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Public library use by Asian immigrants in South Australia: Services and expectations

Abstract for full paper

Research shows that public libraries play an important role in supporting immigrants' settlement in the adopted society (Audunson, Essmat, & Aabø, 2011). Understanding what public libraries provide services for immigrants is useful. Several studies have been conducted in some countries with a large number of immigrants such as America and Canada. Based on the census data of the Australian Bureau Statistics, the number of immigrants, particularly Asian immigrants, in South Australia has seen significant, increasing in the past decade. Accounting for 26.7% of the immigrants (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011), the Asian immigrants have an important place in supporting multicultural life of South Australia. Studies on immigrants' use of public libraries in South Australia are significant, not only to contribute to the theoretical literature but also to support public libraries for better service delivery. The study reported in this paper investigates the public library services used by Asian immigrants in South Australia during their settlement process. Some 197 Asian immigrants participated in the survey conducted in 2013-2014. Of them, 35 Asian immigrants agreed to participate in the follow-up interviews. The survey data was analysed using an online survey tool (SurveyGizmo.com) and further SPSS was used for description statistics analysis. The open coding method was used to analyse the interview data.

The results show that immigrants used services from 20 public libraries, accounted for 15% of the total number of public libraries in South Australia. The participants used almost all the services available in the public libraries including collections such as books, magazines, and newspapers (64%), attending library activities such as English class and storytelling (42%), and using library facilities such as computers, printers, photocopy machines, and study rooms (33%). Accessing to library websites (54%) showed high percentage. Asian immigrants also expected to see public libraries on social media (66%). The immigrants' expectations of public libraries' services included more materials (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers) both from Australia (67%) and home countries (58%), online databases (50%), trainings (79%) and cultural activities (63%), and academic support (35%). Moreover, the review of MyLanguage program with aims to support people who were from other countries and currently living in Australia was also presented. MyLanguage is a partnership project between the state and territory libraries of the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria. Based on the findings, recommendations have been made to the public library system in South Australia to help creating better strategic plans and service design from immigrants' perspectives.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011). Basic community profile (South Australia). Retrieved March 27, 2015 from [http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2011/communityprofile/4?opendocument&navpos=230](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/communityprofile/4?opendocument&navpos=230)

Audunson, R., Essmat, S., & Aabø, S. (2011). Public libraries: A meeting place for immigrant women? *Library & Information Science Research*, 33(3), 220-227.