

9. ETHNIC SERVICES

Officer responsible Sue Sutherland, Libraries Manager	Author Sue Sutherland and Jill Richardson, Ethnic Services Advocate, Central City Library, DDI 372-7876 (Sue Sutherland) and DDI 372-7889 (Jill Richardson)
Corporate Plan Output: 8.2 Libraries and Information	

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the library and information services which have been developed for ethnic minorities in Christchurch.

ETHNIC SERVICES ADVOCATE

This role was established within the Central City Library's Info Centre in July 2000 and was filled by Jill Richardson. It occupies 30% of her full time reference librarian's position, the remaining time being spent on service delivery relating to collection management and public desk reference work. There is a strong overlap in these roles as a large part of the collection management work relates to mother tongue collections and materials for English speakers of other languages (ESOL). Information desk work includes serving customers from the variety of different ethnicities who frequent the Central library.

Work to date has focussed on the following areas:

- Networking
- Promotion
- Staff cultural awareness and training
- Collections assessment – both ESOL and mother tongue
- Service improvement
- Employment opportunities for new migrants

NETWORKING WITH MIGRANT AGENCIES AND ESOL PROVIDERS

Contact with others working to support ethnic groups and speakers of other languages has been vital in providing direction and enabling promotion of the services the library can offer. Initiatives that have resulted from this networking include:

- Attending the Refugee and New Migrant Forum held 6 weekly at the Migrant Centre
- Working with Somali community leaders to discuss some issues that had arisen with their children's use of the resources at the Central library resulting in the appointment on a volunteer basis of young Somali woman to work in the Children's area in the evenings in last term 2000.
- Liaising with Ken Cho (the CCC funded Asian Youth Co-ordinator) to help with promotional initiatives.
- Sourcing a training provider for some cultural awareness training for library staff
- Successful promotion of orientation tours of the library via network contacts
- Voted onto the committee of the Christchurch ESOL Home Tutor Scheme – the organisation values the library's role in supporting the literacy needs of its 335 learners and their tutors.

PROMOTIONS

These include:

- Mail out of 'what's new' to ethnic groups, ESOL tutors
- Displays in the library
- Speaking at the Migrant Forum
- Providing copy for other organisations' newsletters eg Cantesol. (Canterbury ESOL teachers association)
- Providing tours of resources to students and tutors

Staff cultural awareness and training

In response to feedback from staff the following activities have been designed to increase cultural awareness:

- Karolin Potter (Race Relations Office) gave presentations at Central, Shirley, Fendalton and Linwood
- Stimulating all libraries to observe Race Unity Day, 21 March via displays, bookmarks and a visit by Hagley College ESOL students (40) and their teachers
- Bi-lingual Somali community worker, Zeinab Hussein, spoke at the South Area's training day
- Ahmed Ali (Refugee education co-ordinator) spoke at a Central City Library staff lunchtime meeting (very successful and more are planned)
- A two hour workshop with the Christchurch ESOL Home Tutors Association. They are a small government funded body that run courses and provide matching for volunteer English tutors for homebound migrants.

COLLECTIONS ASSESSMENT

There are two types of collections particularly serving other ethnic groups. The first is materials in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL collections) and the second is collections in the mother tongue of the various migrant groups.

- ESOL collections. All libraries have collections and these have been assessed to gain an understanding of current/potential use and presentation. Central and Fendalton collections are the most heavily used with about 50% of the collection out at any time.

Visits to assess the ESOL resources at Polytech, Christchurch Home Tutor Scheme and the International Language Academy have provided ideas for new resources and an appreciation of what else is provided for students in the city.

- Mother tongue collections. These fall in to two categories: electronic and physical. Electronic foreign language newspapers available via the Web continue to be heavily used by new migrants and refugees. Adding sites and extending into more general informational sites is desirable.

ADULT MOTHER TONGUE COLLECTIONS AT CENTRAL

We currently have collections in the following Asian languages: Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Thai. All of these collections are small and in many cases there are difficulties with source of supply and of appropriately cataloguing the materials. The Japanese collection is the largest with the Chinese collection being the fastest growing. The demand in Asian language appears to be for leisure reading.

We do not have collections in Russian (the current population of Russian speakers is estimated at 3000 in Christchurch). An initial approach to community representatives suggests a real desire for a good quality literary collection plus contemporary fiction in this language. . A Russian Cultural Centre Trust supports the teaching of Russian to NZ born offspring.

Arabic is the other language recently arrived in Christchurch with populations coming mainly from Egypt and Iraq. Informal assessment suggests children's literature is a priority for these families but more research is needed before any collections are established.

CHILDREN'S COLLECTIONS

New migrants generally show a strong desire for their children to maintain the mother tongue. This should be supported by the library by continuing to strengthen the small collection of children's stories to include more Somali, Farsi, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese titles.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

In the Central City Library ESOL material, mother tongue collections, dictionaries and grammars in other languages have been collocated with an adjacent lounge, study and notice board area. This has become a very highly used area.

Improvements have been made to the process of joining the library and the 'Conditions of Membership' have been translated into eight key languages.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW MIGRANTS

Several 'work experience' opportunities have been facilitated through PEETO. Since July 2000 we have placed the following new migrants on work experience: 2 at Fendalton, 1 at Papanui, 1 at Bishopdale and 2 at Central. Out of this 2 permanent placements have resulted at Central City Library. In addition we have two other staff who come from different ethnic backgrounds and these appointments mean we have access to fluent speakers of 6 new languages. This is an asset to our network especially for collection and membership issues.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The Library will continue with the part-time role of Ethnic Services Advocate. Whilst it may be desirable to put more staff resources into this area we have been unsuccessful in securing these through the annual plan round and of necessity the role must be combined with a front line service delivery position. Jill Richardson has commented she has *“found it extremely rewarding to work in this advocacy capacity. Being able to research and represent the interests of a catchment of the community seems a very effective way to provide a responsive library service. I have a growing number of community contacts that help me consolidate the role that the library plays in the settlement of new migrants. I see the future role as monitoring collections, assessing the needs for shifts in mother tongue resources, the development of multi lingual web presence beyond just the Conditions of Membership (eg a welcome page with outline of services offered) and continuing with cultural awareness initiatives for staff”*.

The Community Advocate advises the Board that the topic for the next Seminar meeting, being held on 21 June is ethnic issues.

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairman’s

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