Abstract

Purpose
To discuss library services with attention to effective communication between public service professionals and East Asian library clientele.

Design/methodology/approach
A wide range of library literature (1984-2001) about serving international students is reviewed to provide a portrait of efforts made by librarians and researchers. This article then focuses on East Asian students as a unique group based on shared cultural values, applies literature of East Asian/Western communication styles to library reference services, and discusses how cultural-specific communication styles can cause misunderstandings in information delivery processes. Recommendations are made to assist information professionals in their efforts to communicate effectively with international students and meet their information needs.

Findings
Differences in communication styles can often create barriers to having messages understood correctly. As a result, the information conveyed does not necessarily reflect the intention and may even cause misunderstandings. The key to successful cross-cultural communication is knowledge.

Research limitations/implications
Further research should be conducted in addressing how cultural awareness affects effective and appropriate communication.

Practical implications
This paper will be helpful for public service professionals in enhancing their understanding of East Asian cultures and improving communication skills when assisting customers of East Asian backgrounds.

Originality/value
This paper separates East Asian students from the entire international student body, examines cultural-specific communication styles, and explains why misunderstanding occurs when Western librarians communicating with East Asian students.

Keywords

Academic libraries  Students  Culture  Communication  Reference services  Asian studies

Citation

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To discuss library services with attention to effective communication between public service professionals and East Asian library clientele. A wide range of library literature (1984-2001) about serving international students is reviewed to provide a portrait of efforts made by librarians and researchers. Differences in communication styles can often create barriers to having messages understood correctly. As a result, the information conveyed does not necessarily reflect the intention and may even cause misunderstandings. The key to successful cross-cultural communication is knowledge. Research limitations/implications. Further research should be conducted in addressing how cultural awareness affects effective and appropriate communication. Communication in academic libraries: An East Asian perspective. Article. Jan 2006. Ref Serv Rev. Li Zhang. Purpose – To discuss library services with attention to effective communication between public service professionals and East Asian library clientele. Design/methodology/approach – A wide range of library literature (1984-2001) about serving international students is reviewed to provide a portrait of efforts made by librarians and researchers. This article then focuses on East Asian students as a unique group based on shared cultural values, applies literature of East Asian/Western commun.