers, or anyone else that works with the Filipino community are good sources to talk to. Make talking to the community a regular routine. Building your collection with only one community meeting will result in an outdated collection that doesn’t reflect the current community.
- **Promote the library** – Going out and talking about what the library has to offer the Filipino community is important. Many newcomers to the United States may not understand the concept of the library being a free and public service for everyone. This is especially useful once the library has a collection, programs, and information that Filipinos may need.

Online Resources

The following is a list of online resources that will help libraries with the suggestions that were mentioned above.

Filipino Organizations

<http://www.thevolunteercenter2.net/org/6078006.html> -- Filipino American Council of San Francisco (website is not their homepage, but has adequate information about the organization).

<http://www.filipinochristianchurch.org/index.html> -- Filipino Christian Church in San Jose.

<http://www.filchamber.org/> -- Filipino American Chamber of Commerce of Santa Clara County.

<http://tagalog.meetup.com/42/about/> -- The Alameda County Tagalog Language Meetup Group.

Where to purchase materials

<http://www.koleksyon.com/> -- Tatak Pilipino – The Filipino Heritage Store with locations in Daly City, Union City, and Vallejo.

<http://www.pinoymegahits.com/index.html> -- Pinoy Megahits (movie sales and netflix-esque services).

<http://www.kabayancentral.com/index.html> -- Filipino items (good source for movies, books, and CDs).

<http://www.divisoria.com/> -- Another website to buy Filipino movies, CDs, and books.

<http://www.panap.com/> -- Pan Asian Publications; based in Union City, this site has a large collection of bilingual children's books.

Professional Support

<http://www.apalaweb.org/> -- Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association.

http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Cynthia/festivals/philippine_festivals_fs.htm --

Listing of Filipino festivals for the year.

http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Tagalog_mainpage.htm -- Has lessons on learning basic Tagalog.

http://www.tagalog1.com/Index_Sounds.jsp -- Another website for learning basic Tagalog; has audio files too.

Conclusion

Serving a specific ethnic/racial community is not simply putting up a few books and videos about their culture. Much research has to be done first before investing in a collection and services that will be of good quality. The Filipino community in the Bay Area is a population that requires some similar needs as other Asian groups like citizenship and career information. But they also need materials that will support their pride in their culture and shows others in the community their past as well as their future. As noted before, the analysis and suggestions are not conclusive of every Filipino community. Whether the library is in Daly City, Milpitas, Union City, San Jose, San Francisco, or beyond the Bay Area, stepping outside of the library and into the community is the best way to find what materials and services are most needed.

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