Introduction

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada reported that 280,681 immigrants became permanent residents of Canada in 2010 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).
- As multiculturalism continues to increase and newcomers in Canada play a key role in the Canadian cultural identity, a number of public services, including public libraries, are changing to better serve these groups.
- For newcomers in Canada, libraries have the opportunity to become a meeting place and a learning environment—helping these individuals participate and integrate in Canadian society— and be a primary information source where newcomers can obtain information that would help them build a new life in this country.
- To support Canadian newcomers, libraries need to evaluate the needs of this user group, adapt current library programming to offer enhanced services, and examine what effect these changes will have on the library system.

Information Needs of Newcomers

Two specific types of information-seeking have been described by Caidi et al. 2010 as characteristics of the information needs of immigrants and newcomers.

**Orienting information seeking**

- Described as “the monitoring of everyday events through various information sources” (Caidi et al. 2010) in order to learn more about the new country, mainly through media (i.e. television, news, radio etc.) or an informal social network.
- Difficulties that newcomers face in obtaining this information:
  - Limited support networks
  - Information overload and inability to access information appropriate to their needs (i.e. in a language they can understand) (Savolainen, 2008)
  - Emotional stress due to being in an unfamiliar country and/or lack of financial stability (Caidi et al. 2010)

**Problem-specific or practical information seeking**

- Seeking information related to education, health, employment, the law, banking and other items necessary to build a new life in the new country (Caidi et al. 2010).
- Difficulties that newcomers face in obtaining this information:
  - Lack of knowledge of how or where to seek help in the new information environment (Caidi et al. 2010)

What Libraries are Currently Doing

Currently have programs in place to help newcomers access important settlement information, develop skills, and create social networks. Below are two examples:

**Library Settlement Partnership program (LSP)**

- Program across Ontario- includes one-on-one settlement information and referral, group information sessions, and community outreach. (www.lsp-peb.ca, 2012)
- Information regarding housing, health care, education, employment and other issues through a settlement worker located at participating libraries. (LSP pamphlet, 2012)

**Ottawa Public Library Newcomers programs**

- Provides activities and workshops- for example, English and French conversation groups, and cultural social groups (i.e. Russian social group, Chinese social groups etc.), Citizenship Test preparation course, education on healthcare and employment, and computer courses (The Ottawa Public Library Newcomers Programs, 2012).
- Carry books, DVDs and music CDs in different languages such as Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Urdu.

Library Challenges & Recommendations

**Lack of Library resources**

- “...the number of staff and the services offered […] are directly related to the resources public libraries receive” (Picco, 2008).

Recommendation:
- In order for libraries to overcome these challenges and be proactive in solving future problems, continued support and further resources will be required.

**A coordinated approach to providing these services is needed between Libraries**

- Lack of a coordinated approach between libraries regarding services to newcomers as each library is providing varying services and may or may not be evaluating its success (Picco, 2008).

Recommendation:
- The establishment of a united governing body, at a government or community level- its role will be to outline objectives and mandate the services provided by libraries (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Picco, 2008).

**The ability to attract newcomers to the Library**

- To develop and provide relevant services and information to newcomers, “libraries need to find a way to market themselves specifically to these […] potential library users” (Kumaran & Salt, 2010).

Recommendation:
- The development of a marketing strategy that will attract and respond to the needs of this group (Picco, 2008).

**Specific Library staff competencies are needed to serve newcomers**

- Library staff require competencies such as “being patient and proactive, being able to speak several languages, being open and respectful of other cultures and being prepared to adapt to the needs of the immigrants” (Picco, 2008, 51).

Recommendation:
- Training and continuing education is necessary for Library staff to be capable of providing appropriate services for new immigrants (Picco, 2008).

Conclusion

- Newcomers to Canada face many information challenges.
- Libraries currently offer a variety of programs to address the information needs of this group.
- However, in order to serve newcomers effectively, Canadian libraries require clear objectives and consistent programming, ongoing staff training and development, and additional resources, including allotting resources to develop marketing strategies to invite and engage the newcomers.