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Reshaping to Serve Evolving Communities: Addressing Immigrant Needs in the Library

Abstract:

Libraries face evolving communities and must constantly reorient themselves to serve new needs. This article examines the impact of emerging immigrant communities on library services. It discusses the emergence of library services to immigrants and the diverse faces of these services, which may include foreign language collections, access to technology and connections with local services, as appropriately determined through community analysis. The Atwater Library and Computer Centre in Montréal, Québec is examined as a case study of community analysis informing service reorientation. This article will be useful for organisations working with immigrants or community service providers confronted with changing demographics.

Keywords:

Immigrants
Public Libraries
User Services
Management of change
Strategic Planning

I. Introduction

Libraries are often thought of as pillars within their communities, monuments to the intellectual and cultural heritage of a group of people. Libraries have strong associations with history and collective memory. They carry a reputation for continuity and permanence; they are viewed as unchanging institutions.

The core identity of a library – to serve the needs of its users – may be unchanging, but services and programs to meet these needs will necessarily adjust as demographics of user groups evolve and user needs change. Every community, and consequently every library, will experience this demographic evolution differently. This article examines the impact of new immigrant populations on the services demanded of libraries. It discusses how some libraries have successfully restructured and reoriented their programs and services based on appropriate community analysis to meet the needs of these new populations. It highlights key programs and services that can be implemented to reorient the services of any library to current immigrant user needs.

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre (ALCC) in Montréal, Canada provides an excellent example of how a library has reoriented its programs and services to meet immigrant needs. An

examination of its 180 year history reveals several shifts as the profile of newcomers in the community has changed. The most recent evolution of the surrounding community has been led by an influx of immigrants and the arrival of refugees at a neighbouring YMCA. The library has become a hub for immigrants, with a wealth of new programs and services inviting the community into the library. This article uses the ALCC as a case study to illustrate successful service reorientation and to highlight the uniqueness of each library's situation.¹

II. Contemplating Change in Libraries

A. When is change necessary?

Libraries are driven by a core value: to serve user communities. This is the central identity of a library, and it may demand continual change in service provision as users evolve. As Schachter explains, 'you should always be seeking change, as you strive to provide the most effective services and products to meet the changing...needs of your customers' (2005, p. 43).

Moran describes the importance of embracing change and innovation: opening the library doors to disturbance, unknown behaviour, play, practice, and risk in library planning, while simultaneously balancing these characteristics with their traditional counterparts: stability, standards, expertise, performance, and certainty (2006, p. 38). Libraries have historically identified themselves with these more familiar qualities, orienting themselves as established institutions within communities. As Evans and Ward explain, 'in the past, there was a view that successful/effective organizations were highly stable. Clearly, in today's world, just the opposite is the case' (2007, pp. 109-110). Change in libraries has become normal and continuous. As change becomes 'routine activity' (Schachter 2009, p. 44), libraries must re-imagine themselves as evolving organisms rather than static objects.

As a result of widespread consensus on the root cause of change, the library literature tends towards the practical rather than the theoretical when discussing change (Baird 2005). Based on this starting point of user needs, a variety of strategies for reorienting a library's programs and services are offered.

B. How should libraries equip themselves for change?

Cromity and Miller stress that the only permanent part of a librarian's job is 'maintaining a service orientation and outlook' (2009, p. 29). They call for flexibility in redefining every role and responsibility in light of this. Librarians, and by extension libraries, must be willing to take on new roles as appropriate to continue maintaining their service focus.

¹ The author is very familiar with the history of the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, having thoroughly examined its history as Archival Project Supervisor and having become well acquainted with the current user community and the library's services as Circulation Desk Manager.

Sullivan (2004) outlines core elements within libraries that must be involved in change. From organizational systems to human resources, all areas should be restructured as necessitated by the prioritization of customer service. Policies should 'facilitate the delivery of quality customer service and effective work accomplishment'; workflows should ensure that 'work performed is work that directly makes a difference for customers'; work culture should 'focus on customer service and high performance' (Sullivan 2004, p. 180).

C. What Change Looks Like: Mirroring Community Change

If change in libraries should be driven by the needs of the user community, this could suggest a wide range of potential changes. There are many examples: Libraries with time-constrained users place on-the-go bestseller collections in convenient locations, such as shopping centres or subway stations, for easy borrowing; Communities with aging populations add more large print to their shelves and set up home delivery service; Young adult librarians buy gaming systems to bring teenagers in for recreation nights, and these libraries are discovering the popularity of gaming among other age groups as well. Well-executed community analysis can highlight these changes in user demographics and inform decisions about what new programs and services are appropriate. Examples of how libraries have successfully rebranded or reoriented themselves to serve changing community demographics are endless.

This article focuses on a trend that has provoked change in libraries around the world: immigration. As new immigrant populations constantly emerge and establish themselves in communities, libraries see new languages and cultures walk through their doors. This trend may be more prevalent in certain cities and neighbourhoods than others. Heightened awareness of the library's obligation to serve these user groups has led to new program and service orientations driven by analysis of which resources immigrants need and by policies to ensure proper service delivery to immigrant populations.

III. Immigrant Services in Libraries

A. New Trends in Immigration

The face of immigration has changed drastically over the course of the 20th century. Over the last decades, legislation removed some barriers to allow freer movement for immigrants. For example, in the United States the Hart-Cellar Act was passed in 1965, removing quota systems and increasing immigration from non-European countries to the US (Cuban 2007, p. 2). In Canada, immigration rules are considerably less stringent, and less discriminatory, than in the early 20th century. In 1971, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt an official multiculturalism policy. This was cemented by the 1988 *Multiculturalism Act*, the first of its kind (IFLA 2009, p. 22).

Legislation is only one factor. Improved transportation and communication have made it easier for populations to move around the world. In recent decades it has become much simpler for people to become aware of opportunities in other countries and to move their families great distances. Sometimes this is driven by local conflict. Other times it is instigated simply by a search for a better life. These moves are no longer as strenuous and life-changing as in past centuries. Immigrants are much more able to return to their home country for occasional visits. Communication with communities of origin is facilitated by a wide variety of inexpensive technologies, making global relocation less traumatic.

B. The Emergence of Library Services for Immigrants

As immigration expands around the world, and as multiculturalism becomes the norm, libraries have become aware of their obligations to this user group. In 1982 the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Working Group on Multicultural Public Library Services published its *Standards for Multicultural Public Library Service*. A second edition was issued in 1998, and a third edition, *Multicultural Communities: Guidelines for Library Services*, appeared in 2009. This most recent edition points to the ever-increasing global migration rate as cause for libraries to focus on the needs of multicultural communities and immigrant users. Policies have gradually been established to ensure library services for immigrants. In the 1930s, American libraries began supplying foreign language collections for their immigrant users. Legislation provided funding for the creation of ethnic collections in American libraries through the 1960s and 1970s (Koontz 2007, p. 86). The American Library Association Ad Hoc Committee on Treatment of Minorities in Library Materials was formed in 1967; in 1982 this was formalized into what is now known as the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (American Library Association 2010).

C. How are they doing it? Library Services to Immigrants in Practice

As society has acknowledged the need to embrace immigrant communities and as libraries have recognized their role in this, services for immigrants have instigated major organizational shifts in libraries around the globe. Immigrants have unique needs, and libraries – whether they find themselves serving immigrants for the first time or have provided services to immigrants for decades – must make changes to their programs and services to meet new challenges faced by this group. These changes can be successful if appropriately planned.

The UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport, in their landmark publication *Libraries for all*, noted that libraries are not always welcoming places for marginalized populations and urges the removal of barriers to inclusion (1999, p. 41). Immigrant communities easily fit into the definition of marginalized, and immigrant library users face unique barriers. They may not speak the official language of their new homeland. They may not have phone or internet access at their residence. They may change addresses frequently (Cuban 2007, p. 44).

Sondra Cuban stresses the importance of libraries to new immigrants. She emphasizes that library services are crucial for helping immigrants integrate themselves into education systems and the workforce. Libraries have historically used several tools to reach out to immigrants: they may attempt to assimilate new arrivals by teaching them language and customs; they may offer immigrants a connection with their homeland by providing resources in other languages and about other cultures; they may offer educational tools and resources for navigating a new city and finding familiar services in the new country that make the transition easier (Cuban 2007).

IFLA's 2009 *Guidelines* highlight success stories spanning the globe to illustrate the multiple roles that immigrants want libraries to fill. The broad range of immigrant needs means that libraries will need to rethink many aspects of their program and service provision, encompassing every aspect of service organization and human resource management. This is a reflection of Sullivan (2005) and Cromity and Miller's (2009) observations, described above, that changing user needs will demand change in every area of the organization. Many libraries start by providing foreign language collections, but immigrant needs are appropriately reflected in a diverse range of services.

Foreign Language Collections

Language is a significant barrier to involvement by linguistically marginalized populations, and many libraries start here when catering to immigrant groups (Roy 2007, p. 6). It has been recommended that libraries begin embracing multicultural immigrant communities by creating foreign language collections (Clay III 2006). IFLA focuses on foreign language collection development in the *Multicultural Communities: Guidelines for Library Services* (2009, p. 3). Many institutions take this approach: the Brooklyn Public Library Multilingual Center launched programs in twenty different languages; the New York Public Library Department of World Languages accumulated resources in over eighty languages (Josey & Abdullahi 2002, p. 16); the Mid Wales Library and Information Partnership carried out a study of existing library services and local immigrant communities with the end goal of meeting immigrant needs through an improved multilingual collection development policy (Mid Wales 2008).

Developing foreign language collections creates a huge cost barrier for public libraries, and this is often dealt with through collaboration. As examples, the Western Sydney Collection partnership allows Australian public libraries to collaborate on multilingual collection purchasing, and the State Library of New South Wales has instituted a cooperative with 30 libraries to coordinate purchasing, cataloguing, and processing of multilingual collections (Hall 2009, p. 159-160). In other cases, ethnic communities have donated foreign language collections to public libraries, or library branches have rotated multilingual collections through branches (Mid Wales 2008, p. 14).

More than just books

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services highlight six tools for reaching immigrant communities. One of these is collections. The others are partnerships, information services, programs and events, outreach, and planning (2007). Clearly, successful services to immigrants move beyond foreign language collections.

IFLA mandates that libraries encompass multiple functions when serving immigrants: the library is a learning centre, cultural centre, and information centre (2009, pp. 5-6). In these roles, libraries have offered computer classes, ESL classes, conversation sessions, and foreign language book clubs. They offer information on the wider community such as housing and employment information, directions to services, connections to service providers, as well as citizenship materials and education opportunities (Gaus and Weech 2008, pp. 224-225). Libraries provide software for studying languages and training for using computers (Hall 2009, pp. 158-159; Roy 2007, p. 6). They allow immigrants to connect with their home country through technology by providing computers with internet access to facilitate a wide range of communication technologies (Miranda-Murillo 2007, p. 4).

Human resources play another important role in providing diverse services. It is difficult for monolingual staff to serve a multilingual community. A survey of immigrant library users in Denmark highlighted the need for more multilingual staff. A study of ethnic service provision in Wales (Mid Wales 2008) notes the need for more English-as-a-second-language staff in libraries. Cuban (2007, p. 89) suggests that multilingual library volunteers can be used to overcome these language barriers.

D. Determining The Best Approach: Community Analysis

Many tools are available for serving immigrant communities, but not all are a best fit for every library. Changes in a library's program offerings and implementation must be driven by community analysis and needs assessment (Cuban 2007, p. 46; IFLA 2009, pp. 8-9). An immigrant group may primarily want access to a foreign language collection. In other situations, immigrant users may not be interested in borrowing books or reading periodicals but might come to the library only to use the internet and to socialize with other members of their ethnic community. Needs assessment of the user community is the first part of a successful strategy for reorienting library services. It will reveal what changes should be made in the library's service and program organization to serve immigrant needs.

This needs assessment can take many forms. It may involve a survey of users or potential user groups. In other scenarios, needs awareness might come about through collaboration. Part of a strong strategy for reaching immigrant communities is partnerships (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2007). Partnerships with community organizations that serve users can help the library gain an understanding of what users need and how these needs have been successfully met by other organizations. As a bottom line, community analysis implies awareness by whatever means fit best – awareness of who user groups are, what these groups need, and how these needs can be met by the

library. Two brief examples from Denmark and Wales examine how community analysis by survey has revealed needs and reoriented service delivery.

Denmark: a Survey of Immigrant Library Users

A community analysis and needs assessment in Danish libraries revealed that immigrant library users use the library much more intensely than the general population, based on frequency of visits. According to immigrant survey participants, the key roles of the library are to help them learn their new language, to facilitate their personal education, and to help them learn about their new country. They believe that the library is not just an information centre, but that it plays diverse roles. Survey responses pointed out that immigrants generally come to the library to borrow items, read newspapers, and use the internet. Adults want library materials in their native language as they try to preserve their culture, while young people look for resources in their new language. This survey pinpointed the need for the library to have more bilingual staff, to strengthen foreign language collections, and to provide more internet access. Survey respondents also asked for information through channels that are more accessible to them: they would prefer if librarians worked directly with immigrant organizations to facilitate library use. As Danish libraries seek to help immigrants integrate while maintaining cultural and ethnic identity, they are rethinking a multiplicity of service priorities and the tools for service provision (Berger 2002).

Ask Outside the Library: The Mid Wales Library and Information Partnership

A community analysis of ethnic migrants in Wales showed that the region has experienced recent and diverse immigration increases. Public libraries in Wales have in the past offered multilingual collections, language-specific website resources, and translation of key services. The Mid Wales Library and Information Partnership (2008) conducted an extensive review of ethnic minority inhabitants in its service area to better understand the needs of their immigrant library users, and to ensure that existing services are aligned with these needs. English for Speakers of Other Languages students were interviewed about their information needs. Highly ranked information needs included a desire to find English classes, employment, accommodation and transportation, and help navigating administrative red tape to acquire documentation. Immigrants are looking for help finding health care and passing citizenship exams, and they want to learn about local culture. The majority admitted that they approached friends or family for help or used the internet before coming to the library. Those who did visit the library used it primarily for the internet. For the most part, they were not motivated to interact with non-immigrants in their community and at the library because they did not have the language skills to communicate effectively.

The Wales study is especially useful because it does not target only existing library users, and it does not enquire only about use of traditional library services. The survey was administered to new immigrants who may or may not have been aware of what the library has to offer them. It asks

questions about every type of information need these immigrants may have, whether these categories of information are currently available at the library or not. The results led to useful recommendations to better align the library with community needs: to improve the involvement of ethnic minority communities, volunteers from these communities could be recruited to advise on collection development; bursaries could be provided as incentives for ethnic minorities to receive professional librarian training; partnerships between college and public libraries could encourage ESOL students at the college to use public library facilities more (Mid Wales 2008).

These community analyses highlight that libraries can successfully identify user needs and consequently integrate immigrants into their user community by providing diverse services and embodying a wide range of information provision roles (Berger 2002, p. 86). No immigrant community is the same; as a result, no package of library services will be ideal for two libraries. It then follows that, if a library seeks to realign itself to best serve its immigrant community, the changes it implements cannot strictly follow a model employed elsewhere. However, keeping in mind the ultimate goal of serving one's users best will accurately direct any necessary changes.

IV. A Case Study: The Atwater Library and Computer Centre

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre has a long history of serving unique community needs. At present this requires a focus on immigrants and refugees in the community. Through examination of the Library's social and historical context and by analysis of community demographics, we can learn from the way this institution has responded to emerging user needs by restructuring its services and pursuing partnerships to provide appropriate services to immigrants.

The Atwater Library is situated in the City of Westmount, a separate municipality within the borders of the City of Montréal, in the Canadian province of Québec. Community analysis begins with an examination of these geographic areas.

A. A Community Analysis

A Snapshot of Immigrant Communities in Montréal and Westmount, Québec, Canada

Compared to cities across Canada, the Montréal Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) receives the third largest number of immigrants to Canada. 12.0 per cent of newcomers come to the Montréal CMA, compared to 37.5 per cent in Toronto and 13.4 per cent in Vancouver (Fouren 2010b, p. 4). Within the administrative region of Montréal, which had a population of 1 823 900 in 2006, the percentage of immigrants sits at 30.6 per cent of the general population. This number has grown slightly from 27.2 per cent in 2001 and 26.1 per cent in 1996 (Fouren 2010b, p. 3).

Inside the geographic boundaries of Montréal, the separate municipality of Westmount has a population of 19,800. Although Westmount has traditionally been viewed as having a different

demographic than Montréal as a whole, its immigrant profile is similar. According to 2006 Census data, 29.2 per cent of Westmount's residents are immigrants (Statistics Canada 2008). This has grown slightly from 27.1 per cent in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2002) and 28.4 per cent in 1996 (Statistics Canada n.d.). Within this immigrant population, 19.5 per cent arrived within the previous five years. Of those who are visible minorities, dominant populations include Chinese, Latin American and Arab (Statistics Canada 2008).

History of Public Libraries in Québec

A brief history of public libraries in the province of Québec is a necessary component of this community analysis, as it provides an understanding of the user services that libraries in the region have previously been capable of. Public libraries have historically been weak in the province of Québec and, by extension, in the City of Montréal. In 1944 the city had one municipal library, while the city of Toronto had 20 public libraries to serve a markedly smaller population. The weakness of the public libraries throughout the province is generally attributed to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church (Lyons 2007, p. 601). All libraries in the colony of New France were originally attached to the Roman Catholic Church, whether through churches, hospitals, schools, or other official bodies. The Church grew accustomed to censoring the information available to the public through these state-controlled (which essentially meant "church-controlled") organizations. As a dramatic example, conflict between two francophone Montréal libraries in 1844 eventually involved both the colonial government of the time as well as the Vatican. This altercation is credited for the slow growth of public libraries within Montréal and across the province as a whole. Provincial public library legislation was not passed until 1959, well behind other Canadian provinces (McNally 2002, p. 76). While Montréal's public library system is now much better developed than in 1944, it does not receive adequate funding and thus is limited in the services it can provide (Paolo Picco 2008, pp. 52-53).

Libraries in Montréal and Westmount

Because the City of Westmount is embedded within the larger community of Montréal, its libraries and library services to immigrants must be considered within this context. It should be noted, however, that the two libraries in Westmount are independent of the City of Montréal public library network. These libraries – the Westmount Library and the Atwater Library and Computer Centre – are also independent of each other. The Westmount Library has existed since 1899 and receives public funding from the City of Westmount. The Atwater Library and Computer Centre has existed since 1828 and, while it functions as a community library, is privately funded. The two libraries play different roles within the community and serve different populations. For the purposes of this article only the Atwater Library and Computer Centre is being considered, due to its focus on immigrant services for a neighbouring refugee population.

The Mechanics' Institute of Montréal, or, the Atwater Library and Computer Centre

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre takes a unique place on the library map of Canada. Founded in 1828 as the Mechanics' Institute of Montréal, the library was part of a larger Mechanics' Institute movement across the globe. Beginning in the early 1820s in Scotland, these organizations were created to provide adult education and technical training to the general public ("general public" at this time meaning craftsmen, working class men and professional males). Each Institute offered classes and lectures, and its premises generally housed a library. Many Mechanics' Institutes were founded across Canada in the early 1800s; while several of them joined public library systems, the ALCC is the last independent Mechanics' Institute in Canada. It remains the oldest subscription library in the country (Pelletier 2004).

The ALCC also holds unique status within the context of Québec libraries described above. Throughout its history it has experienced greater freedom than its counterparts with regards to service provision and collection development because it is English and privately funded. English libraries, or libraries within English organizations, were historically able to avoid censorship because they did not receive funding from the francophone government, creating distance between themselves and the francophone Roman Catholic Church. Private, Anglophone funding allowed the Mechanics' Institute of Montréal the ability to develop policies to serve users best, without interference from municipal, provincial or religious legislation. This created a niche for focusing on the needs of the immediate community which continues to this day.

A significant addition to the ALCC came in the mid-1980s, when the "Computer Centre" portion of the organization's name was added. The Computer Centre provided the first public-access computers on the island of Montréal.

Library Services for Immigrants in Montréal

Paola Picco conducted an excellent study on *Multicultural Libraries' services and social integration: the case of public libraries in Montréal Canada* (2008). Paolo Picco examines the services offered to Montréal immigrants by the City of Montréal library system and measures their adequacy and effectiveness. Paolo Picco's study is useful because of the similarities between Montréal and Westmount immigrant communities. Some of the service needs among immigrants are transferrable, as is Paolo Picco's evaluation of how well these needs are being met.

Paolo Picco (2008) interviewed staff at three libraries from the City of Montréal public library system located within neighbourhoods with high-density immigrant populations. Services for immigrants in these libraries include language courses, French literature workshops, cultural activities, information on neighbourhood services, employment resources, guided visits for immigrants, and community liaison services.

Paolo Picco also evaluates the effectiveness of these services. Librarians interviewed in this study agreed that public libraries should support immigrant integration but could not agree on how

this would best be facilitated (2008, pp. 53-54). Paolo Picco's evaluation summarizes that foreign language collections in Montréal's public libraries do not meet the needs of the City's multicultural immigrant population (2008, p. 46), that the libraries studied have not built relationships with community organizations to the extent that would be ideal (2008, p. 53), and that foreign language services by librarians vary widely from location to location (2008, p. 46). The overall conclusion is that services for immigrants are uneven.

This lack of relationships with other community organizations serving immigrants as well as the uneven distribution of services may be an indicator that these libraries have not appropriately analyzed their user communities. They are not adequately aware of the needs their users have or how they can best be met. By missing out on thorough community analysis they have failed to provide appropriate services to immigrants.

Paolo Picco concludes that, to ensure adequate service levels, library services for immigrants should be included in government policies and not developed by individual libraries (2008, p. 50). This solution is problematic in that it could result in blanket solutions and thus not leave room for community analysis to determine which services fit a local immigrant population best. However, it accurately observes that library legislation in Québec is not strong enough to ensure provision of services for immigrants, leaving this task to the discretion and initiative of individual libraries.

B. Library Services to Immigrants at the Atwater Library and Computer Centre

A History of Services Changes to Meet User Needs

The historical roots of the ALCC as a library uniquely situated to serve its users without external interference laid the foundation for an institution that has continued to place user needs at the forefront of strategic planning. In its original function as a Mechanics' Institute, daytime and evening classes were offered for apprentices and workmen employed within the city. These were some of the first adult education opportunities in Canada. A laboratory and workshop allowed for the practical application of skills learned. As public education developed and became more widespread in Montréal, the need for adult education classes gradually diminished. Eventually, the education and workshop component of the Mechanics' Institute of Montréal faded and the library rose to prominence. This book collection carried a reputation as one of the best technical libraries in Canada until the 1950s (Pelletier 2004, p. 13). To serve changed readership, over the years the main library collection has evolved to focus on bestsellers and Canadiana.

A History of Serving Immigrants at the Atwater Library and Computer Centre

The ALCC has always had a mission of serving the educational needs of newcomers to Canada. The program and service changes described above were not instigated by a changed mission but rather by a shift in the definition of "newcomer". In the mid-1800s, newcomers were primarily Anglophone

tradesmen looking for more education. At its location on the border of the English-speaking City of Westmount and the bilingual Borough of Ville-Marie within the City of Montréal, the newcomer demographic has evolved significantly over the last 180 years.

As noted above, both the City of Montréal and the City of Westmount have significant immigrant populations (roughly 30 per cent). Most notably for the ALCC, a neighbouring YMCA has taken on the role of providing temporary residence for refugees. In addition, the ALCC is located across the street from the Montréal Children's Hospital, which provides health services to children from across the province of Québec. Many families must stay in the area for a considerable length of time while their children receive care. Notably, many Inuit families from Nunavik, a region covering the northern third of the province which is largely inhabited by Inuit, bring their children for health services. These newcomers experience the same degree of culture shock as refugee newcomers and need many of the same information services.

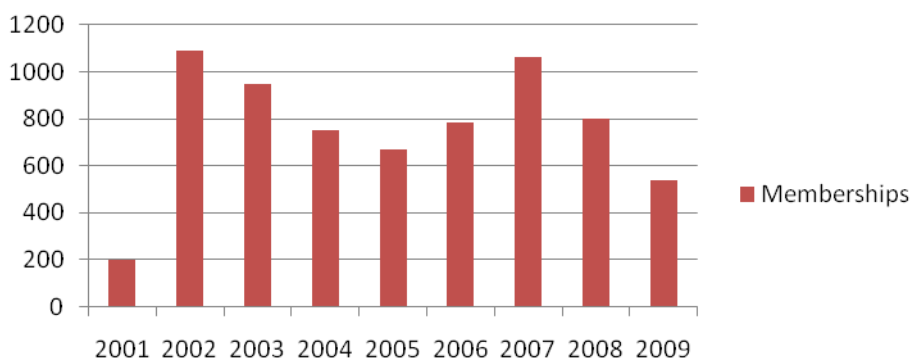
Current Services to Immigrants

Current services to immigrant library users at the ALCC have been based primarily on the needs of refugees, as well as on the needs of other newcomers in the community. A summary of immigrant demographics in the area, described above, provides a basic community analysis. Approximately thirty percent of residents in the community are immigrants, and approximately twenty percent arrived within the previous five years. Working from this statistical indicator that immigrant needs are a priority in this neighbourhood, the library has partnered with local organizations that serve immigrants – primarily the neighbouring YMCA refugee centre – to determine what the information needs of these immigrants are. Primary information needs for refugees encompass language learning, finding accommodation and employment, and navigating documentation related to immigration or citizenship. Services to meet these needs include computer and internet access, specialized collection development, and multilingual human resources.

In response to the technology needs of newly arrived refugees at the neighbouring YMCA residence, the ALCC offers free Computer Centre memberships to these users. This membership provides member privileges on computers, allowing easy access to the online documents refugees need for making their stay in Canada permanent. It also allows them to communicate cheaply with family back home. Realizing the importance of online communication for refugee Computer Centre users, the library has pursued partnerships to secure better software and hardware, including language learning software, scanners, and printers. Skype and webcams have been installed on all computer stations. Wireless internet is made available through partnership with the city-wide *Ile Sans Fil* initiative. Recently, a grant from the Borough of Ville-Marie funded the purchase of new computers. The Computer Centre also offers a variety of courses covering basic computer skills. Immigrants can take advantage of these to prepare themselves for employment.

Residents of the neighbouring refugee residence have confirmed the value of these computer services by taking advantage of the free Computer Centre memberships, as shown in Figure 1. These memberships were made available beginning in 2001, when the refugee residence was established in the neighbouring YMCA. Full library memberships are not available to refugees without permanent addresses, but a Computer Centre membership serves most of their needs. Membership numbers have fluctuated over the years in correspondence with the numbers of refugees arriving at the YMCA, a factor controlled by forces outside the library’s influence.

Figure 1. Free Computer Centre Memberships, 2001-2009



The ALCC also offers discounted full library memberships to former YMCA refugee residents. After they have established a permanent address, the library welcomes former refugees to take better advantage of its resource collection.

Recognizing the specific information needs of the refugee population, the library has established a Welcome to Montréal Collection that any member of the community can access. The collection includes maps, handbooks, dictionaries, and directories of organizations and businesses; pamphlets on services such as health, education, and jobs; and website guides to government and local agencies. The City of Westmount is a funding partner for this project.

Community analysis reveals a major shift in the Atwater Library and Computer Centre’s linguistic audience. While services to newcomers has always been a priority, when the institution was founded this entailed catering to English-speaking working class men. Today, newcomers are from Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Refugee claimants are predominantly from Latin America. Hospital patients and their families arrive from northern Québec. The Welcome to Montréal collection provides many of the resources necessary for orienting oneself in Montréal in both English and French, but a large number of newcomers are limited in their ability to speak either of these languages. As a result, human resources are key. The ALCC is staffed by a small handful of paid employees and a cohort of 130 volunteers. Amongst themselves, the staff and volunteers speak a total of 15 languages. Some of these volunteers first experienced the ALCC as refugee claimants and have returned to volunteer their time, knowledge, and language abilities.

C. Strategy to Take Away

Observation of service redesign implemented by the Atwater Library and Computer Centre outlines the overall strategy to take away:

- **Community Analysis:** Needs awareness and assessment, by whatever technique is most appropriate, lie at the heart of changes to library services. Communities, and therefore user groups, are continuously changing, and a library must be aware of these changes and the best means for addressing them.
- **Partnerships:** The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service *Library Services for Immigrants* (2010) report notes that partnerships are a key aspect of services to immigrants. These partnerships can play a key role in both community analysis and delivery of services. The most obvious partnership employed by the ALCC is with the neighbouring YMCA refugee centre. Other partnerships have been instrumental for funding immigrant services: the local municipalities of the City of Westmount and the Borough of Ville-Marie have provided funding for the Welcome to Montréal Collection and for computer hardware, respectively. These relationships are mutually beneficial: these bodies may not have adequate resources to provide services themselves, but by partnering with the library they can participate in addressing immigrants' needs.
- **Selecting Appropriate Tools:** The library literature suggests repeatedly that a key element of library service to immigrants is foreign language collections. While such prevalent themes in the literature should be given due attention, it is necessary to evaluate this advice in light of both user needs and the library's resources. Libraries must look beyond collection development to become learning centres, cultural centres, and information centres (IFLA 2009, pp. 5-6). In line with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services description of service options (2010), the ALCC has effectively implemented these tools:
 - Redesigned *collection* policies include a Welcome to Montréal collection, as well as specially-funded ethnic collections which embrace the heritage of established communities.
 - *Partnerships* with local municipalities, cultural organizations, and a YMCA refugee residence have facilitated contact with newcomers and have provided resources to implement new services.
 - *Information services* have been made available through special collections and by developing the hardware and software available in the Computer Centre to meet immigrant needs.
 - *Programs and events*, such as Computer Centre courses, provide skill training necessary for employment.
 - *Outreach*, most significantly to the neighbouring refugee residence, has made newcomers feel welcome and has established long-term relationships between immigrants and the library by providing free or reduced-rate memberships.

- *Planning* for changing demographics is never easy, as user needs cannot always be anticipated. However, by continually pursuing funding for new projects to serve immigrants, the library keeps in step with changing needs.

While the needs of newcomers continue to be met at the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, the library is a vastly different place than it was when Anglophone tradesmen first attended evening classes in 1828.

Conclusion

Providing services to immigrants is not an option if immigrants are part of a library's user community. The library's mandate – to meet user needs – demands implementation of diverse organizational changes to serve them. As libraries reorient themselves to serve modern immigrant populations, this involves embracing collection changes, human resource changes, and a wide range of changes in service provision. Many models of library service provision to immigrants have been suggested, and it has also been noted that there is no recipe for the ideal provision of services to an immigrant community. However, the overall strategy remains the same. The needs of the community, including immigrant groups, must be determined through community analysis and needs assessment. Partnerships with other community organizations can inform service decisions and program delivery. Appropriate tools for serving the local immigrant community can then be chosen. Libraries can successfully retain their status as respected institutions within their communities if they remain aware of their user demographics and evolve to meet the needs of their changing surroundings.

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