Literature Review

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INFO 515—Research in Information Organizations

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In *Reading their way through immigration*, Dali describes the leisure reading patterns of Russian immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area of Ontario, Canada. Dali describes that this was “first known systematic exploration of an ethnic readership.”(Dali, 209) The two main questions of this paper were “Who are the readers? and… What are the main characteristics of reading behavior and habits of participants after immigration?” (Dali, 197) Dali uses reading research with additional immigration research to discover the acculturation of Russian immigrants and Russian ethnic communities.

A sample of 14 participants who were avid readers, first generation Soviet/Russian immigrants, between 30 and 65 years old, had been living in Canada for 2 years, and who used Russian as their language of choice, were interviewed first to see if they were the correct fit for the study. Next, they were given a questionnaire written in both Russian and English in which they were to highlight the books they had read and to choose 10 memorable works that were to be discussed. They were given $50 CDN as compensation. Then a second interview in Russian in which each participant sat with a researcher alone and discussed the 10 memorable works. The 14 participants included nine women and five men, two were younger than 40, six were between 41 and 50, and six were between 51 and 60. Eleven were from major metropolitan areas, while four were from midsized towns. All had secondary education, with two having the equivalents of doctorates. Most often read for multiple hours a day.

When asked about their favorite books, Russian and world classics were among the most recalled. Only two of the favorite books recalled were read in English, while the rest were read in Russian; however many were originally written in a language other than Russian. Many had large home libraries and would supplement them by adding books in Russian bought from Russian bookstores, and some said they didn’t buy books in English because they could find what they needed in libraries.

It was noted that, Reading and books comprised an integral part of their daily lives, and the importance of leisure reading was not diminished by the challenges of acculturation and resettlement.”(Dali, 209) Dali also goes on to say that “the experience of immigration has common features that… can be noticed regardless of the country of origin.”(Dali, 210)


In *With Literacy for All*, Pender and García discuss reading groups in King County, Washington for immigrants from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, who speak little English. Chinese “storytimes” had been very popular in the King County Library System (KCLS), which left them overflowing with people. The KCLS decided the best way to show support and engage the older Chinese community was to form a Chinese language discussion group.
A survey was developed that included questions such as: “Are there specific authors you’d like to read and discuss?” and “Do you prefer Traditional or Simplified [characters]?” (Pender & García, 8) The Chinese Information and Service Center helped to distribute the survey, and eighty respondents replied. The discussion group changed its name to the Chinese Reading Group with six members in September of 2010. By May of 2011, the group changed its name once again to the Chinese Book Club and had fifteen members. The membership ages ranged from 20 to 70 years old, and included new immigrants and immigrants who had lived in the area for years. One participant of the Chinese Book Club commented that he had lost touch with Chinese culture after moving to the US thirty years prior, and that without the book club, he would have never learned of newer Chinese authors. Another participant commented on the pleasantness of being introduced to books from Taiwan and Hong Kong, and that without the book club he would have never been introduced to Taiwanese or Hong Kong literature and culture.


In Library services to a linguistically diverse community, Steckman discusses the New Jersey and its ethnic diversity. Steckman explains that 15 percent of the state’s population is foreign born and that Spanish and other languages can often be found in increasing numbers, and because libraries are charged with serving all member of the community, it must plan and decide what to do about serving non-English speakers. Luckily, since 1991, New Jersey has had a statewide library service called Multi-lingual Materials AcquisitionCenter (MultiMAC) and that this service has many non-English materials that can be distributed throughout the state. In order that the libraries of New Jersey can better help the non-English speaking communities, a questionnaire was distributed, so that it could pick the “eight languages or language groups as the most common, or the most challenging, of the immigrant groups with which libraries deal in New Jersey.” (Steckman, Schull & Tandler, 58) With these languages in mind, the committee that distributed the questionnaire then decided on what services it should employ. Some discussed were building a more comprehensive foreign language collection, printing registration forms in other languages and posting signage etc. in multiple languages. In Queens, the “New American Program” gave helpful services like ESOL classes, adding coping skills classes, and adding large collections of non-English materials and programs to promote readership. The ESOL classes allow the immigrants to learn English. The coping classes were meant to give immigrants the skills needed to survive and prosper in the US. The large collections and programs were meant to keep immigrants connected to their homeland. Performing arts programs were also installed. “WorldLinQ” is a web interfaced introduced to the library systems that allowed for speakers of many languages to surf the web in their native language and to search the library catalog in their native language.

These three articles deal with immigrants and their readership of non-English materials. There appears to be a demand for immigrants to read materials in their own languages even if they understand English. For those that do not know English, non-English, it allows the library patrons to educate themselves and spend leisure time reading while they live in the United States before they learn English, if they choose to do so.