Ethnic Diversity at the University of Toronto Libraries

Jack Hang-tat Leong
Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Canada.
E-mail address: jack.leong@utoronto.ca

Abstract:

This article discusses how University of Toronto Libraries embraces diversity and facilitates multiculturalism for its communities. Canada started to adopt "Multiculturalism" to address issues of ethnic and cultural diversity in 1971. After almost 40 years of implementing this policy, what social effect does it have on the University and its Library? The author draws on the data from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey of Canada and the 2011 Census conducted by Statistics Canada to investigate the demographic background. Using results of a series of individual interviews targeting the University's population and library staff on questions related to diversity in the Library, the author explores the validity or invalidity of the above-mentioned observation about University of Toronto Library's effort in encouraging diversity and inclusion.

Keywords: Ethnic diversity, visible minority librarians, University of Toronto Libraries.

Introduction

University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) serves perhaps the most diverse population in North America. The University has a student population of 80,899 (University of Toronto, Quick Facts). Among them, 11, 309, or 14%, are international students. Furthermore, the University's domestic students come from a population that reported more than 200 ethnic origins in the 2011 National Household Survey, accounting for 19.1% of the national population, and about 25.9 % for the province of Ontario, which funds the operations of University of Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2013a, p. 13). The 2011 Survey estimated that the city of Toronto, capital of Ontario, has the highest number of visible minority among Canadian cities – 2.6 million or 47% of the city's population, belonged to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2013b).

Context of the Canadian immigration and multiculturalism policy

Understanding the context of the Canadian immigration and multiculturalism policy certainly facilitates my discussion of the ethnic diversity and community engagement at UTL.

Historically, Canada's immigrants were largely from European countries which provided more than 70% of new comers at any time before 1970. In 1967, Canada started to adopt a universal point system to select immigrants according to their educational background, occupational skills, and other criteria linked to economic and labour requirements. In 1971 to 1980, the proportion of immigrants from non-European regions was 64%, surpassing that from European regions the very first time. In 1976, the Immigration Act separates business immigrants to recognize two categories of business immigrants: entrepreneurs and self-employed persons. Canada's Business Immigration Program was in established in 1978 to attract entrepreneurs to invest in Canada. Asian immigrants become the largest group of new comers in Canada from the statistics period of 1981 to1990, contributing around 60% of total immigrants to Canada thereafter (Statistics Canada, 2013a, p. 9). In the 2011 Census, 6.3 million people, or 19.1% of the total population, identified themselves as a member of a visible minority group. Major visible minority groups include South Asians, Chinese, Blacks, Filipinos, Latin Americans, Arabs, Southeast Asians, West Asians, Koreans and Japanese.

Canada's immigration policy has attracted successfully an ethnically diverse configuration of newcomers since the 1970s. The point system and business immigration program provide immigration opportunity to most non-European immigrants who were professionals or entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, there were many settlement problems and integration barriers, such as employment, language, culture and religion, for non-European immigrants. Foreseeing these issues, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau proposed the adoption of Multiculturalism Policy in 1971. In his speech to the Parliaments for formally adopting multiculturalism in Canada, Trudeau highlighted that the policy was about removing barriers for immigrants to fully participate in society and to ensure equality in major institutions. The policy of multiculturalism, by offering recognition and support for ethnic minority groups as social entities, would only help build a cohesive country provided that a sufficient degree of social inclusion and equal participation are assured.

Along with the increasingly ethnically diverse immigrants to Canada, Multiculturalism Policy became part of Canadian constitution in 1982, and was adopted in legislation in 1988 with the passing of the Multiculturalism Act. Senator Vivienne Poy, in her book *Passage to Promise Land: Voices of Chinese Immigrant Women to Canada*, best summarizes the relevance of the act to ethnic minorities: "The act acknowledges freedom of cultural choice, promotes multiculturalism with full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins. It provides for equal treatment and protection for all individuals while respecting their diversities, promotes intergroup interaction, gives recognition and appreciation of the diverse Canadian cultures, and preserves and enhances unofficial languages while strengthening the official languages of Canada" (2013, p.138).

Multiculturalism has been adopted as a policy not only at the federal level, but also at provincial and municipal levels of government. In many community organizations and school curricula, this policy has been translated into strategic plan and diversity statement. Offices and committees are established at many private and public organizations to address issues related to ethnic inclusion, diversity and equity. In Ontario, for example, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) Diversity Office has been created to develop the strategy to ensure that OPS is equipped to address diversity in its policies, programs and services. The strategic goals for this office are:
1. Embed diversity in all OPS policies and programs
2. Build a healthy workplace free from harassment and discrimination
3. Respond to the needs of a diverse population

4. Reflect the public we serve at all levels of the OPS workforce

Tools, such as OPS Inclusion Lens, have been created to provide advice on inclusion, diversity and equity. Employee Networks for Black, East Asian and South Asian are sponsored to foster an environment that accepts, appreciates, accommodates and makes use of the talents, skills, abilities, perspectives and leadership styles of all ethnic groups. All these measures demonstrate that the Government of Ontario, along with many other agencies, recognizes its diverse population and strikes to become an inclusive employer and government. The Multiculturalism Policy has reached wide and deep across the nation. Canadian pollster Michael Adams (2007) comments that multiculturalism is not an experiment: "It's a national aspiration at the very core of Canadian idealism. It's the Canadian Dream" (Quoted in Reitz, et al., 2009, p.6). Has this dream, which has been as so vividly depicted in inclusion and diversity policies, plans and committee goals become reality or feasible for immigrants?

Highlights of the Ethnic Diversity Survey of Canada (2002)
In 2003, Statistics Canada, commissioned by Canadian Heritage, released the results of a survey conducted in 2002 on ethnicity, which is still the latest available in-depth data on this topic. I am going to highlight some data in the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey of Canada to help present how Canadians' ethnic background affect their participation in the social, economic and cultural life of Canada, leading to a better understanding of the user group that UTL is engaging.

Statistics Canada developed the survey and obtained responses through approximately 40, 000 telephone interviews. About 21%, or 8,600 responses, reported a visible minority origin. The largest groups were Chinese (2, 421) followed by South Asian (1,892) and Black (1,424). The responses from the visible minority groups suggest that Canada has yet to become a fully multicultural and inclusive country despite of the passing of the Multiculturalism Act and the subsequent legislation and implementation.

Multiculturalism is not just about ethnic diversity; it is also about integrating ethnic minorities into the broader society. The Ethnic Diversity Survey asked respondents 7 questions which are considered indicators of social integration, including trust, life satisfaction, belonging, federal voting, volunteering, Canadian identity and Canadian citizenship. Visible minorities reported lower percentage, based on weighted total, in 6 indicators out of 7. The biggest gap is Canadian identity, with a difference of 30%, followed by citizenship (-18%), federal voting (-11%), volunteering (-7%), life satisfaction (-5%) and Trust (-2%). Belonging is the only indicator that visible minorities reported at a higher value of 4%.

Table 1: Attachment to Canada/integration of visible minorities (VM)

	Trust	Life satisfaction	Belonging	Voting	Volunteering	Canadian identity	Citizenship
VM	48%	42%	59%	71%	27%	34%	79%
non VM	50%	47%	55%	82%	34%	64%	97%

Source: Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey [adapted from Reitz et al., 2009, p.35].

A degree of racial inequality exists in Canada. Incidents of racial profiling and discriminating make to the news headline from time to time. In the 1970s, CTV's W5 television program released a series called "Campus Giveaways" that presents a misconception that Canadians' universities are divided between foreign, mainly oriental, and domestic students. It depicts Chinese Canadians and other visible minorities as foreigners whom are negatively portrayed as taking away Canadian higher education resources from white/domestic students. Murray Chercover, the President and Management Director of CTV at that time, released a statement of apologies on April 16, 1980, after a series of protests by the Chinese community. More recently, the Maclean's Magazine published an article "Too Asian: Some frosh don't want to study at an Asian university" which portrays Asian students as hard working and high academic achievers who do not mix with white students. After much controversial and criticism, the article was retitled "The enrollment controversy: Worries that efforts in the U.S. to limit enrollment of Asian students in top universities may migrate to Canada" (Maclean's Magazine, 2010).

The 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey provides data that reveal racial inequality and discrimination for visible minorities. Recent, earlier and second generation of visible minorities reported lower household incomes, higher poverty rates and higher chance in experiencing discrimination and vulnerability when compared to ethnic groups of European origins. Obstacles of finding adequate employment, professional regulations, language barrier and racial discrimination, certainly contribute to this economic inequalities. Visible minorities earned 9,600 less than non-visible minorities on average for their annual income. Their poverty rate was 13% higher and they had 25 % more experience of discrimination. They reported 21% more chance of feeling vulnerability because of their ethnic background.

Table 2: Ethno-racial inequality – objective and reported

	Income, relative to urban area average	Poverty rate	Experience of discrimination	Reported vulnerability
VM	-7686	27%	36%	37%
non VM	1895.3	14%	11%	16%

Source: Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey [adapted from Reitz, et al., 2009, p. 125].

These data depict a national reality that is far from the ideal scenario promised by the multiculturalism policy and the diversity strategies planned at private and public organizations. Addressing and resolving barriers and social inequality for visible minorities require ongoing commitment from all level of governments and private agencies.

University of Toronto
Within the context of the national, provincial and municipal ethnic diversity, students at University of Toronto are very diverse in terms of ethnic origins. To ensure the admission is based only on academic merits only, the University does not collect any information regarding the students' ethnic background. Nevertheless, the University is committed to the Employment Equity Act which was passed in 1995. The following statement is included in all University job postings:

"The University of Toronto is strongly committed to diversity within its community and especially welcomes applications **from visible minority group members**, women, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, members of sexual minority groups, and others

who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas" (University of Toronto, Human Resources and Equity)

The University has an employment equity policy that mandates the following measures on an ongoing basis:
- Endeavour to ensure that University policies and practices do not have an adverse impact on the participation and advancement of designated group members.
- Set goals consistent with this Policy, and timetables and plans for achieving them.
- Implement programs to facilitate the participation and advancement of designated groups.
- Make reasonable accommodation for differences related to designated group membership. (University of Toronto, Office of the Governing Council)

The University's Human Resources and Equity office prepares an Employment Equity Report annually to demonstrate its commitment to diversity and equity. In the most recent 2012 report, it was noted that the University was selected as one of the Canada's Best Diversity Employers for 2012, for the 6th consecutive year. Table 3 summarizes the ethnic diversity picture from 2010 to 2012:

Table 3: Summary of representation rates for visible minorities, 2010 – 2012

Year	Total responses	Visible minorities
2010	9408	2032 – 25%
2011	9354	2095 – 25%
2012	9355	2138 – 27%

Source: University of Toronto, 2011 Employment Equity Report, p. 6; 2012 Employment Equity Report, p. 6.

The representation rate is consistently at 25% for the last 2 years, and 27% in the current year. It is about 20% lower than the visible minority rate in Toronto (47%), about the same as the provincial rate (25.9%) and 6-8% higher than the national rate (19.1%). As a provincial level institution, this is a fair representation. Nevertheless, the breakdowns of the 2012 figures into staff category show that visible minority groups concentrate in union (34%) and non-union (27%) staff categories, while the representations rates for academic faculty (16%) and librarian (14%), who are usually candidates for officers and administrators, are 10% and 12% lower than the provincial representation rate, respectively.

Table 4: Summary of representation rates for visible minorities by staff category 2011- 2012

Staff category (N=9354)	Total	Visible minorities
Faculty	3041	409 – 16%
Librarian	156	20 – 14%
Staff (non union)	1321	304 – 27%
Staff (union)	4837	1405 – 34%

Source: University of Toronto, 2012 Employment Equity Report, p. 6.

Librarian profession
The representation rate, 14%, of visible minority librarians is the lowest in all the staff categories at the University. The 2006 Census estimated that there were 11,975 librarians in Canada and only 1,160, about 9.7%, identified themselves as visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census). Mary Kandiuk's 2011 survey to 1520 academic librarians across Canada suggests that about 11%, or 60 out of 543, reported a visible minority identity (2014).

Table 5 shows the proportion of different ethnic groups in the 2 surveys that provide the most interesting and reliable data. It is interesting to note that the percentage of Chinese librarians is almost double that relative to its total population. University of Toronto's data do not breakdown in ethnic groups. The configuration of these 12% visible librarians would more or less follow the pattern revealed in the 2006 Census data and Kandiuk's 2011 Survey. By counting from staff directory, there are 10 Chinese librarians out of the 24 visible minority librarians, or 41.7%, belong to ethnic minorities.

Table 5: Librarians by visible minority groups ranked according to 2011 Census

Race/Ethnicity	2006 Census (N=1160)		2011 Kandiuk survey (N=543)	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
South Asian (25%)	205	17.7	5	9.6
Chinese (21.1%)	405	34.9	21	40.4
Black (15.1%)	145	12.5	5	9.6
Filipino	60	5.2	2	3.8
Latin American	45	3,9	3	5.8
Arab	50	4.3	1	1.9
Southeast Asian	55	4.7	0	0
West Asian	75	6.5	1	1.9
Korean	40	3.4	4	7.7
Japanese	55	4.7	1	1.9
Multiple	25	2.2	9	17.3

Kandiuk's 2011 survey asked librarians' view on the obstacles to the recruitment of visible minority. 65 librarians responded to this question and most of them, 33, suggested that the major difficulty was the limited pool of qualified applicants, followed by geographical location of institution (25), applicant choose not to self-identify (22), and hiring freezes (16).

University of Toronto Libraries
My discussion with the Library's human resource office concurs with the findings in Kandiuk's finding regarding obstacles of hiring librarians from ethnic minority groups, except the factor of location. As the 2011 Census data show, Toronto is the most multilingual and multicultural city in Canada and University of Toronto is conveniently located at the downtown area. The factors of limited candidate pool, difficulty to obtain information from applicants regarding racial identity and hiring freeze were most often cited factors in my interviews with department heads at UTL. All librarian positions at UTL require an ALA-accredited Master of Library or Information Science degree or equivalent, which excludes many librarians trained in foreign countries outside the United States and some European countries. This perhaps explains the unusually high representation of Chinese librarians among visible minorities. Chinese culture value education and Chinese immigrants are probably more willing to pursue a or another Master degree in library science after immigrating to Canada.

Unlike many other countries promoting diversity in the workforce, job application in Canada does not require the identification of visible minority group. There is a statement welcoming their application but most applicants simply do not identify themselves. There had been an informal hiring freeze from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s at the University of Toronto Libraries. Many positions were not filled after the librarians retired. The number of

cataloguers in the central system, for example, dropped from its peak of more than 80 to about 20 over this period.

UTL's collection consists of more than 300 languages for very diverse needs of the teaching and research at the University, which entails a requirement to hire staff members who are knowledgeable in one or more of these languages for providing adequate information service, collection development and control. The top ethnic minority languages include, in the order of the number of their records in the catalogue system: Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Korean, Hindi, Turkish, Urdu, Bengali, Persian, Sanskrit, Marathi, Panjabi and Tamil. Based on my discussion with the department heads in the areas of reference, material processing and collection development, the languages that UTL librarians have close to native level of knowledge are the first four among the list: Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Korean. The gaps were made up by partnership, such as Library of Congress and Columbia University, out-sourcing cataloguing to OCLC, relying on dealer's orders, vendor records and donation from ethnic minority groups and foundations. Nevertheless, all my informants express interests in having an ethnically diverse team, serving the needs of the collection and the clientele whenever there is any new hiring opportunity. Yet, the availability of qualified candidates remains to be their primary concern.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have surveyed the ethnic diversity at the University of Toronto Libraries using available ethnic data at the national, professional and institutional levels. I argue that University of Toronto Libraries, entailing from government policy and institutional mandates, embraces diversity and facilitates multiculturalism in its organizational policy, statement and strategic plan. The Library recognizes the benefits and necessity of having an ethnically diverse professional team to reflect the community that it serves and to manage the diverse collection. However, there is generally a significant gap in most ethnic minority groups as represented by its collection and its clientele due to the lack of qualified candidates in these groups and the inadequate hiring in the last 2 decades. There is an opportunity to enhance ethnic minority representation with active hiring and promotion activities in the future. In addition to improving the current policy, strategic plan, programs and guidelines, more research on the experience of ethnic minority librarians with respect to racial inequality and discrimination is needed. Outreach to these groups for promoting the librarian profession and education is also important to achieve an inclusive and diverse workforce for the profession.

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