

## Defining Diversity

For the iMapLibraries project, diversity is defined as “the inclusion of different types of people in a group or organization (Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diversity>). Diversity can be due to a number of factors or variables. If one is considering the population of a remote island as the group, a single visitor from outside the island adds diversity. If the group is considered to be the population of college students on a campus, the enrollment of a 10-year old child prodigy at the college will probably add diversity to the age spread of the college students. Because iMapLibraries is a nationwide project, the universe of the “group” is simply considered to be everyone in the United States.

Ofcourse, no one physical library outlet serves the entire U.S. population. So this project categorizes a library outlet as one that potentially serves a diverse library user population if the people living within a particular distance from that outlet is identified as differing greatly for a particular population variable from the norm for the U.S. as a whole for that variable. For example, if 6.5% of the U.S. population as whole is aged 75 or older, then a library outlet that has over 20% of its local residents aged 75 or older is potentially serving a more different type of library user relative to age than the average library outlet who has only around 6% of its library users aged 75 or older.

The line of reasoning can be repeated for many other factors, such as race, linguistic isolation, per capita income, and education. A total of 20 factors were identified as diversity factors by this project.

Some important things to keep in mind include:

- 1) This method of categorizing diversity for a library outlet is one method but it is not the only method.
- 2) The factors used represent easy-to-obtain nationwide data. There are many other potential diversity factors (e.g., number of recent war veterans) that were difficult to obtain, especially on a nationwide basis, that were not used.
- 3) The use of the entire U.S. population as the universe for comparison means that some diversity factors within a state may be missed entirely. For example, a particular library outlet may serve a high number of Hispanics for its particular state (e.g., greater than 40%) but not be identified by this project because the national threshold for Hispanic diversity is greater than 50%. This is where local librarian knowledge will hopefully intervene in this library diversity identification project in order to benefit the public library field as a whole.