“How Cultural Celebrations can Strengthen an Academic Library’s Relationship with Students and Faculty”

Presented by: Bonnie L. Fong (FongB@felician.edu)
Information Literacy, Outreach, & Technical Services Librarian @ Felician College

**What to Celebrate?**

- **February:** Black / African-American History Month
- **March:** Women’s History Month
- **April:** National Poetry Month
- **May:** Asian / Pacific-American Heritage Month
- **September 15 – October 15:** Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month
- **October:** Italian-American Heritage Month
- **November:** American-Indian Heritage Month

**How to Celebrate?**

- Exhibits
- Informational brochures (*Webliography, quiz*)
- Book / poetry readings (*including original works*)
- Presentations (*traditional or PowerPoint*)
- Discussions
- Ethnic foods
- Dress in traditional wear
- Skits
- Crafts
- Demonstrations
- Music
- Video clips

**Who are Potential Collaborators?**

- Diversity Celebrations:
  - Who advocates for diversity?
  - Who is Asian / Black / Latino / Native-American *and* is interested in sharing about their culture?
  - Who is interested in learning about different cultures?
  - In academic libraries, consider who wants students & colleagues to learn about different cultures
- Other Cultural Celebrations:
  - Which Writers / Poets / Artists / Musicians / Cooks are interested in sharing their work?
Who are Potential Collaborators?

- Consider:
  - **Student Organizations:**
    - Cultural clubs (e.g., Asian Club, Black Students Union, Latino Club, International Culture Club)
    - Literary clubs (e.g., Aspiring Authors Club, Poetry Club)
    - Speech club
    - Others that may be interested (e.g., Anime club, History & Social Sciences Club, Honors Students Association, Student Government)
  - **Academic Departments:**
    - Foreign Languages
    - English
    - History
    - ESL (English as a Second Language)
  - **Individual Faculty Members:**
    - identify any relevant courses
    - is doing a presentation one of the course assignments?
    - even if it is not, speak with the professor about having his/her class(es) participate
  - **Non-Academic Departments:**
    - International Programs
    - Study Abroad
    - Student Affairs
    - Residence Life

Focus on Benefits!

- Potential collaborators:
  - Emphasize how working with the library benefits them
    - relaxing + friendly venue for presentations
    - chance to practice public-speaking
    - library helps / does most of organization, PR, etc.
  - Library:
    - Friendly + fun image →
      - more visitors (some were previously nonusers)
      - more patrons asking for assistance
      - faculty are working more with the library:
        - suggesting additional programming
        - referring students to visit the librarians
        - requesting library instruction for their classes
  - Increased awareness when performing collection development

- On campus:
  - Other departments are beginning to organize some cultural programming, too
Continue to Reach Out!

- Post-event promotion:
  - Post pictures of event online (e.g., Library Web site, Facebook, Flickr, etc.)
  - Spread the word about your successful event – increase awareness!
  - Find out if school (including alumni news) publications, local newspapers, student-run (or local) radio or TV stations are interested in covering the event

- Collaborators:
  - Continue working with previous collaborators on future events
  - See if they can help you identify some potential collaborators for the future
  - Obtain feedback (e.g., what went well, what could be improved, should we try something new next time?)
  - Remind them to let you know if there’s anything the library can help them with (hint: library instruction sessions!)

Strengthen Connections + Keep the Academic Library Vital!