

Welcome, Stranger:

PUBLIC LIBRARIES BUILD THE GLOBAL VILLAGE



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URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL



Acknowledgements

The Urban Libraries Council gratefully acknowledges the support of its public library members who contributed time and data to surveys and who shared effective practices in interviews to inform this research. The long view vision and fresh, flexible practices provide insights on the challenges and opportunities ahead as ever-growing and diverse numbers of New Americans arrive in U.S. cities and suburbs.

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Disclaimer

Data presentations are based on self-reported data from ULC member public libraries. Authors of this report are Rick J. Ashton, ULC Chief Operating Officer, and Danielle Patrick Milam, ULC Sr. VP/Program & Development. All statements and conclusions, unless specifically attributed to another source, are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the interviewees, the Urban Libraries Council Executive Board, members, or staff.

About the Urban Libraries Council

A membership organization of North America's premier public library systems and the corporations that serve them, the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) has spent more than 30 years strengthening the public library as an essential part of urban life. Thriving public libraries are the result of collaborative leadership, trustees, library directors, and corporate citizens working together to grasp new opportunities and conduct research that improves professional practice.

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RESEARCH METHODS

Urban Libraries Council gathered data for this publication in the following ways:

- On-line surveys of 35 ULC member public libraries
- Select interviews with library and community professionals
- Presentations at the ULC “Partners for Success: The Changing Face of Cities” conference
- A scan of the literature on immigrant integration

WELCOMING NEW AMERICANS

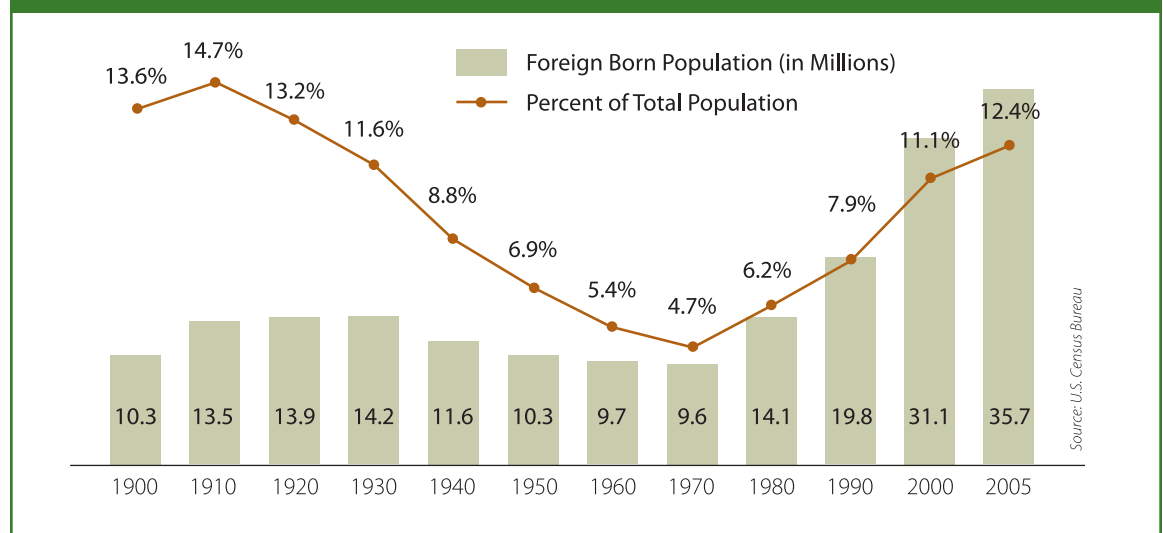
Libraries Speed Transitions



THE URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL (ULC), the leading organization devoted to strengthening the public library as an essential part of urban life, is composed of 150 major public libraries and the corporations that serve them. In March 2007, ULC conducted a survey of its members, gathering data on the ways in which urban public libraries are involved with the transition of immigrants into American life. The findings of the survey, augmented with data collected in another 2003 member survey, are summarized in this report. They show that urban public libraries are in the forefront of the effort to make their cities stronger by welcoming and integrating new residents from all over the world.






No phenomenon reshaping the world today is more dramatic or far-reaching than the massive migration of people from their ancestral homelands to new locations, seeking opportunity and safety. The effects of this movement are felt everywhere. In the United States, foreign-born residents now constitute more than 12.4% of the population, a higher figure than at any time since 1910. While political and policy debates concerning these immigrants rage at the national level, local communities face the practical challenges. The integration of these millions of new residents into the fabric of American life is a major undertaking. With the help of their host communities, new immigrants are overcoming language,

Total Foreign Born and Share Foreign Born in the United States, 1900-2005



FIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

These five strategies support successful immigrant transitions and help communities deal effectively with the effects of rapid worldwide change. As this report demonstrates, libraries in cities and suburbs across America are using them to great effect.

-  **Libraries Understand Local Immigration Dynamics.** Public libraries are gathering population and geographic data from both public sources and informal connections to immigrant networks. When libraries understand neighborhood-level information about new residents, their needs, and the resources available to them, libraries can shape their services and form their partnerships effectively. Especially in cities that have not been traditional immigrant destinations, libraries are often leading their communities in the discovery and description of immigrants' needs and concerns.
-  **Libraries Bring Cultural and Language Sensitivity to Service Delivery.** The biggest barrier for new arrivals is language. Libraries are addressing this with innovations in signage, websites, collections, and provision of basic services in the first languages of their new residents.
-  **Libraries Build English Capacity.** English proficiency is the most important factor in immigrants' chances for success. Public libraries, drawing on their century-long experience as builders of literacy of children and families, are expanding their reach to new residents. Early literacy and family literacy programs are preparing young children for school. Adult English instruction is equipping learners with better life skills and job opportunities. With schools and other learning providers as partners, libraries are also delivering focused programs on job-hunting, health and nutrition, and other survival needs.
-  **Libraries Create Connections to Local Institutions.** Most communities are equipped with a broad array of agencies and institutions. Although these organizations provide assistance for work, education, health and housing, recent immigrants are often unable to benefit from their services. Language barriers, geographic isolation, and culture shock are significant impediments. Libraries are connecting the agencies and services aimed at the general population with the newcomers' needs. Business support, health information, and school engagement are leading examples of this work.
-  **Libraries Encourage Civic Engagement.** Participation in public and civic life is not a traditional expectation for many immigrants. Even the simple American act of registering for a library card can be a strange and frightening experience for some. Libraries encourage both community inclusion and newcomer participation. Using their historic role as strong, unbiased public spaces, dedicated to learning and exploration, they are fostering public discussion of the challenges faced by both newcomers and the communities receiving them.

cultural, economic and educational barriers; contributing to the well-being of their new hometowns; and stretching toward full realization of the American dream.

America's urban public libraries play a major part in their communities' efforts in this arena. From the traditional immigrant gateway cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, to the newer immigrant destinations of Atlanta and Charlotte, urban and metropolitan libraries provide the crucial ingredients of intellectual and cultural growth, along with practical and necessary information needed to prosper in a new culture. Libraries are forming educational partnerships for English-language instruction, adjusting their collections and services for residents not yet proficient in English, and enfolded multicultural, multilingual employees, volunteers and customers.

Based on the survey of 75 member libraries in 2003 and 35 libraries in 2007, this report details the degree to which

city, county and special district public library members are actively working in these strategy areas. It highlights promising and replicable practices and strategies, based on interviews with library directors and staff and partner agency directors in the summer of 2007. ULC shares these stories with the intent of expanding immigrant successes and facilitating community adjustments. It supports greater library and community attention to and investment in support that smooths immigrant transitions.

Although every library operates in a unique local context, patterns of library outreach to immigrants and refugees fall into five broad strategies for successful immigrant inclusion and community adaptation. These approaches are consistent with success factors identified in the recent work of Dr. Audrey Singer, Fellow of The Brookings Institution. [Singer, Audrey. 2004. *The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution]

STRATEGY 1

Understand Local Immigration Dynamics



Photo Courtesy of the Chicago Public Library

TRACKING DEMOGRAPHICS in an era of rapid change is not easy. “What’s happening now is that immigrants are showing up in many more communities all across the country than they have ever been in,” says Brookings Institution fellow Audrey Singer, who is mapping the movement of migrants into U.S. cities (see chart on next page). Singer’s typology is helpful for understanding the spectrum of immigrant settlement patterns, from cities that have served as traditional gateways to cities and suburbs that are the emerging new gateways.

Another observer of immigration trends, Brian Ray, non-resident Fellow of the Migration Policy Institute, notes that suburbs are particularly challenged to understand local immigration dynamics, “Established central cities may have depth of experience in working with diverse populations, but immigration is forcing suburbs to catch up.” Ray notes that immigration grew 54.8% in the 100 largest metro areas of the U.S. between 1900 and 2000. Immigrant growth in suburbs was 63.7%, far beyond the central city rate of 21.7%. [Ray, Brian. 2003. *The Role of Cities in Immigrant Integration*. Migration Policy Institute: Washington, D.C.]

There is great variety in immigrant settlement patterns and languages spoken from place to place. With multiple facilities across the metropolitan landscape, public libraries are often leading their communities in the discovery and description of immigrant needs and concerns by gathering data in these ways:

- Gather and interpret demographic data
- Know the neighborhoods
- Dig deeper with assessments
- Implement systemic tracking and planning

Gather and interpret demographic data. The 2007 ULC survey showed that well over half of public libraries actively track local demographic changes (60% of 2007 respondents, up from 23% of respondents in 2003). The U.S. Census, local city and county planning departments, schools, and immigrant and refugee agencies are the primary sources public libraries use to gather data and understand changes in local demographics.

Know the neighborhoods. Arlington County (VA) Public Library Director Diane Kresh expects branch library supervisors to walk their blocks to get neighborhood-level data. These librarians have become so familiar with the establishments and activist leaders in their communities that now they lead tours for other county employees and civic partners. This helps the library and the county tremendously, as Arlington adjusts to very rapid and pervasive growth of immigrant newcomers from over 120 countries of origin. County Manager Ron Carlee pays particular attention to alignments between departments and the schools. The latest data help Arlington assist international newcomers, for the most part highly educated and high income immigrants attracted to this county adjacent to Washington, D.C. Kresh sees the challenge as remaining flexible: “It’s about getting in touch with the community, being flexible and adaptive. Arlington is changing quickly. We have to go with the flow.”

Dig deeper with assessments. Data gathering directly from the community occurs in a number of formal and informal ways, though only 12% of libraries collect demographic data directly from customers seeking library cards. Having already developed Spanish-speaker service plans, the Multnomah County Library (surrounding Portland, Oregon) used a

Patterns of U.S. Immigrant Settlement are Shifting from Traditional to New Gateways

● Continuous Gateways — Boston, Chicago, Jersey City, Newark, New York, San Francisco

Traditional gateway cities which would have lost population or stagnated were it not for immigration. Characteristically, these gateways have long-residing immigrants, levels of poverty similar to native populations, high levels of English proficiency

● Former Gateways — Baltimore, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis

While immigration was strong in the early 1900s, these cities are not seeing large numbers of new immigrants presently.

● Post WWII Gateways — Fort Lauderdale, Houston, Orange County CA, Los Angeles, Riverside-San Bernardino, San Diego, Miami

These gateways grew up particularly around military establishments. Like traditional gateways, they have long-time immigrant residents, levels of poverty similar to native populations, high levels of naturalization, and a large portion of the populations with limited English proficiency.

● Emerging Gateways — Atlanta, Dallas, Fort Worth, Las Vegas, Orlando, Washington DC, West Palm Beach

In these destinations, immigrants are locating in the suburbs. These cities are both experiencing surging rates of immigrant growth and are already the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the U.S.

● Re-Emerging Gateways — Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Oakland, Phoenix, Portland OR, Sacramento, San Jose, Seattle, Tampa

These communities were strong centers for immigrants at the beginning of century, experienced a lull of migrant influx in mid-century, and re-emerged as immigrant destinations in the 1990s. Immigrants to these places tend to come from Mexico or Asia, have lower incomes than the native population, lower rates of English proficiency, and lower rates of citizenship.

● Pre-Emerging Gateways — Austin, Charlotte, Greensboro-Winston Salem, Raleigh-Durham, Salt Lake City

Trend trackers are watching these communities for the next wave of immigration. As in re-emerging gateways, new arrivals tend to come from Mexico or Asia, have lower incomes than the native population, low levels of English proficiency and lower rates of citizenship.



Framework developed by Audrey Singer, The Brookings Institution, 2007

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant to interview leaders in three emerging language communities that have grown around 20% in the last decade – Chinese, Russian/Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. Similarly, the Seattle Public Library used focus groups to gather data in Spanish, East African, Russian, Vietnamese and Chinese-speaking communities. In Hennepin County (surrounding Minneapolis, Minnesota), Library Director Amy Ryan, with union support, created new positions for “cultural liaison” staff. These individuals use strong connections with civic leaders in immigrant neighborhoods and associations to feed information back to service and collection developers.

Implement systemic tracking and planning In Queens, New York, Library Executive Director Thomas Galante stays on top of the extreme dynamics of new international residents from over 190 countries of origin with a system-wide approach. Queens Information and Data Analysis Librarian Lacey Chan gathers data in neighborhoods where there is an average 40% turnover of residents every 10 years.

She relies on New York City’s Department of Planning and the U.S. Census American Community Survey to study county-wide patterns in languages, foreign born status, ages, and educational attainment. She also relies heavily on the New York City Department of Health, which has complete and current data on foreign-born mothers of children born in Queens hospitals. At present, births to foreign-born mothers are outpacing births to native-born mothers, an indicator that informs Queens Library’s work in early and family literacy. Chan regularly shares data with managers of the Queens Library’s 26 community libraries, relying on them to provide her with information on newcomers they see daily. The data allow the library to stay ahead of trends that may not be formally identified until the next Census.

Libraries can be the front line for communities in tracking demographic changes. Libraries use neighborhood-level information to tailor collections, services, and partnerships to meet the needs of the diverse and changing customer base.

STRATEGY 2

Bring Sensitivity to Service Delivery



Courtesy of Hennepin County (MN) Public Library

ONCE LIBRARIES KNOW their customers, they can bring cultural and language sensitivity to service delivery. Language is the biggest barrier to good service. Libraries must pay attention to the micro and macro impacts of language capabilities. While on average, more than half (52%) of foreign born residents have limited English, this average masks great variety in local conditions. Depending on the language group, 10% to 75% of people may speak English “less than well.” At the macro level, service plans must take into account the number of immigrant groups in the community, another condition that varies greatly from place to place.

However, there is great innovation in libraries’ efforts to make library resources understandable and useful to residents with low English proficiency:

- Signage and website adaptations
- Multi-language collections and collection marketing
- Multi-language and multi-cultural programs
- Multi-lingual and multi-cultural staff
- Relationship-building
- Service planning and funding

Signage and website adaptations. Mayor Greg Nickels and the City Council of Seattle, have set a standard of inclusion. Seattle requires that all official documents be available in multiple languages (“vital” documents in 6 languages, “helpful” materials in 14 languages, where possible.) The city’s Department of Human Services provides citizenship services. It has an employee language “bank” and employee language phones that the Seattle Public Library and other city departments can use for translation assistance.

While only twenty-three percent of surveyed public libraries are formally mandated to put out the welcome mat and critical public information in multiple languages, eighty-nine percent of surveyed libraries do have signage and materials available in multiple languages (up from 66% in 2003).

Thirty-seven percent of libraries report the use of pictogram signage, sometimes to accommodate a great number of languages spoken in the community, and sometimes as a bridge to cultures that lack written language and education traditions.

The Minneapolis Public Library partnered with Rochester Public Library, Owatonna Public Library, and the Mayo Clinic to create a film in Somali, “Welcome to Your Library.” The film is used by agencies that assist Somali refugees and by Somali television stations in Minneapolis, Rochester and Owatonna to orient local refugee populations to public library resources.

Library websites are growing portals for non-English speaking resident orientation to library services. Forty-five percent of surveyed library websites now have multi-lingual web interfaces (up from 30% in 2003). Web language portals are predominantly Spanish and Chinese. However, there are sites using Korean, Hmong, Russian, and Somali. The Queens Library website can be accessed in 14 languages.

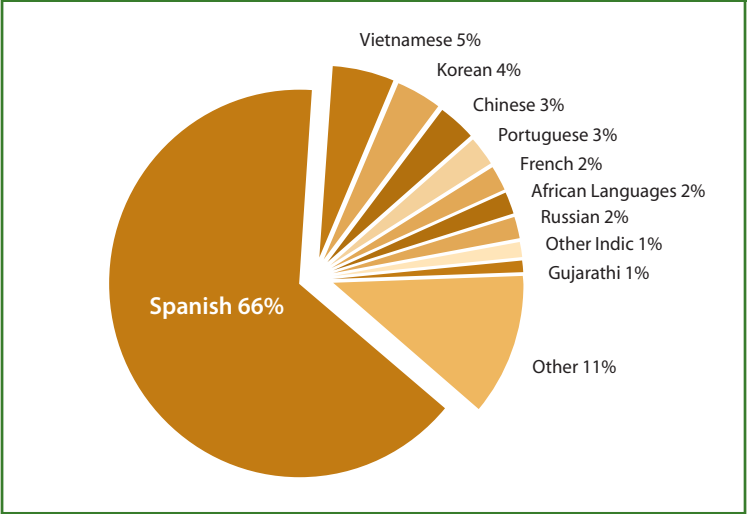
The Hartford, Connecticut, Public Library virtual welcome mat is a vibrant website called The American Place, a web portal to critical resources for thirty-six cultural groups that

reside in Hartford and its surrounds. There are links to twenty-three local ethnic papers, fourteen other agencies that provide English language classes, twelve local associations that provide immigrant services, and interactive links to learn about and share immigrant stories and perspectives on immigration. The Cleveland Public Library attracts immigrant groups to its website by publishing multi-lingual and culture-specific booklists.

Multi-language collections and collection marketing.

To pave immigrant pathways to the library, public libraries also invest in multi-language collections. Public libraries in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Chula Vista, California; and Oakland, California estimate non-English materials purchases at 10% of their collection budget. Montgomery County, Maryland; Phoenix, Arizona; Queens, New York; and Skokie, Illinois estimate expenditures in the range of six to seven percent of their collection budgets. Only 14% of survey libraries report having fewer than 10 languages in their collections in 2007, as compared to 33% of respondents in 2003. Eighty percent of public libraries surveyed do provide some materials in the first language of their community populations, though the majority of these spend far less than two percent on non-English collection acquisitions.

There are a growing variety of languages spoken in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area.



Many libraries, like the Baltimore County Public Library, are fine-tuning the placement of foreign language and cultural materials in branches proximate to immigrant populations. There is a clear trend towards more strategic placement of multi-language collections, based on neighborhood or customer characteristics. Some urban libraries have special facilities for these collections, such as Brooklyn Public Library’s Multilingual Center and San Francisco Public Library’s International Center. This shift in library practice correlates with greater dispersion patterns of immigrants in cities and suburbs. In 2003, sixty-seven percent of libraries reported that their non-English collections were dispersed throughout the system. In 2007, that number dropped to 37%.

Innovative outreach experiments. The DeKalb County Public Library, challenged with the rapid influx of many ethnic groups to Atlanta’s suburbs (see map on page 10 and chart above), is using a traveling kiosk, “Library Take-Out.” “Library Take-Out” is a portable, pop-up exhibit that includes books and other materials in Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese; literature about the library system and its services; and a computer terminal with access to the Library’s web site. The kiosk allows the library to travel to malls, community festivals, and churches in an emerging gateway region where immigrant residential patterns are dispersed throughout the suburbs (see photo left).

Multi-language and multi-cultural programming. Programs targeted specifically to immigrant customers are becoming prevalent among public libraries across the country. The table on page 11 illustrates the extent to which libraries are developing programs in a variety of topics where immigrant support and community



Photo courtesy of DeKalb County Public Library (metropolitan Atlanta)

development intersect. Notably, over half of the surveyed libraries are conducting programs in multiple languages for early literacy and education (66%), English language instruction (62%), youth (62%) and computer training (59%). The greatest increase in targeted program activity appears to be in the area of health, jumping from 34% of libraries surveyed in 2003 to 51% of libraries surveyed in 2007.

Programs oriented to specific immigrant needs are also emerging. For example, Seattle Public Library's Multi-cultural Librarian, Valerie Wonder, draws on her previous experience with Peace Corps resettlement programs and works with focus groups to create a menu of programs that have great relevance to immigrants and refugees: how to navigate the legal system, obtain small loans, and manage credit.

Multi-lingual and multi-cultural staff. Shifts in library practices in all areas – newcomer orientations, collections, and program development - are diversifying the workforce of public libraries. While public library staff are still predominantly white, (the American Library Association's 2007 "Diversity Counts" study reported 89% white), ULC's 2007 survey of library practices indicates a growing commitment to recruiting individuals from a

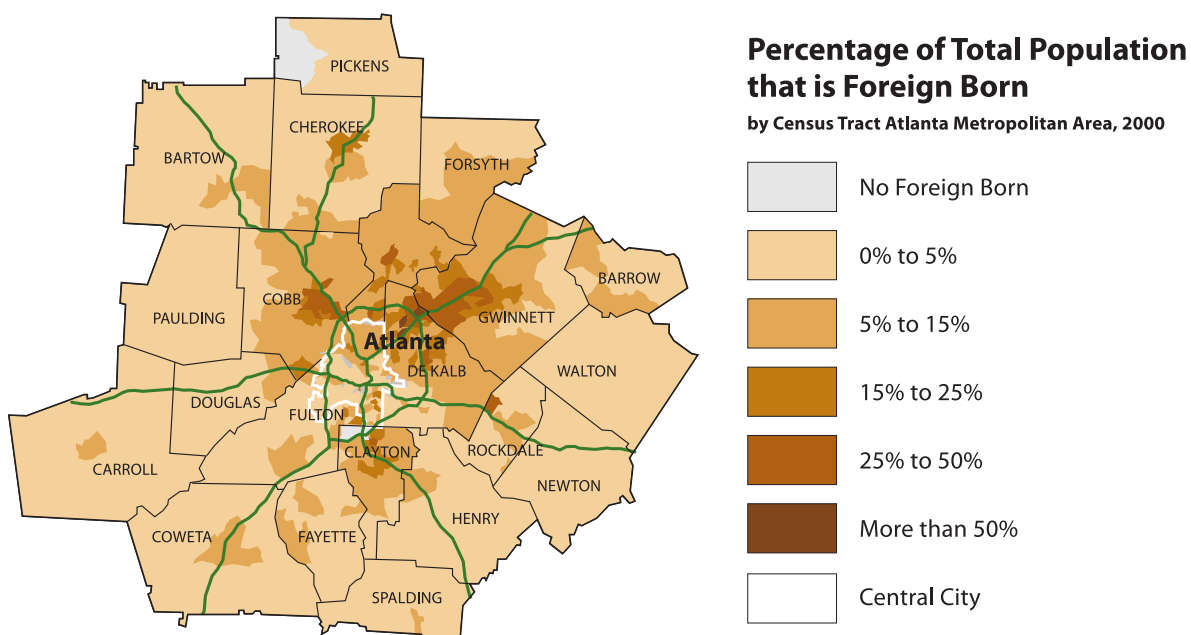
variety of ethnic backgrounds to work with diverse ethnic populations. Major highlights of the 2007 survey follow (2003 comparative data provided where available):

- 91% have staff with multiple language capabilities they use on the job (same as 2003).
- 71% have staff that specialize in the acquisition of non-English materials (up from 47% in 2003).
- 66% use volunteers to reach out to immigrant and refugee populations.
- 66% have special staff to reach out to immigrant populations.
- 57% regularly train staff in multi-cultural customer service.
- 40% actively recruit staff from immigrant populations in their service areas (same as 2003).
- 30% of libraries test staff for language competency. 37% of those libraries also report that their city or county tests staff for language competency.
- 20% compensate staff for language competency.
- 17% have developed system-wide standards for serving immigrant populations.

Public libraries are also developing successful strategies for recruiting multi-cultural staff:

- Youth technology positions are a hook in King County, Washington; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles,

Dispersed Settlement Patterns of Immigrants in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area, an Emerging Gateway



Map created by Brookings Institution using data from Census 2000 SF3.

Percentage of Libraries That Have Active Programs Targeted for Immigrants by Program Area

Program Area	% of Active Programs in 2003	% of Active Programs in 2007
English Language Instruction	60%	62%
Business/Economic Development	40%	48%
Health	34%	51%
Parenting and Early Childhood Education	57%	66%
Youth	60%	62%
Computer Training	57%	59%
Citizenship Classes	n/a	40%

San Francisco and Oakland, California; and Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Youth from immigrant communities are employed, providing important technology training to their peers. They often serve as a bridge between worlds, orienting communities without library traditions to the resources available in public libraries.

- Scholarships are another recruitment vehicle. The federal Institute for Museum and Library Services has made a significant commitment to this effort through the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program, helping diverse students pursue their Master's degrees in library and information science. ULC's Scholar program, funded as part of this federal program, has recruited new professional talent with ties to 28 ethnic language communities. Libraries in this program are engaging these students to develop multi-cultural guidelines. In Seattle, the students have crafted a set of multi-cultural competencies that now shapes staff recruitment and development processes. In San Francisco, one of the students, Richard Le is helping the International Center manage the Chinese book collection and develop a database for the Chinese film and image collections.
- New hiring processes are also having an impact. At the Multnomah County Public Library, branch supervisors conduct a community analysis, gather data on languages in nearby schools and communities, and fill vacant positions from appropriate community populations. The results are palpable: on the first event that celebrated the Lunar New Year, the library had to close the doors because of overcrowding.
- The Skokie Public Library uses community talent. The Russian Club, a volunteer advisory group, helps with program planning and development, stimulating

increased use of library resources among this growing suburban community population.

Building relationships. "Start with relationships," advises Laura Park, Diverse Communities Specialist at the Pierce County Library System in Washington state, as she explains how to attract people from cultures that have no library tradition. "In the Korean culture, you don't get right in the face immediately or you will get skepticism. They can't believe you can get these amazing resources for free. They did not grow up with any kind of institution like this. They equate the library with the overall greatness of this country! Now I receive small donations for food at programs and large donations for collections. At first I had to do lots of visits, translating materials, appearing on talk shows. Now they are our champions." Last year, over four hundred people came to the Lakewood Branch Korean Heritage Day, including the Korean Consul General. More importantly, the Korean community is becoming adept at using the resources of the whole system – collections in all facilities, in all media, and new online services for reference and holds.

Service planning and funding. From all accounts, collections and programs targeted for immigrant communities are increasingly part of general library operations. In 2003, 82% of surveyed libraries supported immigrant collections with some general fund money. In 2007, this was standard practice among 89% of libraries in the ULC survey. Sixty-six percent of libraries currently fund immigrant program activities with the general fund. Collection and program activities also receive start-up and supplemental soft money support (grants and gifts), in addition to significant non-monetary contributions.

STRATEGY 3

Build English Capacity



E NGLISH PROFICIENCY is the most important factor in immigrants' chances for success. It correlates closely with speed of immigrant entry into the job market and rise in earnings. It has great influence on employer and community acceptance of foreign-born residents. Nevertheless, English instruction is scarce. One recent survey shows that funding for increasing access to instruction programs lags far behind immigrant and refugee population growth. For example, while immigrant population in New York state grew by nearly 1.3 million people since 1990, class capacity for English instruction only increased by 15,000 seats. [Bowles, Jonathan. 2006. *Lost in Translation*. New York: Center for an Urban Future] In parts of the country where immigration is a new phenomenon, English learning opportunities may be even more scarce.

Public libraries are becoming an important link in the community network for English learning in two ways:

- Adult English instruction - collections and classes
- Early literacy, family literacy and school readiness programs

Adult English instruction – collections and classes.

Public libraries in traditional gateway cities have long been part of local networks for English learning. They provide collections and classes in partnership with or alongside community colleges, high school continuing education courses and workforce programs. Public libraries in new immigrant destination communities are building on that experience. Data from the 2007 survey show that 67% of public libraries provide adult English language instruction, in a broad array of programs, and with attention to specific immigrant information needs.

"We teach English through many pathways, using topics that connect to peoples' lives," says Susan Dalmas, the Adult Literacy Program Manager for Queens Library. She oversees seven Adult Learning Centers and English language instruction program in the twenty-six community libraries. "We know how adults learn, so we do theme-based teaching according to what our students need – health issues, civics, history, how to get a job, computer training, navigating the schools and advocating for your child in school, basic survival in a big city. We employ experienced educators and augment that with conversation circles, writing tutorials, and reading tutorials that are run with the help of 150 to 160 volunteers." Three thousand people a year go through English language instruction programs at Queens Library.

Arlington Heights Public Library in a northwestern suburb of Chicago has adopted the Queens program development model. When the community noted a sharp jump in immigrants counted in the 2000 census, the library pursued a small program start-up grant (federal Library Services Technology Act dollars via the Illinois State Library). The program has now matured to offer collection support and all levels of English language instruction, augmented with conversation groups and one-on-one volunteer tutoring. Given the high education, income, and homeownership levels of many immigrants in this Illinois suburb, the library, in partnership with the local community college, offers advanced English instruction leading to an occupational English test that certifies professionals for practice in the U.S. The library and college district work closely together on referrals. The District points people who are not ready to enter formal classes, or who are on waiting lists for formal

classes, to the library. The library, in turn, augments formal classes with a variety of one-on-one English language practice opportunities.

The Urban Libraries Council survey in 2007 uncovered a robust variety of ways public libraries are supporting English instruction, ways that often are unique local “niches” in the context of other service providers:

- At the Columbus Metropolitan Library, the Columbus Literacy Council keeps costs for classes low and student outcomes high by providing curricula, experienced teachers, and supplies.
- The Minneapolis Public Library partners with the Minneapolis Public Schools and Minnesota Literacy Council to provide one-on-one tutoring, citizenship preparation, technology training, and English and math classes.
- The Oakland Public Library provides bilingual computer classes in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin and Korean. This strategy enables the library to create customized approaches to immigrant skill levels.
- The Pima County Public Library works with the Literacy Volunteers of Tucson on a writing project with Somali, Sudanese and Spanish speakers.
- The Providence Public Library works with the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative to provide citizenship classes. A large part of instruction is conducted in “small talk” to improve conversational English.
- Pierce County Library staff support formal ESL classes conducted in area community colleges with both Korean and Spanish outreach – sharing resources and going to branches to answer specific questions.
- Volunteers at the Jacksonville Public Library offer English reading, writing and conversational coursework, while guest speakers present information on life skills.

The trend of combining early literacy and parenting information programs is also apparent in many of the public library immigrant literacy service plans.

- Kern County Public Library in California holds bicultural, interactive programs on health and parenting.
- Detroit Public Library’s English language instruction classes are designed for immigrant mothers – “Lifeskills for Latinas” is a class for Spanish-speaking women held in two branch locations.



Photo Courtesy of the Vancouver Public Library

Early literacy, family literacy and school readiness.

“Focus on the parents and children,” says Valerie Wonder in Seattle. “Adults won’t see the library as a place with something for them, but they will bring the children to be associated with books. They want their children to succeed, and if the library is savvy, it will have something that captures the parents’ attention as well. We definitely get a lot more families when we use radio personalities, like Jaime Mendez at Radio Sol, to read at story time.”

Public libraries, drawing on their century-long experience as builders of the literacy of children and families, are expanding their reach to new residents. They deliver targeted early literacy and family literacy programs that prepare young children for school.

- The Free Library of Philadelphia’s program, “Books Aloud,” targets and trains parents with low literacy skills, pre-school children, and child care providers on ways to read aloud to children.
- Denton, Texas, takes Spanish language “Story Totes” to Hispanic children in day care centers.
- San Antonio Public Library delivers “Born to Read/Nacer a Leer,” a bilingual early literacy kit and library card, to every mother of a newborn in Bexar County.

ULC survey data show a rise in targeted programs for families and children. Fifty-seven percent of libraries held multi-language programs in 2003. Sixty-six percent have the programs available in 2007.

STRATEGY 4

Create Connections to Local Institutions



MOST COMMUNITIES have a wide array of associations, agencies, and institutions that provide assistance for work, education, health, and housing. Recent immigrants are often unaware of these organizations and services. Language barriers, geographic isolation, and culture shock also pose significant impediments. Libraries are connecting agency services aimed at the general population with the newcomers' needs.

Public libraries are increasingly involved in partnerships specifically aimed at linking immigrants to local organizations and associations. The table on page 15 shows strong links to immigration and refugee agencies (83%), schools (78%), and social service agencies (77%). As with program development, there appears to be a notable increase in library partnerships with hospitals and health agencies from 2003 to 2007. The 2007 survey indicates there may be a decline in partnership activities between libraries and K-12 schools (decreasing from 86% in 2003 to 78% in 2007), and between libraries and business and merchant associations (decreasing from 62% in 2003 to 49% in 2007). Library partnerships are building a strong and shared foundation for sustainable integration strategies.

The ULC survey asked libraries to describe whether these partnerships involved planning, programs or outreach and marketing activities. The 2007 survey data show high levels of activity in joint programs, outreach and marketing, and low levels of joint planning activities. Over half the libraries report active program partnerships with K-12 schools (66%), social service agencies (60%), immigrant and refugee agencies (57%), adult education (51%), institutions

of higher education (51%), and other non-profit agencies (51%). Similar high levels of outreach and marketing partnerships were reported with schools (69%), social service agencies (60%), adult education providers (57%), immigrant and refugee agencies (51%), and other non-profit agencies (51%).

Examples of libraries as partner or connector institutions are prevalent, and highly local, based on local conditions. Here we will highlight work in three arenas:

- Workforce and business development
- Health
- School engagement

Workforce and business development. Public libraries in American cities have strong links to workforce development agencies, community colleges, small business development centers, micro-lending organizations, and other local and regional economic development enterprises. As a trusted resource for job seekers and entrepreneurs, libraries have developed their own niche, primarily in the areas of job search, computer use and skill development, workplace literacy, and small business planning, development and management.

Public libraries are perfectly positioned to link immigrant job seekers and entrepreneurs with local agencies and resources. As new national research shows, immigrants are a sector to watch. The National Academy of Science reports that one in eight workers today is an immigrant, adding \$10 billion to the national economy each year. [Pyle, Encarnacion. March 14, 2006. "Columbus Becoming a Melting Pot." Columbus, Ohio: The Columbus Dispatch.] The

Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Work and the Economy says that “growth in the workforce depends substantially on migrations of foreign-born workers” [Creticos, Pater A. and James M. Schultz. July 2006. Institute for Work and the Economy.] Similarly, national and local economies are getting a boost from immigrant entrepreneurs. The National Venture Capital Association reports that one in four companies started or expanded with venture capital is founded by an immigrant, adding an estimated \$500 billion in corporate wealth to the U.S. [Anderson, Stuart and Michaela Platzer. 2006. *American Made: Impact of Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Professionalism on U.S. Competitiveness*. Washington, D.C.: National Venture Capital Association.] The Center for the Urban Future reports that in cities like New York and Los Angeles, immigrant entrepreneurs have emerged as key sources of growth in self-employed small businesses. [Bowles, Jonathan. February 2007. *A World of Opportunity*. New York, New York: Center for an Urban Future.]

The Kirstein Business Branch of the Boston Public Library is an example of productive linkages. Economic Development Librarian Laura Pattison keeps her finger on the pulse of local demographic changes by sitting on the city’s New Bostonian Day committee. She keeps in touch with a number of key local business agencies and helps immigrant business owners find their way to powerful online databases and other reference materials. “Boston Public Library resources for small businesses are deep, broad, and accessible,” says Ericka Eurkus, Program Director for New England ACCION, the largest micro-lending program in the region. She refers the library to aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs who need help with their research and planning. With support from the Pioneer Institute, ACCION and the Boston Public Library are also working on translating a key a small business reference guide for navigating rules and regulations of 20 leading area industries. In another partnership with the Small Business Center at the University of Massachusetts, the Boston Public Library is developing a Spanish version of the popular workshop, *Getting Started in Business*.

The Hartford Public Library is strongly linked to the refugee-resettlement agency, Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services. The library plays a critical role in speeding the transition of refugees who arrive in Hartford from Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, the former Soviet Union, Somalia, Turkey, Cuba and Liberia. The American Place Coordinator, Homa Naficy, has developed language and self-sufficiency instruction, help for people dealing with the effects of trauma and isolation, and computer orientation for tribes people, such as the Bantu, who did not encounter technology until they arrived in the U.S.

Health. In the area of health, public libraries are helping to enhance local agencies’ outreach. From health screenings for Spanish speakers at the Toledo Public Library in Ohio

Public Library Partnerships with Community Agencies for Immigrant Services

Partner Institution	Percent of Survey Libraries Partnering in this Area in 2003	Percent of Survey Libraries Partnering in this Area in 2007
Schools (K-12)	86%	78%
Adult Education	n/a	68%
Higher Education	59%	74%
Hospitals & Health Corporations	56%	57%
Legal Aid Agencies	44%	49%
Immigrant/Refugee Agencies	73%	83%
Social Service Agencies	82%	77%
Business/Merchant Associations	62%	49%
Government Agencies	n/a	69%
Other Non-Profit Agencies	n/a	74%

to community-wide mammogram screenings in Queens, public libraries are designing collaborative outreach efforts. The Queens Library attracted the attention of the Queens Health Network, American Cancer Society and Sloan Kettering Hospital when the library developed a 28-session curriculum for health and well-being. The program provides multi-language instruction, teaching immigrants how to explain conditions and symptoms, read prescriptions, learn how to make an appointment, talk to the doctor, use the emergency room, and select nutritious food. Susan Dalmas notes that this program is making a difference. “People are seeking medical help. They are aware of health issues like obesity and high blood pressure. We are paying attention to the critical link between poor literacy and poor health.”

School engagement. Public libraries are learning from community partners with a long history of working effectively with immigrants. The Pierce County Public Library has turned to the Korean Women’s Association (KWA) for help with program development for out-of-school youth. In many libraries, family literacy programs targeted to immigrants are helping parents learn to advocate for their children in school, adjust to bi-cultural teen behavior, and navigate public and private education institutions.

STRATEGY 5

Encourage Civic Engagement



PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC and civic life is not a traditional expectation for many immigrants. Even the simple act of registering for a library card can be a strange and frightening experience for some. Libraries' role as strong, unbiased public spaces dedicated to learning and exploration encourage civic involvement and engagement:

- Expand community awareness and understanding of immigrant issues
- Encourage newcomer participation in civic activities

Expand community awareness and understanding of immigrant issues. Across the country, public libraries are the community salon. The arrival of new ethnic groups has given rise to a host of activities that highlight cultural chasms and commonalities.

Libraries host author talks and films that invite the community to consider a variety of immigrant experiences and themes. Libraries host public conversations, often in collaboration with media partners. For example, the Seattle Public Library collaborated with the International Rescue Committee and KCTS Television to host conversations about immigration, "The September Project," to uncover why people come to the U.S., and how it impacts the local community.

Library staff participates in community forums. Staff from the Fresno County Public Library regularly takes part in the local inter-agency refugee forum, building both relationships and understanding of the issues facing these community residents.

Libraries are creating web sites that collect local stories and link to interactive programs on immigration, cultural festivals and community conversations. The Cuyahoga County Public Library hosts an interactive community website, "Facing Ourselves and Our History," that encourages people to post personal stories.

All of these activities enhance the public's awareness about the new dynamics in their communities and the globe. These activities often have far-reaching and immediate impacts: immigrants see themselves as part of a community and become more active community residents and library users.

Encourage newcomer participation in civic activities.

Public libraries are lively and welcoming community places. ULC surveys in 2003 and 2007 show that nine out of ten libraries are regularly used by immigrant, refugee and cultural groups as a place to meet. Forty percent of libraries now host regular citizenship classes. As elaborated throughout this report, public libraries are delivering imaginative, relevant information and programs to help immigrants find their place in their new hometowns. When Hartford Public Chief Librarian, Louise Blalock, was asked what she sees as the next evolution of programs for The American Place she jumped to respond: "Democracy in action. We want the library to be the place where cultures converge, where people really enter into the democratic process, follow and participate in elections, have their voices heard, and get involved in shaping their communities through civic engagement."

Building the Global Village



THE MASSIVE DYNAMICS of global migration today present new challenges and opportunities for communities. Public libraries in cities and suburbs are actively making connections and speeding transitions.

Results from the 2007 survey indicate that public libraries are getting more sophisticated in their efforts to work with and serve immigrants. In 2003, libraries were concerned about acquiring materials in native languages. Now libraries are refining collection acquisition strategies and forming strong partnerships with ethnic groups and community agencies. As a result, public libraries are known as welcoming places for immigrants.

Taken further, these strategies may open new opportunities for community vitality and economic prosperity. For broader and deeper impacts, here are some ideas to consider:

Understand Local Immigration Dynamics:

- **Develop and share data analyses with library staff, state library agencies, community organizations, local businesses, and government agencies**
- **Pay attention to local perspectives on immigrants and immigration policy**

Bring Cultural Sensitivity to Service Delivery:

- **Use the library website to create a virtual community center for immigrants**
- **Work with vendors to develop multilingual product interfaces**
- **Recruit employees with multiple languages and cultural ties to immigrant groups**

Build English Capacity:

- **Establish English instructor advisory councils to inform staff about student needs**
- **Broaden reading club selections to include books from authors familiar to immigrant groups**

Create Connections to Local Institutions:

- **Market library services and programs through local immigrant agencies and networks**
- **Participate in local government initiatives that support business and workforce development for recent immigrants**

Encourage Civic Engagement:

- **Create library involvement opportunities for emerging leaders from ethnic communities**
- **Support staff participation in local immigrant associations and forums**

Public libraries in cities and suburbs are actively making connections and speeding transitions. They are helping communities understand immigrant challenges and preparing services for the integration of diverse new populations. They are helping immigrants and refugees achieve full social, economic, and civic inclusion.

In a host of practical and imaginative ways, public libraries are welcoming strangers, bridging worlds, and building strong, vibrant neighborhoods in the global village.

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<http://www.cabq.gov/library>

Anchorage Municipal Libraries (AK)
<http://www.anchoragelibrary.org>

Arlington County Public Library (VA)
<http://www.arlingtonva.us>

Arlington Heights Memorial Library (IL)
<http://www.ahml.info>

Baltimore County Public Library (MD)
<http://www.bcpl.info>

Brooklyn Public Library (NY)
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org>

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (PA)
<http://www.carnegielibrary.org>

Chattahoochee Valley Regional Library (GA)
<http://www.thecolumbuslibrary.org>

Chula Vista Public Library (CA)
<http://www.chulavistalibrary.org>

Cleveland Public Library (OH)
<http://www.cpl.org>

Columbus Metro Library (OH)
<http://www.columbuslibrary.org>

Cuyahoga County Public Library (OH)
<http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org>

Denton Public Library (TX)
<http://www.dentonlibrary.com>

Detroit Public Library (MI)
<http://www.detroit.lib.mi.us>

Free Library of Philadelphia (PA)
<http://www.library.phila.gov>

Fresno County Public Library (CA)
<http://www.fresnolibrary.org>

Jacksonville Public Library (FL)
<http://www.jpl.coj.net>

Kalamazoo Public Library (MI)
<http://www.kpl.gov>

Kern County Public Library (CA)
<http://www.kerncountylibrary.org>

Minneapolis Public Library (MN)
<http://www.mplib.org>

Montgomery County Public Libraries (MD)
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov>

Multnomah County Library (OR)
<http://www.multcolib.org>

New York Public Library (NY)
<http://www.nypl.org>

Oakland Public Library (CA)
<http://www.oaklandlibrary.org>

Ottawa Public Library (ON, Canada)
<http://www.biblioottawalibrary.org>

Palm Beach County Library System (FL)
<http://www.pbclibrary.org>

Phoenix Public Library (AZ)
<http://www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org>

Pierce County Library System (WA)
<http://www.piercecountylibrary.org>

Pima County Public Library (AZ)
<http://www.library.pima.gov>

Providence Public Library (RI)
<http://www.provlib.org>

Queens Library (NY)
<http://www.queenslibrary.org>

St. Paul Public Library (MN)
<http://www.sppl.org>

Skokie Public Library (IL)
<http://www.skokieliibrary.info>

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<http://www.toledolibrary.org>

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