Aloha,

I’m here to share why Council has adopted the development process of cultural diversity competence. When I greeted you with Aloha, it is not a gimmick to distinguish myself as a native resident of a desirable vacation spot, but as a cultural identity with its own set of mores, responsibilities, and traditions.

Without cultural awareness and skills, operational gridlock can occur at great cost to the workplace, but more importantly, to the communities we serve. This situation has stimulated the concern of people engaged in business, education, health, human services, and criminal justice, and their concern has led to an increasing emphasis on the formal training of employees in cultural diversity competence in an effort to create culturally competent organizations. Such organizations have congruent structures, policies, programs, protocols, and processes that enable the entire system to work effectively with culturally diverse people. How are we to expand the archival record and share the importance of archives as essential evidence of society, especially to those traditionally under-represented in our collections, if we are unable to effectively work and communicate with the diversity of cultures (not limited to ethnicity) around us?
While serving on our Committee on Education in 2008 and 2009 I surveyed diversity initiatives of 26 academic programs and 35 regional archival groups. Initiatives ranged from producing bi-lingual material to curriculum for urban librarianship to a PhD level course on “Documenting Diversity” to arrange and describe African-American collections related to students’ disciplines i.e. performing arts, literature, or history. Supplementing these worthy efforts, Council accepted my proposal to offer cultural diversity competence training to address the elements on the cultural competence continuum. These range from:

Cultural Destructiveness

I make a conscious effort [use my power] to destroy cultures that are different from my own or from what I think will work best for others. “We are all that is important.”

Cultural Incapacity

I am unwilling to be useful or helpful to other cultures. “We take care of our own.”

Cultural Denial/Indifference

I believe that culture/color and dimensions of diversity are unimportant. “All people are the same.”
Cultural Pre-Competence

I realize that my responses to cultural difference are more often than not culturally destructive and I am trying to understand how to respond culturally competently/proficiently.

“Often have nice written policies, but limited action.” The operative word is “trying.”

Cultural Competence

I hold a commitment to social and economic justice. “Foster mutual adaptation to difference to create environments that are useful for all.”

Cultural Proficiency

I hold culture in high esteem and that it is my organizing frames of reference and the foundation by which I understand relationships between individuals, groups, organizations, systems, etc. Your efforts are, “Optimal, universal, inclusive and proficient.”

Progression on the continuum can be achieved with the following skills:

Skill 1: Understand Culture as Multilevel & Multidimensional comprising of: personal, subcultures, mainstream national culture, & organization culture(s)
Skill 2: Understand the Barriers to Effective Relationships: language, nonverbal communication, judgment, stress, stereotyping and discrimination, & organization/ institution-wide barriers.

Skill 3: Practice Culturally Centered Communication

Skill 4: Design and Implement Organization-wide Cultural Competence

Needless to say, this is an ACTIVE PROCESS which includes the sometimes messy elements exploring:

   Cultural Relativism – Self-reflection and nonjudgement

   Emic Contextualization and Comparison – Obtaining information on attitudes, values orientations, and social relations directly from the people involved.

   And finally

   Accepting a Holistic approach to change

I invite you to join Council in adopting the precepts of Cultural Diversity Competency and experience the benefits it brings to you, your collections, and your communities.  *Mahalo*