diversity and multiculturalism in U.S.
colleges and universities has become
an important goal over the past 40 years
for many reasons: changing demographics,
recognition that diverse points of view and
ways of thinking enrich the educational ex-
perience, and the use of higher education
to further social justice and socioeconomic
equality. In response, diversity and multi-
culturalism have become central themes in
the mission statements, strategic plans, and
goals/priorities of most U.S. institutions of
higher education.

Academic libraries have followed the
lead of their parent institutions by including
diversity in strategic plans, actively recruit-
ing a more diverse workforce and building
collections supporting diversity efforts. De-
spite these efforts, the question remains: Are
academic libraries doing enough to further
these goals?

In the recent book *Multiculturalism on
Campus: Theory, Models, and Practices
for Understanding Diversity and Creating
Inclusion*, the authors suggest that creating
an inclusive, diverse, and multicultural
competent climate on college and university
campuses is the responsibility of the whole
institution. The entire campus community
“should become involved in creating an en-
vironment that has diversity initiatives as its
central mission.” Academic libraries must also consider these
facets of diversity and multiculturalism in
our diversity efforts, and the collections and
services being offered to the campus com-
community. This essay will discuss three under-
represented groups on college and university
campuses highlighted in *Multiculturalism on
Campus*, and offer ideas on how academic
libraries can create collections and services
to support their needs.

Nontraditional age students
Historically, the age of college and university
students ranged from 18 to 24 years and
students 25 years or older were considered
nontraditional students. Due to many fac-
tors, including a volatile economy and the
return of many military personnel from wars

Matthew P. Ciszek is head librarian at Penn State-
Shenango, e-mail: mpc16@psu.edu
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in Iraq and Afghanistan, nontraditional stu-
dents, once forming a minority of college
students, make up more than 70 percent of
those enrolling at colleges and universities
in recent years.³ Research has shown that
adult learners come to higher education with
different expectations and preparation for
college level work than traditional students
and are often juggling work and family
obligations with their studies. Academic
libraries can serve this segment of students
in the following ways:
• provide expanded library hours, includ-
ing evening and weekend hours;
• develop instructional sessions and
workshops providing additional help with
navigating technology and online research;
• partner with campus learning centers
and student affairs offices in creating semi-
nars and programming around “getting back
into a student mindset”;
• purchase and highlight collections on
parenting, pregnancy and childbirth, work/
school/life balance, and other like topics;
and
• provide “busy activities,” such as col-
oring books and other juvenile materials,
for children of parents who need to bring
their children to the library due to childcare
emergencies.

LGBT students
The term LGBT is generally accepted as
those individuals with a sexual orientation
and/or gender identity or expression that
differs from the majority and can include les-
bians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender per-
sons, those labeling themselves as queer or
questioning, and others who associate with
this community. Numbers of self-identified
LGBT students have increased steadily over
the last 20 years on college and university
campuses. Subsequently, many institutions
have created LGBT resource and support
centers and include sexual orientation and
gender identity/expression in diversity and
nondiscrimination policies. Academic librar-
ies can serve this community in a number
of ways, including:
• partnering with LGBT student groups
and resource centers in developing new
services and collections at the library for
this community;
• creating research guides on LGBT top-
ics and making them readily available in
top-level pages on the library’s Web page;
• developing and acquiring special col-
lections in LGBT and Queer Studies;
• supporting LGBT-related events and
displays in the library, especially during the
months of June (LGBT Pride) and October
(National Coming Out Day); and
• training librarians and library staff on
sensitivity and awareness of LGBT issues,
including the coming out process, anti-
bullying and anti-discrimination policies, and
creating safe spaces on campus

Disabled students
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),
passed by Congress in 1990, ensured that
people with disabilities were provided the
same protections from discrimination as
those based on race, ethnicity, creed, gender,
or age. As a result, colleges and universities
have seen increasing numbers of disabled
students, and a 2006 study revealed that over
11 percent of all students at institutions of
higher education report a disability.⁴

While great strides have been made
by colleges and universities to provide
accommodation to students with physical
disabilities, additional steps are now being
taken to deliver services and support for
students with vision and hearing impair-
ments and learning disabilities. Some ways
that academic libraries can accommodate
this diverse group include:
• providing accessible spaces to those
with physical disabilities including variable
height service desks and workstations and
furnishings;
• ensuring that electronic book collect-
tions, online databases, and library Web
pages are accessible to those with visual
impairments;
• partnering with the campus disabilities
office to identify the library and information
needs of disabled students and develop collections and services to meet these needs;
  • purchasing audiobooks, closed captioned video materials, and other alternative media and technology to supplement traditional library collections; and
  • additional training for reference staff in assisting with library research and instruction to those students with learning disabilities.

These three groups form only a small segment of the diverse groups of students at a college or university campus in the 21st century. As academic libraries seek to meet diversity goals, we must look beyond the “traditional” facets of diversity and strive to meet the needs of a diversifying population. It is only through this process of “diversifying diversity” will we truly meet the needs of all students.

Notes
2. Ibid., 2.

(“Google Spreadsheets...,” cont. from page 530)

of ease with technology to begin with. I’ve been fortunate to find that many of these students will go out of their way to set up one-on-one research sessions. However, I would still like to help them feel accomplished in their research as we move through the session.

In response, I may have a few paper versions of the spreadsheet available. I can pass this out to any student who gets lost.

Another challenge that I’ve found is the same with every librarian regardless of the class format, and that’s over tasking the session. In fact, my first spreadsheets just had an enormous amount of high-level tasks to complete. Based on what I watched on the spreadsheets, these sessions required a lot more instruction and less hands-on activities, which is exactly the opposite of what I wanted.

While I still fill them with lots of tasks, I try to make sure that they’re incremental and result in more practice of skills and critical thinking. As a result, they seem to make better mistakes and more intelligent entries when we move through the class at a one-step-at-a-time kind of pace.

Conclusion
If you are at all like me and also had that same nagging feeling that you could help students more if you could only see and assess what they were doing while in your classroom, then I recommend jumping right into using the spreadsheet.

With so much transparency you will have a hard time returning to previous forms of assessment. I created a sort of Best Practice how-to list in nothing less than a Google Docs. It explains in lay terms how to create one of these for the first time, regardless of experience with Google Docs in the past. Good luck!

Notes
2. You can access the “10 Steps to Creating a Google Docs Spreadsheet for Real Time Assessment” at http://tinyurl.com/RealTimeSpreadsheet. Please pay close attention to all of item number 6 when creating one for the first time.