
**Serving New Immigrant Communities in the Library** is both a comprehensive guide for developing and planning library services for new immigrants and a compelling argument for the importance of these services. The work concisely outlines the history of library service to new immigrants in the United States, highlights demographic changes, and connects them to key political movements. It details the process for assessing the needs of new immigrant communities and describes how to gather resources to better serve these communities. The author then discusses the importance of orienting library communications, marketing, and policies to new immigrants. This holistic approach is designed to ensure that neither library policies nor communications undermine or conflict with the desired outcomes of services offered to new immigrants. The author, Sondra Cuban, an ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) educator and librarian, also uses a thorough analysis of the literature concerning new immigrants to support and contextualize the development process she outlines.

This volume is significant for librarians responsible for developing multi-cultural services, as it goes beyond previous texts (such as the 2004 publication, **Still Struggling for Equality: American Public Library Services with Minorities**), by offering a conceptual framework, as well as historical analysis and documentation of what has been done at case libraries. The work should appeal to all librarians, because of the author’s challenge to librarians to become culturally competent. Cultural competence is defined as a heightened awareness of cultural differences generally, as well as a working knowledge of the specific cultures of the new immigrant communities a library is trying to serve. According to Cuban, to be culturally competent also means being actively involved in these new immigrant communities: to sit on community boards, to participate in cultural events and to support their political efforts.

The author’s expectations may be too high for many librarians, particularly those working in library systems that serve new immigrants from several cultures rather than a dominant majority. Cuban’s insistence that public libraries should make a significant effort to support new immigrants to ensure equal access to information for all touches upon the larger debate about the social function of the public library. The author’s idealism limits the volume’s scope by omitting discussion of how to situate services to new immigrants in the larger context of the public library’s service to the community’s general population. It is this lack of discussion about how to provide service to multicultural communities while still providing service to the general population with limited funding and staffing constraints that is the volume’s primary weakness.

The development process outlined covers many areas and activities that would be made more tangible and practical to the reader by the inclusion of examples. Appendixes containing sample questionnaires, policies or advertisements would have greatly strengthened the volume’s effectiveness by offering readers templates for their own work. The inclusion of such materials would also have increased the value of the work by assisting library systems trying to generate multi-cultural services with limited
funds and staffing. The majority of the example case studies described in the work are larger American public library systems with the funding necessary to originate the necessary materials for this development process.

In conclusion, the volume provides a solid foundation for those readers about to embark on developing multi-cultural library services. However, readers should not expect a how-to manual. Many parts of the processes outlined would have to be adapted and scaled down for Canadian contexts with more varied immigrant populations and more rural settings. This should be viewed as a minor caveat due to the lack of full-length works about multicultural library services in Canada. The work is ultimately a worthwhile addition to the literature as it contains such a thorough grounding in the history of multicultural library services. As well, it makes an important contribution to the debate surrounding the definition and purpose of public libraries that is very relevant to our current economic conditions.

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