

## **PATRON AND COWORKER PREFERENCES**

### **Giving and Seeking Feedback**

Once you have a sense of what offends and supports you, you can learn similar things about the people in your library. However, a word of caution here: Don't make people who might already feel on the outside do all the work of explaining themselves. It can feel very objectifying, like being under a microscope, as if they are the odd ones out. Take responsibility to learn about other groups on your own.

Another word of caution: some people might not be open to sharing with you because the trust level isn't there. Why should I tell you a nickname I don't like, if I'm not convinced it won't come back to haunt me in the form of "just teasing" and "good, clean fun?" When I let you know what bothers me, I become vulnerable to you. If someone does open his or her thoughts to you, that's a *sacred trust*, an agreement that you won't misuse the information.

If you are going to seek feedback from an individual, here are some ideas on the kinds of questions you can ask:

- How can you and I communicate better? What would be the best way for us to learn what's offensive and what makes each of us feel respected and valued?
- How would you rate our trust level — poor, good, very good? What can I do to improve the trust between us?
- What do you personally prefer to be called?
- What names do you prefer for any groups with which you're associated?
- What language do you find offensive, personally or about groups with which you identify?
- What behaviors toward you or any groups to which you're affiliated do you find offensive?
- What word, phrases and other language make you feel respected and valued?
- What actions help you feel respected and valued?
- "Does it bother you when I...?"
- (If there's been a misunderstanding) "Are there any negative feelings left between us because of this conversation?"
- (If there's been a misunderstanding) "I need to hear you think I'm a good person even though I said this really stupid thing. Is our relationship still intact?"
- "If you are still feeling distrustful, what, if anything, can I do to rebuild the trust between us? I can't promise I will do everything perfectly, but my intention is not to offend or hurt you in anyway."
- "What do you mean by that remark? I'm hearing it as meaning "...." Is that what you meant?"
- "May I ask you something about your cultural background?"