

**STATE LIBRARY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Culturally diverse communities and the public library: a review of NSW public library multicultural services

Research report

PREPARED BY CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES PTY LTD FOR THE LIBRARY
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Foreword

As multicultural services and collections continue to grow in popularity across the NSW public library network, libraries are increasingly refining current services and instituting new and relevant services for their communities. In many NSW libraries the demand for these multicultural services and resources outstrips supply.

In this context the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services (NSW) comprising representatives of the Metropolitan Public Libraries Association, the Country Public Libraries Association and the State Library of New South Wales resolved that research into the growing needs of multicultural communities would be crucial to ensure the appropriateness and relevance of current and future services.

This research and report was commissioned by the NSW Public Library Network Research Committee (which is convened by the State Library of NSW) and funded by the Library Council of New South Wales. Cultural Perspectives Pty Ltd was contracted to conduct the project. The research phase of the project took place in August 2002.

The research comprised focus groups and in-depth interviews with library users representing ten community language groups, and a survey of library staff who work with multicultural clients.

This report contains key information on the needs and wants of multicultural library clients, as well as their impressions and opinions of current library services. This information will be of great assistance to the NSW public library network including the State Library for further developing services for diverse community language groups.

Kathleen Bresnahan
A/Assistant State Librarian, Public Library Services
State Library of New South Wales

Executive summary

The research objectives were to review multicultural library services, identify current library visitor needs and to map opportunities for wider engagement of non-English speaking background (NESB) audiences.

The picture that emerges from the research is positive in relation to NESB library users' interest and commitment to LOTE (languages other than English) collections within public libraries. However these LOTE collections are in need of attention. The research indicates that multicultural services and access to multicultural collections for NESB users of public libraries is a complex issue. The ways in which NESB library users engage with public libraries (and specifically multicultural collections) varies depending on the size and quality of the multicultural collections, as well as the presence of multicultural staff, within individual libraries. In particular, the existence of bilingual staff plays a major role in how NESB users experience public libraries. Moreover NESB library users' literacy in their own language, English language proficiency and their cultural understanding and expectation of public libraries affect their ability to access library services and multicultural collections.

In specific terms the research indicates that:

- Being able to access resources in-language¹ was viewed as a valuable and welcome service. Generally participants felt that libraries in Australia meet the needs of a variety of people in the population, are conveniently located and easy to use in terms of locating and borrowing materials.
- The research confirmed multicultural services are highly valued by NESB library users, and the need to regularly review individual language collections. Poor English language proficiency contributes to low levels of computer catalogue use and an inability to request and/or access appropriate materials. This situation is often alleviated by the presence of bilingual staff.

¹ "In-language" is a term that is used throughout this report as a generic reference to individual languages translations, verbal or written.

- Staff members who speak a community language are highly utilised by NESB library users. Those language groups that had access to library staff proficient in their language had a more positive experience of public libraries, since any difficulties faced through language barriers, such as communicating needs or searching and ordering materials, were erased by the assistance of bilingual library staff.
- Limited proficiency in English was cited as one of the major barriers to accessing multicultural services for NESB library users. Poor English language proficiency as well as illiteracy in own language was a major contributing factor in overall awareness of in-language library services, as well as the ability to access desired resources.
- Multicultural collections are not well publicised and therefore a substantial proportion of the NESB community are unaware of the in-language resources offered in the local libraries. Research participants argued that extending or changing library opening times is important if libraries are to appeal to a broader cross-section of the community, specifically people who are employed full-time.
- There is good general awareness of materials and services in-language amongst NESB library users. Most participants were aware of the range of materials available in the local libraries but little reference was made to the State Library of NSW bulk loan collection or interlibrary loans services.
- NESB library users want public libraries to improve the promotion of their services and their multicultural collections not only to those NESB users of library resources but also to potential users within NESB communities. Ethnic media was considered the main avenue for promoting multicultural collections within public libraries.
- NESB library users are committed to working with public libraries to ensure the development of access strategies and multicultural resources. Research projects such as this provide these audiences an opportunity to contribute to the overall functioning of multicultural services within public libraries, and there is a great willingness from these participants to contribute via similar group discussions and/ or surveys.

Introduction to the research

The State Library of NSW currently provides multicultural collections in 41 languages. This research project provides libraries with a greater insight into the current needs of NSW NESB library visitors, by providing information about the specific language communities targeted in the research, as well as identifying their needs and barriers to visitation and participation.

Current data indicates that little information exists on the profile of NESB library borrowers of community language library resources. It is envisaged that these research results will provide public libraries with valuable feedback for designing and implementing multicultural service provision, ensuring services are culturally relevant, appropriate and strategically target their intended audiences. Where there is a lot of intragroup diversity, this should be reflected in the collections and services provided. Libraries need also to be aware of the most effective channels of communication to reach speakers of languages other than English in NSW.

Engaging wider audiences builds community social capital. Social connectedness is increased when members of the community congregate in a civic space and critically engage in a shared activity. Library programs that meet the identified needs of their target audiences enhance social connectedness, build strong communities and ultimately build social capital in these communities.

Project outline & methodology

This benchmark project sought to:

1. undertake a review of multicultural services and resources provided by NSW public libraries to NESB clients from the users' perspective;
2. map opportunities for NESB audience development to inform the future direction of multicultural library services in NSW.

Research approach

The components of the research program were:

Stage 1:

- Qualitative research involved 10 focus groups with the target audience, across 10 language groups. Eight of the focus groups were held in metropolitan Sydney whilst Macedonian was held in the Wollongong area and Punjabi in Woolgoolga.
- 100 in-depth telephone interviews among the target audience, 10 per language group. Telephone interviews were spread across Metropolitan and regional NSW.
- Self-completion questionnaires for library staff.

Stage 2:

- Establishment of qualitative benchmarks for use in ongoing library user reviews.

Focus group discussions were conducted with people from each of the language groups and were facilitated by experienced and trained bilingual researchers. These focus groups enabled the participants to openly discuss and debate attitudes and opinions.

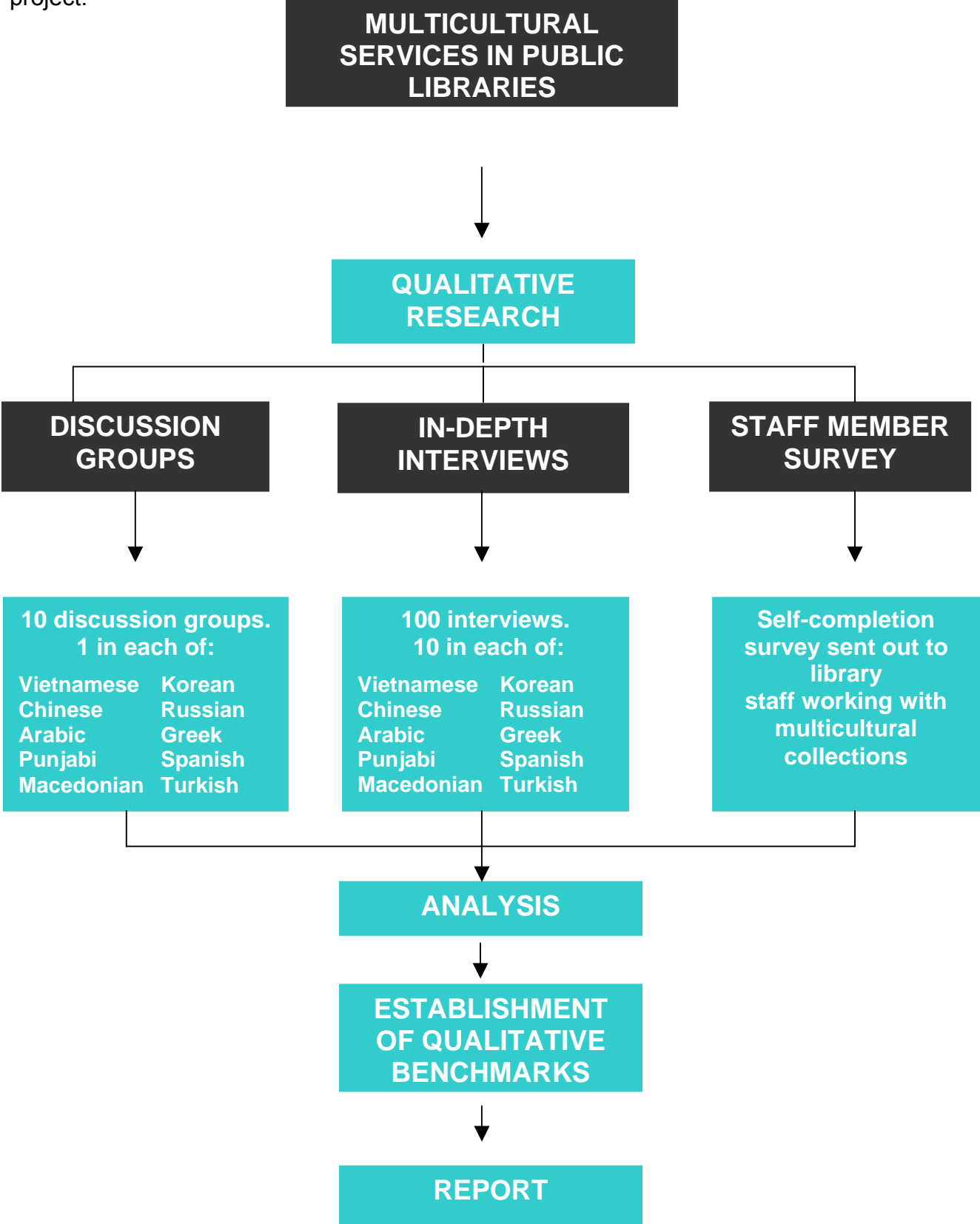
In-depth telephone interviews were used to achieve a thorough understanding of how the target audience felt about the subject matter. These individual interviews were conducted to provide:

- a more relaxed atmosphere, allowing the participant to air their views freely and openly,
- better geographic spread.

A **self-completion questionnaire** for library staff was sent to all libraries throughout NSW via email. Library staff, particularly those involved in multicultural services, are in an ideal position to comment on a wide range of client needs.

Finally the research results have been used to establish **qualitative benchmarks** for the ongoing review of multicultural services.

Below is an outline of the methodology used to meet the objectives of the research project.



Research report

This report presents a picture of multicultural resources and services within public libraries in NSW. These results represent issues and ideas common across all language groups. Where differences between language groups or anomalies with specific language groups exist, it is noted. Appendix 1 contains separate reports for each of the language groups which incorporate the results of the in-depth telephone interviews and the focus group discussions. These separate reports provide details of specific language group needs and suggestions that are not appropriate to include in this main discussion.

3.1 Use of libraries

Range of public libraries accessed Participants in the research tended to visit a wide range of public libraries, not just confining themselves to libraries in their immediate area. This was due to a number of factors but was mainly based on the use of libraries that are close to both home and work environments and visiting different libraries in search of new language resources to borrow.

Comparisons with home country/ country of birth library experiences Overall, participants agreed that libraries in Australia and specifically public libraries in NSW are better resourced and more accessible than libraries in their home country or country of birth. Being able to browse shelves and handle resources was perceived as a marked difference from library experiences overseas. Libraries in Australia have a more relaxed atmosphere, viewed positively by some library users, whilst others, such as the Russian speaking participants preferred the more austere and studious environments offered by home country libraries. Libraries in Australia were seen as better staffed with a greater focus on customer service.

The research found that whilst NESB library users consider that NSW has a large number of public libraries accessible to the wider community, the resources they offer in-language are generally limited.

Some participants, particularly the Spanish and Vietnamese speaking participants, argued that libraries in their home country are more elite in nature and less accessible to the general public. Ostensibly, these libraries were associated with studying and therefore not perceived as being available to the general community.

Following are a number of comments made by participants regarding their use of public libraries.

In Colombia libraries are less computerised. There is one main library and only the more affluent municipalities have local libraries.

Australian libraries have a very comfortable atmosphere and have vast volumes of books to borrow with lots of friendly staff to provide various services. It should be noted that libraries in Korea are generally considered a facility for students to study in and hence they have limited numbers of books to borrow. They have a very strict and unfriendly atmosphere but provide a lot of desks and open areas in which to study.

It is a big difference and difficult to compare. In Moscow I was used to big libraries with a full range of Russian books, newspapers and magazines. In Australian libraries the range is very limited. However, there are more services provided in Australian libraries.

In Vietnam, library services were only available for high school and university students and for professional people such as medical practitioners and pharmacists. I only used library services when I was a university student in Vietnam.

The research found that offering services for free is one of the best aspects about public libraries in Australia. Free access to library services was perceived as one of the defining differences between libraries here and overseas.

In China the libraries are not as big as here, staff were less friendly, there are no computers, it's noisier and there is no table to sit down to study. Anybody can use public libraries if you can produce your ID. In Australia it's a nice environment, good service but there are fines if books are returned late. We can read books anytime without producing ID first.

3.2 Perceptions of public libraries overall

Before specific questioning about multicultural services in public libraries participants were asked to comment on the best and worst aspects of public libraries generally. This often produced some contradictory results.

3.2.1 Best things

Generally participants felt that libraries in Australia meet the needs of a variety of people in the population and they have “good systems” in place, are conveniently located and easy to use in terms of locating and borrowing materials.

The research results suggest that being able to access resources in-language was viewed as a valuable and welcome service. Participants from the Greek sample spoke about multicultural resources in terms of access and equity, arguing that the needs of smaller groups in the community such as NESB groups are treated as secondary to the general population. Chinese and Vietnamese speaking participants also supported this view. Some research participants questioned the equity of this when it is widely acknowledged that resources in languages other than English are not readily available within the wider community.

The other key benefit identified was that libraries and the services they provide are easy to access. This in part was related to the location of libraries across Sydney. Other points raised included the ability to request resources from other libraries when not available in a local library, and also the availability of computers and printers that were regularly accessed by participants and their children. All of the language groups agreed that a positive aspect of libraries in Australia was that people could approach the shelves holding the language (and other) resources and materials and browse the collection.

Free and accessible

It's accessible. I walk there and it's an open space with no barriers to access. There are lots of books and resources if you need anything.

Library users argued that one of the best aspects of public libraries in NSW is that the services and resources they offer are free. Moreover, it was argued that libraries are easy to access, both in terms of location and materials/services. Participants praised the number and environment of public libraries in NSW, making it easy to access library resources and services. Many library users noted how open, friendly and comfortable public libraries are.

I think they are very nice places and environments to be at. It's comfortable to read books.

Services and resources

You can find books in so many languages, like Turkish and Italian. Many resources are available.

All participants were encouraged by the existence and availability of books in-language. As well, the range of resources available in public libraries, coupled with a variety of community-based services was viewed positively. The range of materials on offer was also positively received with participants making mention of reference materials, books, videocassettes and tapes, English language materials and multicultural resources as well as computer and Internet access. Many however felt that their own language collections, in general, were limited. One participant commented that whilst she could search online for a book and request it be brought from another library, *for many older people and those who don't speak English it will be difficult to use this system as they would not know how to use the computers for searching and would not be able to request this service from an English speaking assistant.*

Staff

The research found that staff are a valued resource within public libraries and staff that are bilingual and/or culturally aware are highly valued by library users. Indeed the research found that staff play a vital role in multicultural resource development. They provide direct client assistance and ultimately help shape a NESB library user's experience of public libraries. Library staff that speak a local community language were particularly valued by library users and tend to be regularly consulted within the library.

Russian speaking staff always help and offer an excellent service.

I have always found the staff to be most sincere in their efforts to assist. Only on one occasion when a trainee librarian was helping me out was I not satisfied.

3.2.2 Worst things

The research results suggest that around half of the users of multilingual resources could not name an aspect of public libraries with which they were unhappy. All of the language groups commented on the condition and age of the resources offered in their language. When asked about whether they had experienced any difficulties when looking for resources in their language, most spoke about the difficulty in using the library catalogue system. Difficulties were experienced because participants felt unable to use computers, and/or because the catalogue system does not allow for incorrect spelling. This was a concern amongst the Arabic sample since Arabic words can be spelt in many different ways when using the Latin alphabet. The Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Russian, Turkish and Vietnamese samples also commented on the difficulties of locating the required resource on library shelves. Some of the Greek sample complained that the needs of NESB groups were treated as secondary to the general population, and that their needs were not as well catered for as the rest of the (English-speaking) population. All participants commented that they either rely on assistance from staff that speak their language or have a need for such assistance.

The remaining participants in the research nominated the following issues.

Quantity and quality of language materials

There are not many books in my language. Also the books are too old and boring.

The research found that whilst the availability and range of multilingual resources was seen as a positive aspect of public libraries, the quality and size of the collections was identified as one of the major issues within public libraries. Whilst the research found participants are happy with the existence of multilingual resources, these same resources are on the whole considered of dubious quality, out-of date and under-represented.

One participant spoke about his concern with damaged resources and the vandalism that occurs stating, *At times you find pages ripped out of books or recipes ripped out of magazines or the newspapers disappear.*

I experience much disappointment. I find that other languages (Italian and others) are available but not Turkish. I was after this book called "Life in Australia" for nine years. I couldn't find it. It was never available. I also dislike finding books with missing pages. Its terrible that people can get away with damaging books.

Resources in other languages used by migrants are not available. Catalogues fail to provide easy identification of material with script other than English.

Public libraries not servicing NESB demographic The research found that many participants were unable to access any multilingual resources in their local area, or conversely resources for their language group tended to be located in one or two libraries rather than distributed in line with demographics for that language group. As one participant argued,

The library seems to encourage people with ethnic backgrounds to stay in certain geographical areas if they want to get good access to their ethnic language materials.

At our council library, we have to ask for books and then they arrange the books from State Library. There is no allocation of shelves for Punjabi books. Majority of Punjabi speaking people live around here and there should be a separate section for Punjabi books.

3.3 Primary library activities

The research results found library users accessing multilingual collections in public libraries overwhelmingly nominated borrowing books in their language as their main library activity. Other regular activities included:

- Borrowing other resources such as videos, cassettes, CDs

- Reading language resources such as newspapers and magazines
- Accessing language resources such as bilingual dictionaries
- Using computers, the Internet and printers
- Attending story time with children

3.4 Searching for materials

Browsing shelves

The research found that NESB library users prefer to search for materials by browsing shelves holding materials in their language.

Generally participants argued that the number of resources in their language was insufficient to warrant the use of computer catalogues and it was simply easier to go straight to the shelves. Many participants also noted that they prefer to have a tangible relationship with the materials by handling and reading them. Browsing the shelves enabled them to tap into this facility.

I never go through the computer to look for Chinese resources. It is much easier to pick them up from the shelf. The shelves are clearly labelled with the relevant categories.

I do not use the library catalogue because the Vietnamese collection is too small. I always browse through shelves to look for the materials that I want or are available.

I go to shelves and browse through items. I do not use the library catalogue because I do not read English language.

Use of computer catalogue

The research found that few participants used computer catalogues when searching for materials. A number of factors contribute to this situation. Many of the NESB library users do not know how to use a computer. Many also responded that their level of English

language proficiency is either poor or non-existent and therefore computer catalogues in English script are inaccessible to them. A number of research participants also argued that whilst they had used the computer catalogue in the past, they have found that resources are often incorrectly shelved. The use of

computer catalogues to locate specific items was therefore perceived as having little value.

I used the Russian catalogue with new arrivals. I used it in the beginning, however now it is difficult to use because resources are not kept in order.

I have asked the library if I could have a look at the complete list of resources in the Macedonian language across libraries. This is not available. When I have ordered a specific book it takes too long because if it's on inter-library loan they wouldn't know until it comes back. The catalogue system does not assist me in any way.

The research found that in the process of cataloguing resources, book titles and other details are often translated or spelt incorrectly making it very difficult to access the required resources. For example, Arabic speaking library users expressed a concern that Arabic names are regularly spelled in many different ways when using the Latin alphabet.

Use of staff The research found that those library users with limited English language skills relied heavily on library staff, particularly those who spoke their language. For example, Russian-speaking participants have developed relationships with those libraries in the eastern suburbs of Sydney that have Russian-speaking staff. They consult these staff members about their resource needs and difficulties that arise searching for and locating resources.

However, many library users with a sound English language capacity also relied on staff rather than the computer catalogue to locate resources.

With Russian speaking staff, assistance it is not difficult at all. I do not use the catalogue system because of 2 reasons: limited English and the catalogue is in English and I cannot use a computer.

The staff help me. I do not use the catalogue. They direct me immediately. It's convenient and efficient.

Use of bulk loan collection and inter-library loans

I tell library staff what type of Vietnamese language books, magazines and videotapes I want. They arrange for these materials to be brought to Rockdale library for me.

Few references were made to the State Library of NSW bulk loan collections or inter-library loans². Participants seemed to be unaware that such services exist or did not articulate their knowledge of this service during the research process. Some participants mentioned making requests for general materials through library staff and then receiving items from other locations. The exception to this finding was the Punjabi language group that were reliant on the State Library of NSW bulk loan collections. Specific comments relating to this language group concerning the bulk loan collection can be found in the following attached Punjabi report (Section 6.6).

Difficulties

Language barriers were regularly raised as an issue for NESB library users. Staff that speak community languages make it easier to access library resources. Many of the participants across all language groups suggested catalogues of material available in different languages would make searching for books much easier, although this does not address the difficulties participants have when using computers.

The research found that another common difficulty facing NESB library users concerned incorrectly shelved resources.

Sometimes when I search through the shelves, the order of the books are mixed up. It is hard to locate titles or the author. This is may be the users who mess up things not the staff.

3.5 Staff assistance

The research results suggest that an overwhelming majority of NESB library users are very happy with all library staff. Library staff are perceived as committed, accessible and concerned about the needs of library users. While participants felt

² Bulk loans consist of a selection of 20 books that are lent to public libraries for three months on a non-renewable basis. Books and Talking books are selected according to general instructions received from the public library or a specific selection of authors and titles requested by the public library on behalf of its clients. The State library has 41 languages and approximately 65,000 items, all accessible through the website catalogue. The public access catalogue will show "in use" if the book is out on loan.

that staff are very helpful and there were very few negative experiences, lack of confidence in approaching staff for help appeared to be a significant barrier within some language groups such as Macedonian, Turkish and Vietnamese. Participants argued that NESB library users are reluctant to approach staff for fear of looking inadequate or stupid.

Generally, library staff were viewed as obliging and available. As one library user suggested, *They are very helpful. I cannot think of any time that I did not receive help.*

Library staff are very helpful. I often get help from the Chinese speaking staff though I do not speak any Chinese.

Bilingual staff The research found that staff that did speak a local community language are highly utilised and desired by NESB library users. Those language groups that had access to library staff in their language had a more positive experience of public libraries, since any difficulties faced through language barriers, such as communicating needs or wants, and searching and ordering materials, were erased by the assistance of bilingual library staff. Those library users that do not have access to library staff in their language reiterated throughout the research how essential such a service is for their community. Bilingual staff were viewed as being able to increase the appeal and relevance of public libraries to their communities.

Staff are very helpful. Their assistance is excellent especially from Russian speaking staff.

Staff are extremely helpful. One day the Turkish speaking staff was not at the front desk and they called him out from his lunchbreak to help me. That was amazing. I was so apologetic when I heard that. They go out of their way to help.

There is a lack of Vietnamese speaking staff to effectively communicate and/or ask for help to search for Vietnamese language books and magazines.

3.6 Multicultural resources

Overall participants were concerned with improving the multicultural collection through widening the range and number of resources in-language. For example over half of the Korean participants commented that few Korean community members are using the services available at public libraries because *they believe that there is not a great variety of books available and that those that are available are too old.*

Knowledge of resources All participants were aware of at least some of the multicultural resources available in their language. The most commonly cited resources in-language were books, newspapers and magazines.

A large number of the research participants were also aware of videos, CDs and cassettes in their language.

Existing resources *Marrickville has fantastic resources and materials. It's a joy to go there! I really like it, there's nothing I dislike. There's contemporary and old, historical, fiction and non-fiction.*

Other libraries have poor collections or no Greek at all. They should rectify this.

The above comment from a Greek library user is not, however, representative of the diverse language groups and their opinions concerning existing multicultural resources. Overall the research found that one of the most significant issues for NESB library users was the concern regarding limited resources in their language. The research results suggest that most of the language groups consulted during the research were unhappy with existing resources in their language. This needs to be weighed against NESB library users' initial gratitude that resources in their language exist and are easily available. However, when asked to comment specifically about the multicultural collections, the research revealed collections are generally considered inadequate in size, of dubious quality and often damaged and out-of date, over-represent some materials, often present one political ideology and do not always mirror the needs and interests of the specific language community.

As one library user argued,

The collection is poor and needs many additions. I should be able to find newspapers (at least the ones printed in Sydney) or magazines, or books that are actual and relevant.

I think the existing Vietnamese language collection at the library is too small. I do not dislike anything in the collection. I particularly like the non-fiction books and reference books and magazines such as Chuyen Luan, Dep and Kien Thuc Ngay Nay.

Some books are very old, more contemporary writers could be added to the collection.

Existing resources are almost negligible. I would like more books so that we can make our kids learn our own language.

The books seem to belong to one ideology (political). There needs to be more variety.

Over-represented resources

The research found that there are some materials over-represented in some language groups. Please see individual language group reports for more details on resources over-represented.

Preferred resources

The research has found that NESB library users have clear ideas concerning the types of resources they would like to see represented within public libraries in their language. Increasing the number and range of language materials was considered of paramount importance. Generally, novels were perceived as over-represented while the majority of library users would like an increase in the number of non-fiction materials including reference materials, bilingual dictionaries, and political, historical and geographical texts. A number of participants mentioned large print books in-language for older NESB library users as well as audio-visual materials to cater for those with own language literacy issues. Increasing the range and variety of video materials to include documentary materials and factual issues was also considered important. The research found that a consistent theme throughout all language groups concerned the need for ESL materials.

The collection is not too bad but needs some improvement. The collection is a bit old and battered. I'm not sure who decides what comes here. It is necessary to bring books that are educational for the

community to improve their skills and knowledge. We need more up-to-date material, more children's books.

The novels are plenty but there are not enough reference books. The resources could be improved by purchasing more recent titles.

Audio books in Spanish for illiterate members of our community. There are too many romance novels.

The research results suggest that NESB library users would like to see more contemporary materials, particularly materials published in their home country or country of birth.

The library should purchase more Vietnamese language books, magazines and videotapes, preferably new or recently published items from Vietnam.

The library needs to buy recent Punjabi (Guimukhi script) publications. The library can have copies of locally published Punjabi language resources at public libraries to pave the development of the Punjabi language.

3.7 Access to multicultural resources

3.7.1 Issues

The research found that NESB library users face a range of issues regarding access to multicultural resources. Most participants in the various language groups agreed that the services and multicultural collections were not well publicised and therefore a substantial section of the NESB community was unaware of the in-language resources offered in the local libraries. Beyond the issue of awareness of multicultural library services a number of participants argued that it was also important to extend or change library opening times to suit a broader cross-section of the community, specifically people who are employed full-time.

The following are some other major issues concerning access to multicultural resources.

Communication/ language issues The major difficulty facing many of the sample people when using public library facilities is language. Indeed language barriers and an inability to communicate needs to library staff were major barriers in accessing multicultural services for NESB library users. In the first instance poor English language proficiency as well as illiteracy in own language was a major contributing factor in overall awareness of library services in-language. The research found that promotional material in-language, when produced, is limited to the library space. It was argued that potential NESB users might be prevented from joining libraries if they perceive support in their language does not exist, eg bilingual staff, signage in language, brochures explaining how the library works.

The research results suggest that in general, library users are not aware of signage in-language or do not know that promotional material in their language exists. Pamphlets and signage within the library were considered vital components for directing people to relevant resources and communicating information about borrowing and collections. Similarly many participants do not access the computer catalogue or use computers because of their limited English proficiency.

There are no multilingual brochures and no one speaking Macedonian. I have brought my elderly parents and helped them, as they would not be able to manage by themselves without any assistance.

Not being able to speak English can make using library services difficult, particularly for the elderly. Providing information in Spanish on how to use library facilities.

People are not always aware of what exists and the promotion of what is available is not very good. We need more information in Spanish and a campaign to encourage people to use the libraries.

Limited resources The research found that language collections are perceived as limited and this acts as a disincentive for many library users and potential library users. It was argued that library users have exhausted current language materials or consider many of the materials inappropriate for their needs. The research results would suggest that in some

instances there is little incentive for NESB users to continue to access multicultural library services/materials.

The Vietnamese language collection is too small. Materials (Vietnamese titles) are not placed in order on shelves. Having Vietnamese speaking staff is not as important as improving the volume of Vietnamese materials in the collection.

The language collection is not large enough to respond to the needs of patrons in the Local Government Areas.

Relevance The research found that there is a perception amongst library users that public libraries should fulfil the language material needs of the diverse language communities. However some participants argued that local public libraries should not be expected to stock extensive and diverse collections and that people who want such resources should access the State or university libraries. The research results suggest that some language groups held particular cultural and class assumptions (from home country experiences) about libraries that precluded them from visiting or acknowledging the relevance of public libraries within the community.

Some language groups view libraries as particularly relevant and necessary to their language community. For example Turkish participants argued that people from their community like to use library services and that this was increasing over time. They argued that the longer the Turkish community is present in Australia the more the community becomes sensitive towards and interested in their own culture. Over time there is an increased need to fulfil a desire to learn about themselves and their cultural identity and this is assisted by reading, culture and the arts. Although some have learnt English here, the majority still want to keep in touch with their language and maintain knowledge about Turkish literature.

People of lower educational background tend not to visit libraries.

There is a lack of awareness of what is available and people are not going to use local libraries, as they may not have existed in home country.

I think some of our people do not have an interest in reading. They are not attracted to the library and say it is boring.

Different resources attract different target groups eg elderly likes newspaper and traditional novels, teenagers like cartoon stories.

Opening hours The research found that an underlying issue across all language groups concerned the current opening hours of local libraries. Most considered that public libraries should have more flexible hours of opening, and should act to meet the needs of people who work full-time by opening in the evening and on weekends.

3.7.2 Enhancing access

The research results suggest public libraries should have appropriate signage in-language as well as bilingual staff to greatly enhance their NESB clients' access to library resources and services.

Marrickville has Greek speaking staff but not on a daily basis. Other libraries don't have such assistance. I've seen notices informing us (in Greek) of new resources from Greece. It's a good idea because then you can have a look at what has newly arrived.

Knowledge of how to use the library is not available and people find it difficult and so stay away. Bilingual staff are needed to assist people maybe once a week/month to physically show them how to do it.

3.8 Quality of the collections

The quality of the material offered by public libraries in-language was considered of paramount importance. Maintaining the quality of multicultural collections over time was also an issue that users felt that libraries should strive to achieve. Damaged books should be taken off the shelves. There should be a range of signs in-language asking people not to damage books and informing them of fines if materials are damaged or lost.

The research found that the quality of the collections in languages other than English, with regards to size, variety and relevance of the collection tended to be library specific. For example, the Greek collection at Marrickville library was highly regarded by most of the Greek participants in the research. As well, these library users also felt supported by Greek speaking staff within the library. However, some public libraries with growing populations of particular language groups do not yet service those language groups eg. the Vietnamese community in the St George area. This points to the need for public libraries to regularly assess the demographics of their area in relation to language groups, and respond to these needs as they change over time.

The research also found that responses to current multicultural resources were user dependent and often language dependent. The research revealed that there are substantial differences between language groups in terms of own language literacy, which impacts on the range and type of materials desired and used. Some language groups surveyed, such as Russian and Chinese consider themselves “big in-language readers” and therefore utilise multicultural collections with a greater frequency than other language groups. However, as previously mentioned, all language groups expressed a need for more and varied resource allocation.

3.9 Library activities - known and suggested

The research found that there is a good general awareness of materials and services in-language amongst NESB library users. Most participants were aware of the range of materials available in the local libraries but little reference was made to the State Library of NSW box book collection or interlibrary loans system.

A few participants were aware of library services such as English language classes, outreach services and children’s story time. Most were not able to nominate library services beyond standard borrowing and reference collections.

3.10 Suggested improvements

We need cultural liaison officers within libraries to consult with all NESB groups and promote library services and ask members of the community to donate books to the library. Expand mobile library to include visits to centres such as the Macedonian Welfare Centre. Good quality video collection would be very, very popular for both young and old. Topics covered would be, tourism promotion, material on Macedonia, art & architecture, dance and national costume, archaeology, geography, history etc.

Quality and quantity of multicultural collections

Public libraries need to increase the number of resources available as well as the variety or range of these resources. There is a strong need for contemporary literature from their home country/country of birth. Across all language groups it was suggested that public libraries should go directly to the source and access books through catalogues and/or publishers overseas. Another suggestion that emerged from the research was the need to update and improve current multicultural collections.

Another of the common themes to emerge was the need to set up regular and ongoing consultations or evaluations with NESB library users about their needs. Participants argued this would be an effective way to find out what users want to read. Moreover, it would have the added bonus of improving community–library relations and act as a promotional venture for the libraries.

Many participants suggested a system of inter-library exchanges of whole collections between libraries that hold same language collections. This was seen as a cost and time effective way of increasing resources and would open up communication channels between libraries.

**Staff training/
cultural
awareness** *Getting more staff from different language backgrounds and also more multilingual staff. Prepare a simple list of material available in a particular language and put it on a board.*

The research found that there is a great need for bilingual or indeed multilingual staff. At the moment NESB library users rely heavily on staff in general and more heavily on staff that speak their language, to access resources and convey their needs in relation to services and materials. Cultural awareness activities and staff training needs to be implemented since it is not possible to provide all language groups with access to in-language library staff.

**Access
issues** As mentioned previously, the research results suggest that a range of tools and services could be implemented to increase access for NESB library users. These include in-language signage, library tours and workshops on how to use the computer catalogue system.

There has been a group organised to study to use computers (in English). It would be good to organise a group for Russian readers in Russian to study to use the computers (or the Internet and catalogue) as well.

**English
language
classes** Some of the participants were aware that English language classes are conducted through some public libraries and many others argued that this would be a valuable community service.

**Donations and
volunteering** Increasing opportunities for people from NESB backgrounds to volunteer their language skills within public libraries, as well as promoting or making available the means through which people can donate language materials was a popular suggestion across all language groups.

They can involve Punjabi community to generate resources for future collections. There are lots of Punjabi associations that can help in that. Being President of Punjabi Study Circle I am willing to help develop the Punjabi section.

3.11 Promotion

Firstly they need to improve their collection with things that are popular. Then advertise widely to the community so that they are aware and can use it. In fact, they should ask people on a regular basis their opinions about what they like to see in the library.

The research found that NESB library users want public libraries to improve the promotion of their services and their multicultural collections not only to NESB users of library resources but also to potential users within NESB communities. Most of the participants had not seen any promotional material.

The most common response to the question of how to promote public libraries and multicultural collections was to use ethnic media, particularly radio. This was not consistent across the research as some of the Chinese sample felt that libraries did not need to do further promotion since most Chinese community members were aware of library resources and particularly which libraries had extensive Chinese collections.

There were many suggestions on how to effectively promote to NESB communities including:

- Advertising in ethnic media since ethnic media acts as a community access point and provides information on the needs of specific ethnic communities
- Involving ethnic organisations in public library activities and using these organisations as a conduit for promotional public library activities
- Improving and increasing the dissemination of promotional materials beyond the library environment

Participants also argued that it is vital to impart information about public libraries to ethnic community organisations, which act as access points for their language communities.

Libraries may approach community resources centres and promote their resources and activities, organise or participate in community festivals.

3.12 The future for multicultural resources in public libraries

Libraries should make a list of different language speaking clients. They should instigate Multicultural Days involving the community and receive suggestions for the purchase of new material. The multicultural section should be more visible when you enter the library. New arrival book jackets should be on display. They need to collect feedback and should be advertising more widely.

As the above comment illustrates NESB library users want to see public libraries play a greater role in the local community and increase the relevance of public libraries to their respective communities. Suggested ways for achieving this include the following:

- Multicultural Days that could promote multicultural resources and services
- Community language volunteers

Community members should have some representative or voluntary helpers in the library so that people who have language problems will feel more comfortable in going to the library. These members can look after the needs of the community, organise some activities in the library and promote cultural heritage of India. I think if the library invites people many will be ready to offer voluntary services, which will benefit the community as a whole.

- English language classes
- Book promotions and launches in-language
- Mobile library service that regularly visits ethnic specific organisations
- Internet and computer classes in-language
- Educational workshops
- Toy Library
- Reading groups in-language

Results from library staff survey

The Library can be a bridge to help more and more NESB people get involved in community events and enjoy their social life in Australia. Libraries are also a place where people can know each other and help each other to create community harmony. Therefore public libraries need more support from government, more support from our clients, no matter what their cultural and language backgrounds. All people including NESB people have some freedom to access this public service and information. The more effort we provide the more benefits the whole society will receive.

The research also harnessed the views of library staff, specifically those involved in multicultural collections, to add a broader perspective to the research results. Library staff involved in multicultural collections are in an ideal position to comment on the needs of people from non-English speaking backgrounds accessing their library services, to identify where and how those needs are not being met, and to make comments on how multicultural services might be improved. The survey was not limited to those libraries with identified multicultural workers, but was sent via email to all libraries throughout NSW.

A short, self-completion questionnaire was sent to libraries for the relevant staff to complete. The survey was confidential. Forty completed surveys were returned. Although this response rate is less than 50% of NSW libraries, responses were received from all metropolitan library services. Country libraries with significant multicultural populations are also represented in the response.

4.1 Difficulties using library services

Library staff were asked to comment about their perceptions of the major difficulties encountered by people of NESB backgrounds using library services. Not surprisingly barriers associated with language were the most commonly cited responses. Associated with this was a lack of awareness of the range and extent of library services, particularly the libraries' multicultural collections. The following section details the range of difficulties expressed by library staff.

4.1.1 Communication issues

Communication was the most common barrier cited and this was most often associated with English-language difficulties.

Language barriers The poor English language proficiency of many library users, and associated communication problems, was perceived by staff as impacting on a NESB user's ability to join the library, renew books, ask for help generally and understand the rules and procedures of the library. Complex enquiries were seen as especially difficult to provide assistance with.

Many library staff felt that lack of English language skills may be very inhibiting if the library is not seen as a friendly place to visit and comments about shyness and lack of confidence were made in association with poor English-language proficiency. Library jargon and the use of colloquial terms, was seen to add to the problem. One staff member felt that terms like 'audiovisual' and 'periodical' were not widely used in many languages and therefore difficult to explain or translate.

Lack of in-language signage is discussed below. Some staff members expressed concerns that some NESB users who use different alphabets or numerical systems have greater difficulty in understanding both library signage and the ways in which our collections are arranged.

Lack of appropriate signage Many staff felt that the lack of in-language signage within public libraries was a significant barrier to NESB people's use of library services. The lack of in-language brochures advertising multicultural collections and 'how to guides' is considered a significant problem.

Lack of bilingual staff Communicating with English-speaking staff is often a problem. *Sometimes it is difficult for English speaking staff to understand the exact nature of more complex enquiries.*

Literacy issues A few library staff also mentioned a lack of first language literacy as an impediment for people from NESB backgrounds in using

library services.

4.1.2 Lack of awareness of services

The next significant difficulty identified, again largely linked to language, was a perception that many NESB library users were not aware of the range and extent of library services available. This perceived lack of awareness ranged from people not knowing of the existence of a local library, a lack of understanding of libraries in a western context and library culture (eg. how to use the library, how to care for library items) to being unaware of the extent of resources available to them in languages other than English.

Some staff also felt that many potential NESB library users were unaware that the service was free and available to everyone.

Catalogue The State Library of NSW catalogue system was subject to much criticism. Many felt that it was not user-friendly, particularly for people who did not speak English well. A few felt that it should be available in the language of choice of the user.

The Catalogue of the State Library is a nightmare. You need to be a cataloguer to guess the subjects to find a book. Books in languages other than English should be able to be displayed by language so people can browse the collection.

The State Library should have access to CJK catalogue. This is a database developed by the National Library of Australia. The good thing about it is that this database is able to display Korean, Japanese and Chinese in the actual language script.

Some felt that many people who speak languages other than English were intimidated and lacked the technological skills required for using the libraries' catalogue systems.

Technology is changing everyday; OPAC cataloguing may be too difficult for users to handle.

OPAC Cataloguing / Internet access cataloguing are input in Roman format, items in non-Roman script are not so easy for users to retrieve.

4.1.3 Limited resources

A few participants felt that there was poor range of materials within collections for NESB library users.

The resources are limited. For example videos, not everyone can pay to rent a video, I don't think the people who live in rural areas have access to these kinds of materials easily. Music has the same problems.

4.1.4 Marketing

It was clear from staff members' responses that public libraries were perceived as not doing enough to target NESB communities. Lack of bilingual signage (both internal and external) and brochures promoting how to use the library and the extent and nature of library resources available were the most commonly cited issues related to this.

4.1.5 Transport

A couple of staff members raised lack of available transport as a barrier to accessing library services.

4.2 Reasons for non-use of library services

Library staff were asked to make an assessment whether there were many people in the NESB community who do not use library services, and to consider the main reasons for their non-use of library services.

Virtually all respondents acknowledged that there was a level of non-use of library services. A range of reasons were cited. These are presented below, in approximate order of the number of times they were mentioned.

Lack of awareness of library services

As with the previous section, which related to the difficulties NESB users faced in using library services, lack of awareness of the services offered by public libraries was considered the most fundamental barrier to members of the various NESB communities accessing library services. In relation to this people discussed the need for greater advertising and promotion to NESB communities, as there was a feeling that many

people were not only unaware of where their local library is, but also that it even existed.

They don't know library services exist, and the people that I am talking about have been in this country for more than 20 years.

There are many people in the community who do not use the service, because they do not realise that we can order books in their first language from the State Library. Those that do use the State Library service are very satisfied with it. Again, poor spoken English is a barrier.

Many members of NESB communities are not aware that we do have a multicultural collection. I often ask them, if they'd like to borrow other languages, reply is usually 'not aware you have one'.

I tend to believe that if the person is interested in reading and they are aware that the local library a) has material in their language of birth or b) can acquire these resources then they will utilise the library service.

More advertising would help. Unfortunately we also need more space if we want to offer a variety of languages and money is a problem as far as purchasing books in other languages.

Several staff members also commented that there was a general lack of understanding that NSW public libraries offer a free service and that it is open to everyone.

Language Not surprisingly language barriers were also seen as a major impediment to people using the library. This related to both a perceived lack of understanding of the existence of multilingual collections and resources within libraries as well as lack of confidence in actually approaching the library itself.

Confidence/intimidation Several staff members felt that many people from various NESB communities were likely to feel intimidated about accessing the library.

There may be people out there with English as a second language who do not use the library. Lack of confidence because of their lack of English could hinder people with a NESB background from asking questions at their local library

The perceived lack of confidence in using library services was not only attributed to language barriers. Other reasons cited that contributed to people feeling intimidated by the library service included:

- Lack of education
- Libraries are mainstream institutions, and therefore some people assume that it is 'not for them'
- Fears about new experiences, as the library can be an unfamiliar place for some NESB community members that have no previous experience of public libraries
- Lack of understanding of some terms commonly associated with libraries.

Relevance Several staff members questioned the relevance of reading in some communities compared with others.

In some communities many people do not use library services because of cultural, religious or language barriers and alienation from the mainstream population.

Some cultures are less familiar with the concept of libraries and therefore are less likely to go looking for their nearest library when they settle in Australia.

Literacy Similarly, low levels of literacy in both English and home country language were seen as a barrier for some people from NESB communities in accessing public libraries. Many library staff felt that this was exacerbated by the fact that many people were unaware of library services and resources beyond books and magazines, e.g. audiovisual collections.

Our emphasis on the printed word [is a barrier] when there may be low literacy in a particular group. We do not go out into the community enough to find out what people want. Videos and sound recordings may be an alternative for some groups. Certainly these have been difficult to acquire in the past but this situation is improving. Of course the cost is usually a big issue for most libraries.

Some migrant groups have low literacy rates (even in their own language) and are consequently more likely to want audiovisual resources. Libraries, however, are still very strongly associated with books and these people may not necessarily think the Library could help in this regard. Referral bodies may also not make this connection.

Other Other comments relating to perceived reasons why people from various NESB communities might not access NSW public libraries include:

- A lack of awareness of the broad services offered by a library

Some people would not normally seek out a library, may be uncomfortable with that and unaware that a library is not only books but also an information source – a social aid. Other social agencies should include local library in list of aids to assimilation for new arrivals

- The range of resources is too narrow

It is not financially feasible to purchase collections in every language spoken within our Council. Our library has therefore used the Census to determine the most widely spoken community languages and concentrated on these. However, these collections are still comparatively small and quickly read-out. The material from the State Library while helpful in supplementing our collections varies in quality and is not of interest to all readers, eg pregnancy books. Perhaps more sharing of resources among public libraries.

- Atmosphere

The library environment is totally boring. Libraries should make the space more friendly and beautiful, make you feel at home, most of them look like classrooms, and the colours are brown and white.

Language barriers, which leads to cultural and personal isolation. Language is a barrier that hinders their inquisitive nature to come inside the doors. Signage plays an important part.

- Lack of training in customer service and training issues

Libraries as community spaces are in an excellent position to help the elderly and lonely people. Library staff need more training in customer service and social issues.

4.3 Suggested improvements to library services

It depends on the library service and their community profile, but regardless all libraries need to identify the various cultural/ethnic groups residing in their community, identify their needs, promote relevant services to these groups, provide appropriate literature in relevant languages and staff training to ensure that staff are aware of the difficulties faced by people for whom English is their second language and how best to navigate communication issues.

Staff members were very forthcoming with suggested improvements to library services that would benefit existing and potential NESB library users.

4.3.1 Raising awareness of multicultural library services

It was strongly suggested by the majority of staff members that libraries need to work a lot harder to promote libraries, library services and in particular libraries' multicultural services to NESB users.

The fact that any language and most genres can be requested from the State Library should be promoted.

There was a feeling that libraries had to be more strategic in their targeting approach. Promotion and marketing was suggested in a variety of forms.

- **Own-language media.** There was a feeling that the libraries would benefit from promoting their resources, services and upcoming events/courses (particularly those specifically targeting NESB communities) through own-language radio and newspapers. Particular messages that could be promoted include the fact that libraries are free and open to everyone, and where appropriate the existence of bilingual staff.
- **Community groups and meeting places.** Many staff acknowledged the importance of ethnic-specific community organisations in support and information delivery to NESB communities. It was felt by many staff that library services could be promoted through these organisations, as well as churches, clubs and shopping areas.
- **Multilingual brochures.** There was a strong feeling expressed that library services need to be promoted in-language. Multilingual brochures were the most commonly suggested medium for presenting this in-language information.
- **Internet sites.** The Victorian Public Libraries website suggested by a few staff members as a good model for promoting public libraries over the Internet.
- **Pre/post arrival promotion.** A few people felt that libraries should be more active in promoting their services to people immediately prior and post migration. Many felt that there were members of NESB communities that did not know that public libraries existed and the types of services they provided.
- **Direct mail.** It was suggested that in areas where there are high concentrations of NESB residents (e.g. Vietnamese in Cabramatta) there are opportunities for multilingual mail drops promoting local libraries' resources and services.
- **New collections.** Some felt their libraries had much to benefit in promoting new collections to keep people up-to-date with what the library has to offer.

My library has just introduced two new collections of books in other languages and they have attracted many new patrons but we do need to publicise this more and also the State Library service.

- **Word-of-mouth.** Some staff members felt that the power of word-of-mouth referral cannot be under-estimated in some NESB communities and that this represented clear opportunities for some libraries.

We find the 'cultural grape-vine' has helped us extend services to the Chinese community in particular. We always include a 'spiel' on LOTE resources when enrolling LOTE patrons.

4.3.2 Improvements to multicultural collections

Access to different collections is important and highly valued by our community.

Many staff members felt that there was room for significant improvements to existing multicultural collections. Some of these suggestions included:

- **Resource sharing.** Clear opportunities were identified for resource sharing among libraries in relation to multicultural collections. Rotating collections was suggested as a way of ensuring the collections remain current and provide variety. Resource sharing opportunities were also seen in promotion and marketing activities through the development of signage and a multilingual glossary of terms, for example.
- **Better/wider range of multicultural collections.** It was noted that multicultural collections were often limited in their scope and that this could be improved, although it was acknowledged that smaller libraries have limited budgets.
- **State Library of NSW to overhaul some of its collection.** A few staff members felt that it was time for the State Library to overhaul its collection, as many resources were starting to look 'tired' and 'dirty'.
- **Book lists in languages other than English.** A few people suggested the development of booklists in languages other than English.

- **More non-book collections.** There were suggestions that there should be more emphasis placed on developing libraries' non-book multicultural collections, particularly audiovisual resources. This related to an earlier comment about the different cultural emphasis placed on reading in some NESB communities.
- **Community education and seminars.** Community education and seminars held in-language were seen as an excellent opportunity to better target and meet the needs of existing and potential NESB library users. English classes, book appreciation clubs and story-telling sessions conducted in-language were all suggested.
- **Community language directories.** It was suggested that community language directories needed to be kept up-to-date.
- **Never charge for requests from the State Library's multicultural collection**

A few library staff suggested that some libraries were charging members a fee for requesting items from the State Library's multicultural collection, and that this was inappropriate.

It should be consistent in the charges, some libraries charge if you request a book in LOTE even when they have nothing to offer. I think this is against access and equity; people have to accept what comes in the bulk loans from the State Library. The State Library does not charge public libraries.

Charges for specific LOTE titles should never be treated as an inter-library loan.

4.3.3 Outreach services

Obvious opportunities were seen by many staff members for libraries to improve their outreach services.

More outreach into the community. There are of course some notable libraries who do this but I feel that in the main multicultural services are considered a luxury which can be cut out if necessary for budgetary reasons.

Many staff members felt that there were also possibilities for libraries to work with other services that provide education and support to the NESB communities, e.g. Centrelink, Schools, Adult Migrant English School, Churches, Migrant Resource Centres, etc. The need for more direct and better lines of communication with other community organisations was identified, as well as resource sharing. One suggestion related to the driving skills test:

One of the most popular requests we receive from our NESB patrons is for access to the RTA Internet site. In particular, they ask for the demonstration questions in their particular language. The RTA is still working on developing the multilingual part of this, but when this is completed it would entice a lot of NESB people into the library.

4.3.4 Signage

Multilingual signage was also suggested as a way of making the library environment more attractive. This was also viewed as an opportunity for resources sharing.

The State Library should co-ordinate a non-English signage programme and develop a website similar to the Victorian LOTE website and provide guidance for community language interfaces. Signs are expensive to order. Surely every library needs similar signs. Why can't this be done co-operatively?

Sutherland Library has made a big effort to letter drop Chinese/Arabic resource info. Each branch has signage in several major LOTE communities telling of availability of resources.

4.3.5 How to use the library

Many staff members felt that service to NESB library users would be greatly improved if there was information available in languages other than English that outlined basic information about how to use the library. Suggestions included the following:

- List of common questions and their answers provided in-language.
- Glossary of common library terms used by library staff, translated and printed for staff and users.

- In-language library introduction/orientation tours
- Set out parameters for what is required in using the library – noise, orderliness, overdue book procedures, etc.
- Many staff felt that better instruction was required on how to use the library catalogue, and that there was a need for the on-line catalogue to be available in languages other than English.

4.3.6 Staff training / cultural awareness

Some staff members argued that better and more comprehensive staff training would improve the level of service provided to NESB library users.

Cultural awareness is required so that staff can recognise LOTE community members and assist library users with patience.

It was also felt that information and suggestions were needed about how staff might handle situations where they are confronted with languages they do not understand.

There was also a need expressed for libraries to employ more bilingual staff reflecting the demographic profile of the area. In the absence of bilingual staff the following was suggested:

My library does not have bilingual staff so I am planning to try to involve different groups [in the community] to conduct multicultural storytelling for children (and maybe adults) in the library.

Develop a list of Council/library staff that can speak different languages and willing to help to spend maximum 5 to 10 minutes as the interpreters.

4.3.7 Welcoming and safe environment

A few library staff expressed a belief that the environment in some libraries is forbidding and unwelcoming and that many people are not aware of what goes on inside the doors.

Make the library an interesting, vibrant place to visit. I feel that too many libraries are forbidding places and that too many staff have attitudes more suited to the 1950s! Also, I can't say often enough that we need to be out

in the community working on developing a higher profile. Most people in the community have no real idea of the facilities and services we can offer. LOTE customers are further disadvantaged of course by the language barrier.

4.3.8 English conversation classes

English language classes run within the library were seen by many staff members as a way of both providing a necessary community service, but also introducing the library to NESB users.

The number of migrant classes coming on excursions to the Library has noticeably declined since government funding for these classes declined. These classes were a good opportunity to point out the types of Library resources that would help new migrants settle into the community. The fact that they now knew a friendly face at the Library meant they were also more likely to revisit the library on their own.

4.3.9 Budget

It was commonly suggested that the budgets allocated to developing multicultural collections were inadequate, particularly in areas where the proportion of people speaking a language other than English was very high.

I'm aware that more funds are not always the complete answer. However, having said that, I feel strongly that LOTE collections are not given the budgetary considerations they deserve. There is much statistical information available about relevant populations to enable libraries to plan their services appropriately. There are community groups that would undoubtedly welcome some indication that the library service was interested in what their members wanted. If a tight budget is inevitable then careful purchasing is necessary. The proposed cooperative cataloguing venture interests me particularly.

4.3.10 Other

Other (less frequently mentioned) suggestions included:

- Make browsing collections more effective

Make the browsing collections more effective, weed the collection, some of them look brown and dirty. Do not create a false environment by having on the shelves books that nobody is interested in reading. People are sending the wrong message to their council saying we have many resources here when nobody is interested in what is on the shelves.

- Access to multicultural collections would be enhanced if they were moved to more prominent positions within libraries
- Promote the benefits of being multilingual rather than focussing on the barriers
- Explore whether the hours of opening are both convenient and long enough to existing and potential NESB users
- More accessible services, i.e. more self-service where procedures are simple, easy to follow and supported by signage
- Development of events and activities specifically for NESB populations
- Raise the profile of the library with Council in order to attract more funding
- Have a 'have your say' feedback form available in different languages to get feedback from NESB library users
- Provide technology such as word processing in other languages
- Obtain and display a calendar of festivals and national days of the various countries for both the staff and library users
- Libraries should have an awareness campaign with the local primary school
- Continued consultation with the community, so future plans can be organised based on facts and direct consultation with the community.

Benchmarks

Once the research was complete the research results were categorised against a five-point scale based on responses to each of the discussion areas. Such a five-point scale was chosen to provide a high level of sensitivity so that behavioural changes could be measured. The benchmarks were not designed to provide numerically significant data given the qualitative nature of the research. They have been numerated to the extent that they can be revisited to identify any perceivable, indicative changes that may have occurred.

The benchmark categories move from “5” which is the best possible practice for public libraries in relation to multicultural services and collections to “1” which is representative of poor practice.

It should be noted that the benchmarks that follow in Table 1 are provided as an indicative measure against which individual libraries can identify present knowledge, skills and resources as well as any changes to these in the future.

The types of results and the discrete areas relevant to public libraries in NSW have determined that a number of areas are relevant to benchmarking. These are:

1. Planning for library services relevant to NESB clients
2. Organisational capacity to develop and deliver multicultural services/collections
3. Quality of multicultural services/collections
4. Promotions and delivery
5. Evaluation

Table 1:

	Benchmark 1 Planning for Relevant Library Services	Benchmark 2 Organisational capacity to develop and deliver Service/Collections	Benchmark 3 Quality of Service/Collections	Benchmark 4 Promotions and Delivery	Benchmark 5 Evaluation	OUTCOME
Best Practice 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms exist which allow participation of diverse community representatives to identify their library service needs, wants and preferences. Comprehensive community data is used to inform library service planning. Data covering key demographic considerations such as English language proficiency (ELP), family size, recency of arrival, immigration category and age. Comprehensive library planning mechanisms exist which are inclusive of diversity issues and which allocate appropriate staffing, resourcing and planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multicultural policy exists and is integrated into the overall library policy structure. Multicultural skills sets are identified as part of overall service delivery planning. This is then reflected in position description and recruitment procedures. Staff have the skills and capacity to develop and implement services for a NESB client base, which is developed through training, performance appraisal and organisational support. Resource allocation for multilingual library collections and services exists to meet NESB client needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive range of up-to-date materials that reflect community profiles. Services reflect community profiles and responds to needs identified in community consultations. Collections easily accessed by NESB library users eg. bilingual staff, cataloguing in 1st language and signage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a fully developed multicultural communication strategy which is: - - informed by language targeting and library service relevance - integrated into the overall library or council communications program with a level of resources reflective of multicultural services - matching relevance, message, recipient and using the most appropriate medium. - serviced by staff with appropriate language resources to meet client LOTE needs and provided in a context which meets specific user requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To meet the needs of diverse client groups a range of formal and informal client monitoring mechanisms are in place, the output from which is used to inform the ongoing planning process. Formal audience research is carried out at least biennially to assess the relevant success of libraries in meeting client needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Libraries have fully integrated the multicultural reality of their clientele into ongoing planning and operation. Activities specific to NESB users are clearly identified, measurable and form part of the mainstream activity of the library service. Library performance in this regard is noted as best practice.

	Benchmark 1 Planning for Relevant Library Services	Benchmark 2 Organisational capacity to develop and deliver Service/Collections	Benchmark 3 Quality of Service/Collections	Benchmark 4 Promotions and Delivery	Benchmark 5 Evaluation	OUTCOME
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Libraries utilise consultative activities to inform library services to which NESB are invited. Demographic data is utilised as a planning tool, though the ethnicity data is not integrated with other data. Planning mechanisms exist for library and for multicultural policies, but are not integrated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multicultural policy exists but is not integrated into overall library policy structure. Specific language and cultural skills are identified in position description(s). Multicultural skills training is compulsory but not integrated into other developmental skills training. Resources are identified, monitored and protected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum collection standards are identified for a range of language groups Services are reflective of identified community diversity but implementation is ad hoc and variable. Some degree of in-language cataloguing exists and computer catalogue advice and training is provided for and promoted to NESB clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication decisions and language targeting are based on client group analysis and relevance to multicultural service(s). Non-English communication strategies are developed as part of mainstream communications. They are researched, developed and placed in the most appropriate communication channels. Library undertakes translation of information documents in priority languages Clear staff guidelines exist on a full range of spoken language strategies including the use of the Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) or local government equivalents and the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). Some consideration has been given to the needs of diverse groups such as opening hours and location, service points, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback mechanisms exist and responses are specifically requested from all library users. There is a capacity to access LOTE responses. Comprehensive library user research is undertaken to include NESB participants but is ad hoc and irregular. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Libraries have a well-developed planning program and related promotional activities for NESB audience. These activities do not form part of overall library activities, but are still evaluated by management.

	<u>Benchmark 1</u> Planning for Relevant Library Services	<u>Benchmark 2</u> Organisational capacity to develop and deliver Service/Collections	<u>Benchmark 3</u> Quality of Service/Collections	<u>Benchmark 4</u> Promotions and Delivery	<u>Benchmark 5</u> Evaluation	<u>OUTCOME</u>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultative mechanisms exist based on community nominees or public submission. • Planning mechanisms exist to identify NESB issues but are not clearly linked to resource allocation. • Demographic data is utilised as a planning tool but only through rudimentary ethnicity client population data (eg. language spoken at home only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library policy exists with specific mention of multicultural collection and service which is not detailed. • Language and cultural skills are utilised where they exist but not planned. • Multicultural skills training exists but is not compulsory. • Identified resources are allocated but are not monitored and there is no formal commitment to utilise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of collection varies across language groups, or is limited to a dominant language group. • Services reflect the needs of the dominant language group and not other NESB groups. • Computer catalogue advice and training provided for NESB clients, but not promoted to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of information media is used and based on client research. • Publicity materials are screened and tested for cultural appropriateness prior to placement in ethnic media. • Undertakes translation of information documents in languages based on collected client data. • Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) program or local government equivalent program is fully implemented and reviewed regularly and an interpreting budget is in place and guidelines on interpreter use are circulated. • Reactive development of flexible service delivery such as opening hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback mechanisms exist, which have a capacity to meet LOTE needs and are made available to library users. • Client research is undertaken with provision for English and other main non-English language groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries undertake a range of collections/services planning, promotion and access activities though these operate as adjuncts to mainstream activities. Limited evaluation of these services exist and therefore there is limited capacity to input into ongoing planning.

	<u>Benchmark 1</u> Planning for Relevant Library Services	<u>Benchmark 2</u> Organisational capacity to develop and deliver Service/Collections	<u>Benchmark 3</u> Quality of Service/Collections	<u>Benchmark 4</u> Promotions and Delivery	<u>Benchmark 5</u> Evaluation	<u>OUTCOME</u>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and feedback mechanisms are limited to complaints and service feedback. • Demographic data exists but is not utilised in planning environment. • Formal planning mechanisms exist but only include NESB issues as part of 'special needs' category. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal identification of multicultural policy. • No formal cross-cultural training. • Language and cultural skills used only if necessary and not encouraged • No identified multicultural resource allocation in response to community need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection contains multilingual material though does not match current community profile. • NESB library users are offered mainstream library services • Advice is only provided on request. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No planned multilingual promotions exist. • Ethnic media advertisements in English only. • Translation of information documents in languages not informed by demographic data. • Makes Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) available to staff and list of CLAS recipients circulated, and occasionally uses professional on-site interpreters. • Flexible approaches to service delivery exist but are not used to meet NESB client needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback mechanisms available and promoted only in English. • Some client research is undertaken, but only in English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries allocate some resources to the area of multicultural service provision with focus given to language groups of high number in the area.

	Benchmark 1 Planning for Relevant Library Services	Benchmark 2 Organisational capacity to develop and deliver Service/Collections	Benchmark 3 Quality of Service/Collections	Benchmark 4 Promotions and Delivery	Benchmark 5 Evaluation	OUTCOME
1 Poorest Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No allowance for NESB community involvement. There is limited access to community population data. Planning mechanisms for multicultural services are informal and ad hoc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No multicultural policy exists. No formal cross-cultural training. Staff language and cultural skills are not valued as part of service delivery. No identified resource allocation for NESB needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited range of materials and out-of-date materials. No specific multilingual services offered. No multilingual cataloguing exists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no promotion of multicultural services. There is no advertising in ethnic media. Produces all formal documents in English only. Occasionally and informally uses bilingual staff for client communication, but there is no allowance for Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) or on-site interpreters. Operational aspects are standard with little provision for flexibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback mechanisms available only in English and based on complaints. No library research is undertaken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Libraries undertake a low level of activities relevant to the needs of NESB clients. These tend to be unplanned and ad hoc.

* Community Language Allowance Scheme (CLAS) is an allowance paid to selected NSW public sector employees who have a basic level of competency in a language other than English and who work in locations where their language can be used to assist clients

Appendix 1: Results for individual language groups

6

6.1 Arabic

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall When asked about the best things about libraries in Australia, most identified the availability of this service as a key benefit. This is clearly related to the fact that most participants had no experience of libraries in their home country. Libraries and the services they provide are easy to access. This in part was related to the location of libraries across Sydney. Other points raised included the ability to request resources from other libraries when they are not available in local libraries, and also the availability of computers and printers that were used by some of the participants' children.

Worst things about libraries included the limited number of copies of books, newspapers and magazines and the poor condition of these resources, and the difficulties in using libraries outside your area. Participants were not happy that a card from one library couldn't be used to borrow resources from a different library. They also revealed that membership of libraries outside their residential area often has to be paid for.

All of the participants bar one visited a library at least weekly, with several visiting the library daily or around 3-4 times per week. When asked about the activities they normally do when visiting the library, the activities identified focused on those related to their personal use and those for their children. Accessing library services for their children was an important part of their library experience. Also, it is worth noting that libraries are used for social and community gatherings. Below are the activities identified through the research:

- Meet other people
- Borrow books
- Read the daily papers

- Accompany the children when visiting libraries/being a role model for the children/helping their children with their studies
- Borrow children's books and CDs
- Children use computer and printer
- Attend seminars on subjects like diabetes

Participants used and preferred Arabic resources such as books, CDs, magazines, newspapers, and children's books. These were all available in their local library.

Searching for materials and staff assistance and staff assistance

None of the participants used the catalogue when searching for resources. They either asked staff or went straight to the shelves to look for what they are after. All participants commented that they relied on help from Arabic-speaking staff when they needed assistance or information. Difficulties were experienced because the library catalogue system does not allow for incorrect spelling.

This was a concern because Arabic names can be spelt in many different ways when using the Latin alphabet.

Other difficulties identified related to the shelving and resources. It was felt that all the materials are thrown together without any specific order.

Appeal and access of multicultural resources for the Arabic-speaking community

A range of suggestions were offered to increase the use of multicultural services amongst the Arabic-speaking community.

These included:

- Improve and update the resources
- Employ staff with knowledge about the latest issues regarding books and who are familiar with the works of famous Arabic writers as well as new and upcoming authors
- Remove books that attack religions (this point was the centre of a heated debate)

- Increase the collection of books that teach the children prayers and religious values (mainly Islamic books)
- Have one membership card that can be used in all branches instead of having to acquire many different cards and pay for them
- Stop young people from hugging and kissing

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvements

When asked specifically about the quality of the resources in Arabic, some issues were identified, including:

- The books are old and disorganised
- There are not enough religious books
- Religious (Muslim) books should be shelved separately so that they do not get 'soiled' (i.e. so they are not thrown on the ground or mixed with other materials that are not 'clean')
- Most resources are outdated
- There are not many books by famous Arabic writers and where they do exist there are insufficient copies
- Historic and scientific books are outdated
- There are not enough children's books
- Too many books are a bad translation of books written in other languages
- There are no Egyptian newspaper and magazines

Similarly, when asked about how the multicultural collection could be improved, several suggestions were made:

- Review and update resources regularly
- Employ staff who not only speak Arabic but have a good knowledge of famous Arabic authors
- Provide more scientific and historic books

- Provide more children's books
- Include resources such as videos, CDs, tapes, ESL texts, newspapers, magazines
- Provide other services such as outreach services, children's story-time, and homework centres

It should be noted though that eight participants did state that the Arabic resources are adequate for their needs.

Other suggestions were offered for improving library services overall for the Arabic-speaking community, such as:

- Provide periodic newsletters to inform members about new acquisitions of resources and any other activities provided by the library
- Involve the regular users in organising some activities
- Consult regularly with the community on ways to improve services

Promotion All participants stated that they have seen promotional material about library services, mainly at the front desk, but that they do not use them as they get their information about library services and resources from the staff.

Feedback on possible future multicultural services Four of the participants were aware of activities that the libraries are involved in, including:

- Seminars about medical and literature issues
- Activities involving children (reading and orientation)

They suggested a few activities that libraries could be involved in, such as:

- Competitions in reading, spelling and drawing for children and parents with prizes offered (eg. books).
- Exhibitions of educational value

6.2 Chinese

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall Although some participants occasionally visited libraries in their country of birth, most rarely visited libraries.

When asked to compare their library experiences in their country of birth with those in Australia, the majority of users agreed that the differences between the two systems make it difficult to compare. There were considered fewer libraries available for public access in participants' home countries, such as Hong Kong and China. The libraries that do exist are much larger than those found in Australia and obviously have more Chinese resources. Participants argued that public libraries in Australia are easier to access and it is easier to obtain library cards for borrowing. Libraries in Australia were seen as better staffed with a greater customer service focus.

The participants enjoyed going to the library and using the resources available to them. Participants nominated *good facilities, availability of Chinese resources, Internet access* and *range of organised activities and classes* as the best things about public libraries in NSW. When asked about the worst things about libraries a small number of users could not think of anything, whilst other common responses included:

- Inability to find required resource on shelves/difficult to locate resources
- Resources tend to be old/worn
- No-one chases overdue books
- Limited text books (Chinese, history, culture)

Generally the participants felt that libraries in Australia meet the needs of a variety of people in the population and that they have *good systems* in place and overall are convenient and easy to use.

During their library visits participants mostly borrowed books and used the computer to search for required items. A number of participants also regularly attend story time with their children.

Preferred Chinese language resources include:

- Health related resources
- English language (ESL) resources
- Range of non-fiction including historical and religious
- Classical Chinese texts and novels

Searching for materials and staff assistance

Most of the participants do not use the library catalogue or computers to search for required resources. All preferred browsing the Chinese language resources on the shelves since the collections are small. This was considered the easiest way of becoming familiar with the collection. Around half of the participants did use the computer catalogue occasionally to renew loans.

All participants stated that they have experienced many difficulties searching for library resources. As one library user argued, *the library shelf is not tidy. Too many users put things back in the wrong place.* All users agreed that books and other resources are often misplaced on library shelves.

Appeal of and access to multicultural resources for the community

Participants argued that the main reasons the Chinese community do not access library services centred on limited opening hours, language barriers and a general lack of awareness of the existence of Chinese resources for borrowing.

All participants were aware of information or assistance in their language. However, all stated that they rarely accessed this information/assistance. Information/assistance that participants were aware of included information about Chinese community groups and events located on library noticeboards.

The majority of participants argued library staff provide good assistance. It was always *easy to find them* and staff were always *helpful and polite*. The group agreed

that people from the wider Chinese community use the library facilities and resources as a way of *killing time*.

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvement

Most of the participants advised that they thought the existing Chinese language collections in public libraries were good but limited. A few participants argued that the resources on the whole were out of date, particularly magazines. Tapes seemed to be rarely borrowed.

Suggestions for improvement to the collections focused on increasing the overall number of Chinese language resources and updating the collection. As one participant argued, *resources of any kind are welcome*. A number of library users commented that books on Feng Shui and novels are over-represented.

Participants would like to see more of the following resources:

- More history and religious books
- Chinese text books for junior high
- Translation table of traditional and simplified characters

Promotion

Participants suggested libraries should facilitate a book donation scheme. Other suggestions focused on addressing the specific needs of the elderly Chinese community through the provision of large print books and a book delivery service.

Many library users argued that public libraries are ideally placed to initiate and facilitate community activities for the Chinese speaking community. One popular suggestion was to hold English language classes as well as book promotions or launches by Chinese authors.

Feedback on future multicultural services

Participants argued that there are many ways the library could improve their Chinese language collection. A number of users argued that donations to the library collection should be encouraged. Sites for receiving donations included Chinese

language schools. Donations from publishers in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China could also be requested. Encouraging Chinese-speaking volunteers was also suggested.

All agreed that the library should employ the following strategies:

- Promotion through Chinese community groups and media
- Extend opening hours
- Employ Chinese speaking staff
- Encourage book donations and identify collection centres for convenience of book donors
- Include information on range of Chinese resources in general library
- Volunteers to do sorting
- More computers with the Chinese system in place (traditional and simplified)
- Expand the Chinese collection

Participants also felt it was important for public libraries to be aware of the calligraphy preferences. Most library users would prefer traditional characters, and ideally have both on the same resource. As one user commented, *I would prefer traditional characters but would like to be able to read resources written in simplified characters. A translation or comparison table of the two types of characters is essential and should be available in the library.*

6.3 Greek

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall

All the participants remarked that there were no libraries in the areas where they were born and raised. One stated, we didn't have a library in our village, it was too poor.

Another added, Greece survived the devastation of WW2 and the civil war, so there was no money for libraries. Only regional areas had libraries and none of us used them.

Only high school students went to libraries to find factual information for their classes and tutorials

None of the participants could make direct comparisons regarding library services and content as none of the participants had used Greek libraries.

The participants loved going to the libraries in NSW and enjoyed the experience of being there and using the resources available to them. One woman argued, *I feel serene when I go to the library in Marrickville, it is such a relaxing environment.* Another participant commented,

The library is my spiritual paradise and it relaxes me totally...I like the atmosphere and the environment and there are so many wonderful choices, fantastic resources and it allows me to enrich my mind and soul.

When I go to the library it feels like I've stepped into a part of Greece, it is like paradise.

The few complaints offered about public libraries in NSW concerned a perception that the needs of NESB groups were secondary to the general population. They felt this was inevitable as resources and budget are always of paramount concern. Another participant spoke about his concern with damaged resources and the vandalism that occurs.

He stated,

At times you find pages ripped out of books or recipes ripped out of magazines or the newspapers disappear.

One of the participants felt strongly about the outdated materials and resources at the library. He commented,

Marrickville has so many books yet 30% of the Greek books are either redundant or 50 years old...I know it is due to budget restrictions.

During their library visits participants mostly read newspapers and magazines, and browsed through the shelves to borrow books, magazines, CDs and videocassettes.

Searching for materials and staff assistance

None of the participants had used the library catalogue or computers due to a lack of understanding of how the system worked. Most found it easier to browse the shelves.

I go directly to the shelves and just sort through the shelves until I find what I want.

All the participants endorsed the helpfulness and approachability of the staff of the public libraries they used:

The staff are wonderful, so helpful and very efficient.

They are very welcoming and always available to help.

Barriers to participation

All of the participants agreed that there are many in the Greek community who are unaware of what the library offers whilst others in the community are not interested and have never thought of using the library. As one participant argued,

We must not forget that there are many older Greeks who for no fault of their own do not know how to read, historically, due to WW2 and the Civil War. They missed out on formal schooling.

Another added,

If you never read then you do not see the value of joining or using the library.

A few of the participants argued that a significant barrier to library participation was the quality of the resources available in some of the libraries.

If you come to the library and there are the same books and magazines weeks and months at a time then of course people will become bored and stop coming.

The majority of participants identified Greek-speaking staff as an assistance to them. However, none had seen or recalled seeing or reading anything in Greek about library services. The two women who used Bankstown library expressed disappointment that there were no Greek-speaking staff at their library. *The staff at Bankstown are wonderful but it would be good to have a Greek person there.*

No one could recall an example of poor service or difficulty in accessing services.

All the staff do their jobs well, they are always polite and friendly.

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvements

Marrickville library users were happy with the volume of books, magazines, videocassettes and CDs. They appreciated the availability of the newspapers and that there was a variety of topics and subject areas covered/available through the books and magazines.

It is a pleasure to sift through the shelves and all the books.

I love all the books available however they should keep renewing the books as some, at least 30% in my view, are too old and redundant.

My only criticism is that the videocassettes they have should be rated or there should be a warning on the cover. I borrowed a video and sat down with my children to watch it and the movie was full of explicit language...I was so embarrassed.

Another participant commented that a number of the videocassettes were damaged and others agreed with her. This led to a discussion around the quality of the resources and participants spoke about their disappointment with library users who damaged and vandalised library resources and property.

I'd pick up a magazine to read and there were pages ripped out and articles cut out of newspapers.

I understand the budget is limited but I go to Bankstown library and the books are all the same, they should be swapped around or updated regularly.

The participants were generally happy with the balance the libraries had with respect to the Greek resources. They all agreed books were a priority and that there should be a variety of books made available.

I like the fact that there is a focus on books because I can borrow videos from video stores or watch Antenna and listen to music on the radio but I cannot get books anywhere else.

Appeal and access of multicultural resources for the community

Overall, participants agreed that many Greek speakers are unaware of the different services and resources offered by a library and so were unaware of what they were missing. Further, the group agreed that there is a certain belief amongst older, less educated Greek speakers that a library has nothing to offer them.

If the library advertised in the Greek papers and told people that they also have newspapers, videos and CDs then many more Greeks would take advantage of the free services.

Another participant stated that she believed there were a great number of people who would love to use the library but were too busy due to childcare responsibilities. Others suggested that some community members with health problems or are immobile are unable to access the library.

Promotion

One participant could recall hearing advertisements on the Greek radio about the library but couldn't recall any details. No other participant could recall any promotional material.

Suggestions for promotion of library services included advertising in ethnic media, organising a morning tea at libraries and inviting the community to attend as well as printing promotional material and distributing it through Greek and Cypriot community organisations and Greek social workers.

Two of the participants knew that the library had various playgroups and reading groups operating. This encouraged more discussion about the role of public libraries how they should serve the community. In the main the participants felt libraries do a commendable job. They felt the library could be involved in more self promotion and fund-raising activities such as holding morning teas, having a café attached and using buses to transport those less mobile.

**Feedback on
future
multicultural
services**

Other ideas for improving library services were equally innovative. Some suggested that volunteers be trained to transport people or to pick up and drop off books for people. Another suggestion was that social groups meet at the library on a regular basis and that excursions leave from the library so that people can physically see the library and are encouraged to go in and have a look around. All agreed that the library should promote itself widely through the strategies mentioned earlier such as Greek media, brochures distributed through Greek and Cypriot organisations and information provided to Greek social workers.

They could swap books with other libraries so then it won't be as expensive.

They must buy new resources like magazines and CDs and impose strict regulations to ensure they aren't stolen or damaged.

6.4 Korean

Use of public libraries and perceptions of libraries overall All of the participants have experienced using a library in Korea, mainly for studying, collecting information for school projects or reading books in the library reading room. There are government and private library systems in Korea. All libraries provide books to borrow, lots of space to study and reading spaces. An entry fee is charged and in return a large variety of study resources are supplied. The service and atmosphere of the library is very strict and efficient. There is also a portable library service available for sick and disabled people who are unable to get to a public library.

When asked to compare libraries in their country or origin with public libraries and library experiences in Australia, participants argued that the major difference was that libraries in NSW are free. Users were pleased that public libraries in NSW provide services for everyone, including ethnic communities. Public libraries are perceived to have friendly staff and a relaxed atmosphere.

The best aspects of the NSW library system are:

- Large number of books individuals can borrow at a time and flexibility in borrowing
- Great customer service from staff

The least favourable aspects of public libraries in NSW are:

- There is no reading room with a quiet environment
- Many local libraries do not have any resources in the Korean language

Around half of the participants visit the library once a week, the other half visit once fortnightly or monthly. Five of the participants are young mothers who go to the library to borrow books for themselves, children's books, resources for school projects and videos. The remaining participants mainly go to borrow novels.

Participants would like to see the following resources added to the Korean collection:

- Picture books for young children
- Novels for school children
- New best sellers
- Self learning English materials
- Magazines
- General books for hobbies like gardening, golf or fishing
- A general variety of books.

Searching for materials and staff assistance

The majority of library users do not use the computer catalogue when searching for resources, but instead go directly to the Korean book section and browse the collection for an item to borrow. Due to language barriers the majority of participants were unable to use the computer catalogue.

Appeal and access of multicultural resources for the community

Language barriers are the major difficulty facing Korean-speaking people when using public library facilities. As one participant commented *other patrons frown or say something in an unfriendly manner when little children make noise.*

The majority of participants were unaware of information about public libraries provided in Korean and only one has seen a pamphlet regarding activities at Campsie library.

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvement

Participants were generally appreciative of the effort made by public libraries in providing resources in Korean, though many commented that there are too few religious books in Korean. Other comments concerning the Korean collection included:

It is nice to have books in our language, but they are too old.

I know many people from the Korean community are very happy to have some Korean books.

I couldn't be bothered to go to the library because there are not many books there that I like to read.

When asked about improvements to the multicultural collection, the major suggestion was to increase the number of books available. It was felt that there was a good range of resource material in public libraries.

Suggestions for inclusion in the collection:

- Lots of children's educational books
- Some healthy lifestyle books
- Some new best sellers

Reasons for not using the library services included:

- Many young couples are both workers therefore they do not have the time to visit a library
- Middle-aged and retired people feel uncomfortable due to the language barrier

A participant suggested that it would be helpful if flyers were provided at the Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES) and a common meeting place was established.

Promotion Suggestions for increasing the usage of the library services by the Korean community included:

- Advertise through Korean Radio and Korean ethnic papers and magazines
- List the available services in the Korean Language on public noticeboards
- Provide a Korean speaking staff member – this will encourage many Korean customers to visit the library and will make the experience easier
- Host a seminar featuring a Korean lecturer regarding reading and cultural activities

- Liaison staff could request that the Korean Government provide more books
- Establish an encouragement awarded system that would be based on the amount of books read by one person (a competition)
- Cooperate with the Korean weekly newspaper to advertise for the donation of books by people who are returning to Korea or anyone else who would like to donate

Almost all participants had not seen any promotional flyers in the Korean language. One participant has seen a brochure at Campsie library.

Half of the participants stated that they were aware of the following activities within public libraries:

- Story-time for young children
- School holiday activities for school children
- Korean language sessions at the Campsie library

Four participants wished that the library provided a multi-format video system so that they would be able to watch any sort of videotape (since Korean formats are different).

One participant suggested that a Korean speaking staff member would be great but if this was not possible, the library could advertise to recruit volunteer workers for this task.

Feedback on possible future multicultural services

The following suggestions were made for possible future multicultural services:

- Provide some Korean books at other local libraries like Strathfield and Liverpool
- If it is possible, create a portable library with Korean speaking staff.

This is done in Korea – all of the books are monitored in a computer system in a bus. The bus moves around according to a timetable.

Perhaps this would be something that could be trialled in the Campsie area and extended if the system is successful.

- List available library services on a Korean public noticeboard
- Provide lots of books with a wide variety of subjects
- Work together with the Korean radio and newspapers to advertise multicultural services
- Provide a Korean-speaking staff member or volunteer worker at local libraries to make people feel more comfortable

6.5 Macedonian

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall Most of the participants visited city libraries in their home country. Those living in smaller village areas used school libraries. Libraries in their home country were mostly used for borrowing books and professional magazines. In comparison Australian libraries are considered better resourced although there are fewer language material available. Public libraries in NSW are considered easily accessible and are free of charge. In comparison, Macedonian public libraries hold more videos and more contemporary material. Libraries in Macedonia are considered more accessible. As one participant commented, *We can find our way more easiliy and are able to communicate our needs.*

When asked about the best things about libraries in Australia the main points raised included:

- Good facilities and are quiet and peaceful
- Good service
- Good locations
- Well organised system for borrowing (including ordering books)
- Professional staff
- Technologically up-to-date

It was also felt that Port Kembla should have a library, as travel to Warrawong or Wollongong is difficult for some people in the Port Kembla area. Some participants noted that the mobile library in the Wollongong/Port Kembla area is not accessed by members of the Macedonian community even though the bus stops every Thursday next door to the Macedonian Welfare Centre at the Senior Citizens Centre.

Most of the participants visited a library at least once a week, with a few using one less frequently, either fortnightly or once a month.

When asked about their main activities when visiting a library, most said that they borrow books in Macedonian. Only a few participants used computers at the library, and a few also read at the library (books or magazines). A few participants used the reference library.

The resources preferred by participants included books, contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, and videos. Some participants stated that they not only access local Macedonian newspapers, but also other overseas newspapers. However, when asked about the availability of resources in the Macedonian language at their local library, participants were quite critical. While they identified that the library provided Macedonian newspapers published in Australia, children's books, novels, and books from the Tito Communist era, it was felt many of the resources are outdated. Some felt that the library has not had any new books in the Macedonian language for the last 10 years. This is particularly important because it was felt that there has not been any new material since the independence of Macedonia in 1991, with many yearning to stay in touch with all the rapid changes happening in Macedonia in this time.

Searching for materials and staff assistance

When searching for material all participants said that they go to the Macedonian section and help themselves to whatever they can find there, as the Macedonian section is clearly marked. Others also sought assistance from staff. None had used the catalogue or computers for the Macedonian language materials, but a few used the catalogue for general library materials. No difficulties in searching for materials were identified.

In terms of accessing staff, results were mixed. In the group discussions the participants said that they had not approached staff to enquire about books that they would like to read to ask if the library could obtain them. Most tended to be more passive when accessing library services. Indeed, many said that they try to purchase books from overseas on their pensions and then exchange the material between themselves.

It was noted that there are no Macedonian-speaking staff at any of the libraries in the Wollongong area, although some were aware of written material in the form of a brochure, which advertises services of the library. One participant had used the

services of Macedonian-speaking staff in Rockdale. Other difficulties identified included:

- Not knowing how the library system works
- Not knowing what resources are available

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvements

When asked specifically about the existing resources in the Macedonian language, the most common response was that the material at Warrawong and Wollongong is very outdated, and that there is not enough variety. It was felt that half of the collection is children's books and the other half are books from the Tito communist era dating 50 years ago. Following on from this point, participants felt that the children's book collection is over-represented.

Participants requested that the collection be improved, and this generated considerable discussion. It was felt that the Macedonian collection should include:

- Contemporary novels, not necessarily those by Macedonian authors, but also novels translated in Macedonian
- Authors such as Bill Neskoski (Playwright) and Nada Ivanova (Poet), who were both Wollongong locals (now deceased), as they are a part of the history of the area
- Classic novels and other international best-selling books, as they are available in the Republic as a translated edition, such as authors including Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov
- Self-development literature by authors such as Anthony Robbins
- Books on history, poetry, culture, geography, art, heritage, architecture and dictionaries
- The collection should contain books on cooking, religion and agriculture
- Audio and videotapes, such as documentaries on Macedonian tourist destinations, architecture, archaeology, geography, history, art and culture, and contemporary literature and music. Some participants referred to a few

wonderful videos of this type purchased by the Macedonian Welfare Centre, but complained that because of the poor quality of the videotape they could not be used. It was felt such tapes are very educational and popular with both the young and old of the community

- Popular magazines

Participants also suggested a range of options for implementing the improvements previously suggested. Below is a list of the suggestions identified by participants.

- Establish contact with the Emigrants Council of Macedonia whose role is to assist émigré communities. They have been known to ship out large supplies of books and various other written materials at no charge to the destination country. Wollongong in particular has an advantage in that it has a sister city relationship with the town of Ohrid, a famous tourist destination for a lot of Europeans
- Establish contact with the largest printing company in Macedonia and request a regular mailout of catalogues on new publications
- A budget should be set aside for the purchase of very popular new publications
- Establish contact with Grigor Prichev in Arncliffe, Sydney. There are quite a number of local writers of poetry and prose who publish their works with the assistance of this library. Copies of these books should be available in Wollongong libraries.
- Establish contact with the *Today Denes*, a Melbourne newspaper which is probably the most widely read Macedonian newspaper in Australia. The Editor of this paper, Mr Bozin Pavlovski, is also a prolific writer with many published books and a good knowledge of the Macedonian population in Australia. He recently purchased Mislá, the largest publishing house in Macedonia today, so would be an excellent contact

Appeal and access of multicultural resources for the Macedonian community

Participants stated that the majority of people from the community read Macedonian newspapers and listen to community radio programs as a way of keeping up with events both locally and overseas. They also estimated that anywhere between 10-20% of the community would be interested in reading other material such as books, and that a large majority would be interested in video and audio material as there is a high illiteracy rate amongst the population in Wollongong. Therefore, they felt there is a clear need for Macedonian language library resources.

When discussing why many members of the Macedonian community do not use library services, a range of reasons were suggested by the participants, such as:

- High levels of illiteracy amongst the population
- An attitude amongst some that reading books is a waste of time, especially for women for whom domestic duties are prioritised
- Not being aware of all the services that the library offers and how it can touch their lives
- Libraries are unfamiliar territory for those people that had not visited libraries in their country of origin

To encourage the use of the library services, a range of suggestions were made, such as:

- Enrich the collection (this was deemed as the necessary first step)
- Advertise the collection widely using the radio and ethnic press as the preferred medium
- Establish a small advisory committee for consultation on the needs and interests of the community and for ideas on promoting the library
- Provide a complete database of all material in Macedonian available throughout NSW and make this database easily available to members of the community. This will allow members to order books via the library book exchange program

Promotion When asked about whether they had seen any promotional material, the results were mixed. All those in the Wollongong group discussion had seen a brochure along the lines of *What can your library do for you?* which explains in very basic terms the services of the library, but they had not seen any other material apart from this.

Participants were asked for ideas about how libraries can promote their services to people from the Macedonian community. A range of suggestions were given, as follows:

- Posters placed in strategic places.
- Organise theme nights for members of the Macedonian community. Participants felt that a cooking topic would be popular amongst Macedonian women, with cookbooks available as part of the evening. Agriculture was another topic suggested, especially for men, as a lot of the Macedonian community have their own vegetable gardens or even small farms. For these theme nights to work, the library would need to have material on the specific topics. It was suggested that a member of the community could volunteer to organise such theme nights.
- Organise regular library tours.

Activities Most participants were aware that the library is involved in play groups, craft and story telling sessions for young children. It was also suggested that libraries could be used for art and cultural exhibitions given there is both suitable and available space. This would also encourage people to visit the library more often, especially if a tour of the library was organised. Other suggestions included yoga and dance classes, music appreciation classes, English conversation groups, technical training (eg Internet training), poetry evenings and text readings. It was felt the library should also link in with community activities.

Serving the community Participants were asked about some of the ways a library should serve the community. Participants stated that libraries should have a dialogue with the members that it is trying to serve on a regular

basis, as this is the first survey the participants were aware of where the Macedonian community had been involved and consulted about the services of the library.

It was also suggested that as the library is trying to update its technology, it should also provide some training to community members about the new technology. Very few of the participants had used computers at the library because they did not know how.

One suggestion was for the mobile library to visit places like the Macedonian Welfare Centre at Port Kembla and to promote this service widely.

Improving access to the Macedonian community

In discussing how access for the general Macedonian community can be improved, participants felt that having Macedonian-speaking staff would make a big improvement. If this is not possible, it was suggested that there should be one staff member (eg. Cultural Liaison Officer) to cover all of the major language groups in the area by consulting with each community regarding their interests, changes, where to find resources, donations from the community, and so on.

6.6 Punjabi

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall Participants commented that in India there are libraries in schools, colleges and universities. There are some public and state libraries. Most of the community in India are regular visitors to public libraries, with the main activities undertaken including reading, borrowing toys and using public spaces within libraries. Some of the public libraries in India hold yoga and meditation classes. Public libraries in NSW were considered more advanced than libraries in India, providing better customer service and are generally better funded and resourced. There are few computers and Internet access within public libraries in India compared with NSW public libraries.

Participants felt that NSW public libraries are highly used by the community, with participants accessing their local public library and also libraries with subject specialisations. For example, Rockdale public library specialises in music, and so is used by music lovers and students studying music.

The best things about NSW libraries were the clean, modern and well-maintained facilities, and the quality of the books and services available. There were some criticisms though of the limited resources in languages other than English, and the lack of bilingual staff.

When asked about how they use the library at the moment, most participants visit libraries once a week or once a fortnight. The library was used to borrow books and videos, to read newspapers and magazines, and for Internet access and accessing Microsoft Word for preparing resumes.

In terms of the level of knowledge of materials in their language, most were unaware arguing the collection had not been promoted. Participants were aware that the library could arrange an inter-library loan on a request basis, and books only are available through this service.

Preferences for resources vary across the Punjabi community due to age and familiarity with new technologies.

- Books, CDs and videos
- Popular literature and modern magazines
- Magazines, story books and tapes on how to learn the Punjabi language for children
- Material in Punjabi about farming and agriculture appeals to the younger generation who work on farms
- The elderly prefer religious books and video tapes of popular Punjabi movies and folk songs, information on how to learn English, Punjabi to English dictionaries, and information on using computers and the Internet

Searching for materials and staff assistance and staff assistance

For those participants accessing libraries with a Punjabi collection most ask staff or go straight to the shelves, although several also use the catalogue. There were criticisms that the translation is sometimes incorrect which makes searching impossible.

Participants in the focus group did not have any comments on the difficulties in accessing the multicultural resources because their local library does not have a Punjabi collection. However, this library arranges bulk loans from the State Library of New South Wales, and there were some criticisms about this arrangement:

- The local public library does not have a list or catalogue of Punjabi language books from which clients can choose and clients have to rely on the taste of the State library staff with whatever is sent
- Once the bulk loans are sent to the branch library, the books are kept on the shelves and there is no message to inform clients about it. There are never reminders or leaflets about the collection when it arrives from the State library.

If you happen to visit the library then you are the lucky one to spot the collection.

- If you have borrowed a book and want to extend the borrowing period you cannot, as the book has to go back by a certain date
- Opening hours are limited in the branch library. It does not open after 5 p.m. on weekdays, and only opens for a few hours on Saturday

Participants also mentioned that they are not aware of any assistance available in their language, but many did not raise this as an issue because it was felt most Punjabi speaking people speak English as well. A few participants also noticed posters and pamphlets about library services.

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvements

When asked about the quality of the collection in the Punjabi language, several points were raised:

- The size and quality of the collection is poor and out of date.
- Participants felt that whatever the publisher cannot sell over the counter, or is hard to sell is sold to the libraries. The titles are old, boring and are unpopular with users.
- Only books are accessible, and there is no access to CDs, videos or talking books, or if these are available, the participants did not know about these resources
- Some of the clients know that the State Library has some magazines and newspapers in their language but it is a policy of the State Library to not issue magazines and newspapers on Inter Library Loan. It was suggested that the Branch Library should have its own Punjabi magazine or newspaper collection. A few showed the group a couple of magazines from India that they subscribe to, and they mentioned that they are not very expensive. They offered to show these to the library if they are interested.

In response to these criticisms a range of suggestions were given with regard to improving the collection.

- Increase the size of the collection

- While purchasing new items the library should ask the Punjabi community about their interests, relevant subjects and authors, as they are the ones who are going to use the collection

Appeal and access of multicultural resources for the community

It was felt that the community would visit the library if they knew about the availability of materials, as libraries do not promote themselves unless people actually go there.

Another suggestion for enhancing access was to go to the community by providing a mobile service that visits shopping centres and temples.

Everyone comes to the Sikh temple on Sundays

Feedback on possible future multi-cultural services

A range of suggestions were made for improving library services for NESB clients and specifically Punjabi speaking clients. These include:

- Extend the opening hours or open later in the morning and close late at night. Participants indicated that the library has never done a survey on opening hours or opening on weekends.
- Provide Punjabi-speaking staff. It was also suggested that the library could encourage volunteers from the Punjabi community to assist the library.
- The library should organise a focus group like the one conducted for this research from time to time and encourage the public to participate. The library should also do their own survey for people using the collection.
- The library should develop a better method to reserve multicultural items instead of numbers. Items should be allocated some subject headings or titles, as it will then be easier for clients to choose an item that they are interested in.
- The library should appoint a committee to improve its services, and some of the committee members should represent the local Punjabi community. This committee could try and fill the gaps between the collection and community

needs. Participants felt that improvements to the service will not be made instantly, and that it is an ongoing issue.

- Participants felt the library should celebrate a cultural day for the Punjabi community so they can participate and promote their own culture, like Bankstown Library has a Chinese Day. It was suggested the library should have an open day or multicultural day annually.
- Participants suggested that the library could play an important role in helping our community by promoting their services in shopping centres, on Punjabi Radio or at community gatherings. Punjabi books are never displayed like other books. Whenever the library has new arrivals in English titles, these titles are always on display in boxes so you can see them when you enter the library, and perhaps the library can do this for the Punjabi resources.
- It was requested that there should be a catalogue or display of Punjabi resources, and that the person doing the cataloguing should understand the language. Cataloguing of books in the Punjabi language is misleading because sometimes it changes the meaning. Below is an example from a library user: -

Supaneiya di khabar means about the dreams

Supaneiya di kabar means cemetery of dreams

6.7 Russian

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall Library users commented that the following services were available in their home country/ country of birth:

Order books/ magazines/ technical literature/ periodicals at the desk and then read them in the reading (study) room. It was a special (usually) large room where people sit, read and study and where it was strongly prohibited to talk (even whisper), to walk, to do any noise at the room.

When asked to compare library experiences in their home country with library experiences in Australia all agreed it was difficult to compare due to the following reasons:

- Russian and Ukrainian libraries have a full valued range of Russian resources while Australian libraries have very limited collections of Russian books, magazines, videos, CDs
- Home country/country of birth libraries were like homes, with a special atmosphere in the reading rooms

People were not allowed to talk or walk around. There was special lighting for the whole room and individual lighting on the tables. The atmosphere was absolutely quiet and completely calm. People could concentrate and study. No one could be disturbed.

Usually people entered the library, ordered books at the desk and sat in the reading room. The officer brought books to the place where the orderer was seated. People were not allowed to approach the shelves with books only library staff, with the exception of shelves holding recent periodicals such as newspapers, magazines and dictionaries.

Library users argued that there are no such reading rooms in Australian public libraries. Libraries here tend to be viewed as noisy and full of disturbances.

Participants agreed that a positive aspect of libraries in Australia was that people could approach the shelves and browse the collection.

Some of the negative aspects of libraries in Australia included:

- Books are mixed on the shelves
- Difficult to find specific books
- No Russian catalogues and limited periodic editions.

The service in public libraries in Australia was considered better than in the home country libraries.

Participants nominated the following as the best things about public libraries in NSW.

- Excellent service
- Delivering ordered books to home
- Extension of the term of ordered books by phone
- Russian speaking staff in libraries for assistance and help
- Range of material available for borrowing

Participants nominated the noisiness of public libraries and the limited nature of the Russian collection as the worst things about public libraries.

Most of the research participants regularly visited public libraries, with most visiting weekly or fortnightly.

The main library activity amongst the Russian speaking users was borrowing books. All of the participants said that they visited libraries to search for something new in the Russian collection. Usually they borrowed only Russian books, magazines, cassettes, videos and sometimes English language texts and cassettes.

Preferred resources include:

- Any Russian books
- Magazines and newspapers
- English language texts and cassettes

Searching for materials and staff assistance

The overwhelming majority of participants said they did not use the computer catalogue. The following reasons were given:

- Limited English
- Did not know how to use a computer
- Difficulty in using a catalogue in English if the proper spelling of the name of the author/book is unknown

Almost all participants preferred to browse the shelves and/or ask for assistance from library staff. Participants also commented that Russian-speaking staff will always help Russian readers with information and/or assistance.

I have no problems at all in using library services because the Russian speaking staff in libraries are always at hand. It is the best thing that libraries do: employ a person who speaks Russian!

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvements

Even though the Russian collections are considered limited, many participants argued there are still enough books to choose something interesting to read.

Suggestions for improvements to the collection include:

- Books published by My 20-th Century, Vagrius and Orma-Press
- Good magazines such as *Inostrannaia Literatura*, *Иностранная Литература*, *Ogonek*, *Огонек*, *Novyi Mir*, *Новый Мир*, *Znamia* and *Zvezda*

- To supply more Russian periodic magazines
- To supply more new books of modern authors
- To supply books in Russian about Australia, Australian history, geography, etc.
- To supply new videos and CDs in Russian because already existing resources are in a bad condition and the collection is very limited
- To supply dictionaries in Russian in every library
- More books by contemporary authors such as: Vasil Aksenov, V. Voinovich, A. Kabakov, B. Akunin, L. Ulitskaia, G. Vadimov, Boris Vasiliev, F. Iskander, G. Baklanov, T.Tolstaia, V.Tokareva, G.Shcherbakova, D. Dashkova and I. Nagibin.

Participants argued that videos, CDs and tapes are in poor condition and seldom used because participants are not interested in such resources.

Promotion Amongst the Russian sample it was considered most important to attract people to reading, the rationale being that if people like to read they will use libraries.

Participants suggested that the library could better serve the Russian community by organising meetings for Russian readers to introduce new books/authors, poets as well as offering different workshops aimed at educating people not only on maximising their use of library services but on general community health issues.

Appeal of and access to multicultural resources for the community All participants agreed that a large number of Russian speaking people in Sydney do not use library services. Participants felt that this was primarily because people were unaware of the range of library services and Russian resources provided. As well, a number argued that poor English language proficiency amongst the Russian community meant that any advertising or promotion of library services might not be understood.

Feedback on possible future multicultural services

Participants were asked to think about ways to improve library services generally for the Russian speaking community. The following responses were given:

- To list new Russian materials once per month and promote them
- To separate books by subject area and improve signage
- To provide some books in large print for elderly people
- To organise a special social group of readers to represent the needs of the Russian community and suggest what kind of books and magazines should be supplied to library. It should be noted that all focus group participants are ready to form this group.

Suggestions for making the library more accessible included advertising libraries services and resources on the SBS Russian Radio Program, community radio MCR 3, FM-2000 98.5 and in Russian newspapers *Horizon*, *Moscow News* and the magazine *Voice*

6.8 Spanish

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall Most of the participants commented that home country experiences of libraries differed greatly from their experiences of public libraries in Australia, and specifically NSW. As one user argued, *you can find libraries in many suburbs and all you have to do is lob up with your card and make a selection.* All participants argued that the accessibility and number of public libraries in NSW was not reflected in their home countries. Moreover the size and quality of collections in NSW public libraries, in both English and languages other than English, was again a service that was not reflected in their home countries. However many, having migrated to Australia in the 1970's and 1980's, were speaking about their experiences some time ago.

Participants were from Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Paraguay, Colombia and Argentina.

Some difficulties experienced by participants centred on lack of computer literacy, making it difficult to use the technology available in libraries.

Back home the librarians seem to hold all the information about collections whilst in NSW public libraries everything is automated and if you don't understand the technology you feel very alienated.

A number of participants also experienced difficulties seeking information because of poor English language proficiency.

Many of the videos and language videos were from Spain with little from Latin America. Learning Spanish with language tools from Spain was less useful for people from Latin America as language varies from one country to another.

The collections were generally considered large in size but quite old and lacking in subject range. Another felt the selections in local libraries were appropriate and that if people were looking for textbooks on physics or the like they should go to the University or State libraries.

One library user stated that he had almost read everything in the particular library closest to him. It was argued, *there are so many new books in Latin America, but we never get to see the contemporary works*. One participant felt that the only contemporary writers that the libraries were stocking were the ones who had been recognised in Australia such as Isabel Allende but nothing from Pedro Donoso for example.

Resources participants are aware of include:

- Books
- Internet service
- Videos
- CDs
- English classes at Liverpool library
- Newspapers, local only, i.e. not from Latin America but our own locally produced Spanish papers
- Justice of the Peace

Searching for materials and staff assistance

Generally, Spanish-speaking library users prefer to go directly to the Spanish section in libraries and browse through the collection for items to borrow. The size of the collection means that use of the computer catalogue for searching for Spanish texts is not necessary. It is considered much easier to simply browse through what is there.

Appeal and access of multicultural resources for the community

The main difficulties for Spanish speaking people in using library services included:

- Lack of English skills
- Inability to negotiate the library system including Internet and computer catalogue

Given the preceding barriers to accessing library services the following suggestions were made concerning increasing access for Spanish speaking people:

- Training provided by the library staff on how to use the computers and search mechanisms
- Spanish-speaking staff available in libraries holding Spanish texts
- Increase opening hours to suit people who work during the day
- Advertise the services available at libraries in order to quell ideas that libraries are just for studying. It was widely agreed that home country experiences result in identifying libraries with studying.

The majority of people who participated in either the focus group or in depth interviews agreed that the notion of a library for public access, holding a range of resources and serving local communities was not reflected in their home countries, with most people in Latin America only using libraries for studying purposes.

A number of participants experienced problems when trying to access help from staff. Many felt that library staff were not interested in assisting. As well, all argued that the information desk is always very busy and there are long queues to get service. One participant argued, *unfriendly staff can put you off using a library*. It should be noted that the above comments are specific to one library rather than public libraries in general.

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvement

They need to update all the stock, remove every book and replace with more contemporary material.

All Spanish-speaking participants argued that the Spanish collection is limited, there is a need for more contemporary resources, and the subject matter needs to be extended.

A few participants argued against extending the range of resources, arguing that the collections are appropriate for local public libraries and that non-fiction materials are best accessed from the State Library of NSW or university libraries.

Suggestions for improving the Spanish collection included:

- Greater variety of authors (from range of Spanish speaking countries) and subject matter
- Audio books for illiterate people in the Spanish community
- Romance/ cookbooks/self-help books are over-represented in current collections
- More music

Promotion Increased promotion of the collection was a central issue in discussions with Spanish-speaking library users. Suggestions included:

- The Internet should be used to advertise the language sections, using the library website
- Pamphlets can be sent to ratepayers. *I have never had a letter from my local council to inform me of the services available at my library and I'm a member.*
- Advertisements in the Spanish papers and on Spanish radio programs
- Libraries themselves should have more information on what they stock in Spanish and where to find the books
- Wherever the Spanish speaking community gathers there should be information about library services such as cafes, clubs, shops, etc.
- Schools should also have information available on what language services are available at the local libraries

Activities Some library users were aware of library-based activities such as children's book readings and English classes. Other suggestions included:

- Jazz music concerts
- Arts and crafts courses

- Screening of movies from different countries of Latin America
- Teaching music and dance from Latin America
- Cultural exhibitions
- Public spaces made available for local artists from the Spanish-speaking community.
- Libraries should have an informative and educative role

Feedback on possible future multicultural services

Suggestions for improvements that libraries could make to increase the accessibility of Spanish language collections included:

- Other forms of ID should be acceptable when joining a library such as passports
- More current affairs type magazines such as the Spanish equivalent of Time magazine and more magazines from Latin America
- Screening films at the library would facilitate integration for the Latin American community
- Employing bilingual library staff
- Community consultations should be held on a regular basis to find out what services and books the community want to be made available
- I have read just about every book that interests me in my local libraries. I would be grateful if they brought more contemporary works from Latin America.

6.9 Turkish

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall Most of the Turkish-speaking library users did not use libraries in their home country. Those who did mainly used the school, college and university libraries. Some used libraries for borrowing novels and research.

Participants argued that there were not as many points of access to public libraries in Turkey as there are in Australia. For example, the municipal libraries only have one small library not branches. Those who did not go to libraries in Turkey argued that since books in Turkey are much cheaper to buy and easily available, it was easy to purchase reading material rather than go to a library. One of the participants said she had over 500 books in Turkish before migrating to Australia.

All participants felt that the access to libraries in NSW is good and there is at least one in each local government area. One library user reported that she experienced difficulty accessing books in Turkish because she lives in Leichhardt and this library does not have a collection in Turkish. She reported that, *a library staff member offered to order books from other libraries and the request was made. The books all arrived at once and I felt under pressure to read faster in order to return them all in time. This arrangement was not very favourable as I could only choose by title and was not able to choose the book by myself.*

The best aspects of the libraries included:

- The availability of books in many languages
- There are reading rooms and the libraries are considered comfortable and provide a peaceful environment.
- The staff are considered very polite and helpful
- Toy libraries are good for families to save them buying toys
- The different parts of the library are easily identified and each section is easily accessible, well lit and sign posted.

The worst things about public libraries included the following:

- Difficulty in finding specific books. Participants argued this was mainly due to users misplacing the books they remove from the shelves and not putting them back correctly
- Turkish speaking staff are not available in all libraries.
- Many of the books available are very old and damaged. Library users have damaged some books eg. scribbled on, pages torn and badly handled
- New titles, newly published books are not available
- There are too many of the same kind (eg. political books) and not enough educational or research titles

Most of the research participants regularly visited public libraries, with most visiting weekly or fortnightly. The main activity that participants engaged in when visiting public libraries were:

- Borrowing books, mainly novels,
- Reading magazines and newspapers
- Borrowing children books and/or toys
- Borrowing videos and CDs
- Using photocopiers was less frequently mentioned

Searching for materials and staff assistance

A number of library users commented that at times it was hard to use the computer as it was heavily utilised or was not working. It was also difficult to find books if one did not know the title or the author.

Participants were not aware of any information or assistance offered in their language. However, if such material were produced (brochures describing the library and other services in Turkish) the majority of participants would use them. Only one participant had seen a flyer in Turkish.

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvements

Suggestions for improving the collection included:

- Purchasing more new titles
- Improving reference materials eg. Turkish grammar books
- Purchasing more adult English learning cassettes and video aids

The books are there but there are no learning aids.

- Swapping books between libraries may improve the collection
- State Library can contact newspapers and publishing houses in Turkey to improve their collection
- Adult reference books eg. parenting skills, child psychology, economic planning, family planning, dictionaries etc.
- CD ROMs for younger Turkish speakers to be able to explore and learn the history of their country of origin
- Poetry books and country folk writers

Appeal and access of multicultural resources for the community

Public libraries are considered major points of contact for the Turkish community to access information services. However all library users argued that public libraries could do more to encourage the young and old to be actively involved in reading and using library services. Some ideas that were expressed by the Turkish-speaking group that would benefit the whole of the community included:

- Speakers to give talks about books, book reviews
- Competitions for children and youth to encourage them to write and read
- More contact with local schools to hold joint activities and to find out about the needs of the community
- Book clubs in community languages

- Exhibitions of art and cultural forms
- Turkish language learning aids to help parents to assist their children such as books, videos and cassette tapes
- Mobile library services for the Turkish speaking users that do not live in main Turkish settlement areas
- Activities that promoted multicultural literary works such as inviting local and overseas guest writers to give talks to the English speaking community to raise awareness of what is happening out there
- The library activities could be promoted through multicultural media (newspapers, radio) through schools and mailouts to community organisations, mosque etc.
- Signage in Turkish
- English classes more widely advertised
- Library and Internet tours/courses in Turkish

The Turkish participants agreed that the wider Turkish community is not encouraged to use library services, primarily because current Turkish resources on offer are considered both out of date and limited, and therefore unattractive to new or potential users.

As one user argued, *the new publications do not reach here, like art books, cook books and self development books. People are bored to see the same things.*

Feedback on possible future multicultural services

The group was pleased that the State Library of NSW was concerned about their issues and hoped that this feedback would be taken into account to improve their services and make them more useful and accessible to the Turkish speaking community.

Some people were aware that Auburn Library provided English courses once a week. Most were unaware of this service. Many would like these kinds of services to be regularly available and if possible increased.

Most people did not know how to use the Internet services provided through the library. It was suggested that the library could also organise courses to help adult users learn how to use this facility.

It was felt that libraries should increase access for all their users not just those who are capable and spoke English.

6.10 Vietnamese

Use of libraries and perceptions of libraries overall All of the participants advised that library services were only available for school students and/or tertiary students and that they had to hire or buy books for reading in their home country. All advised that they found the NSW public library system *very popular and useful* as there were *no free public libraries like this in Vietnam*.

All participants nominated accessibility and free service as the best things about public libraries in NSW. When asked about the worst things about libraries a small number of users could not think of any, whilst more common responses included:

- Long wait-time for recently (or newly) published issues of Vietnamese language material particularly magazines, to be available in libraries
- Insufficient number of Vietnamese resources
- Need for a list of recently acquired Vietnamese resources

All advised that they visited the library mainly to borrow Vietnamese language books, magazines and videotapes. A number of these users also said that they often used Vietnamese reference books, which were not for loan, in the library. Five library users said that they also attended story telling time with their children, whilst a number of participants stated they often accompany their children to search for school-based project material. A few mentioned they also visited the library for borrowing English language materials. All participants nominated books, magazines and videotapes for both adults and children as resources in Vietnamese language they most prefer.

Searching for materials and staff assistance All participants advised that they had used the computer catalogue to search for Vietnamese language materials. However the majority of participants advised that they preferred to browse through the shelves to look for books and magazines since the *Vietnamese collection was small and therefore it was easy just going straight to the shelves unless you wanted to reserve a book or video tape*.

All participants advised that they did not have any difficulty in using library services. However, they all said that they had to *wait for a long time, between booking and having our turn to borrow, for a newly arrived book or video tape because the library had only few copies, in some types only one copy, of each title we wished to borrow.* A lack of English language proficiency and the small collection of Vietnamese language materials within libraries were considered the main problems. Illiteracy was also considered a significant issue within the community, as well as a general lack of awareness within the Vietnamese community about public library services and resources in Vietnamese language.

All participants advised that they were aware of and had used information/assistance offered in Vietnamese language by Vietnamese speaking staff in the library. The majority of participants further advised that they found these Vietnamese speaking staff and other non-Vietnamese speaking staff, whom they came across in the library were very helpful and responsive to our enquiries. A small number responded that they wanted to seek assistance from library staff but the staff had appeared too busy.

Quality of the collection and suggestions for improvements

All participants advised that they thought the existing Vietnamese language collections in public libraries were too small. A few participants made reference to Rockdale and Bankstown libraries both of which were perceived to have limited or non-existent collections. All participants further advised that there was nothing that they disliked and nothing was over-represented in the Vietnamese language collections.

When asked what improvements could be made to the Vietnamese language collections, all participants suggested that the library needed to acquire more Vietnamese language materials, published in both Vietnam and overseas (North America and Western Europe), in a range of subject areas.

Specifically, participants nominated the following titles they wanted the library to purchase (or purchase more copies) to improve the Vietnamese language collection:

- Hanh Trinh Ve Phuong Dong (*Express to the East*), book translated from Tibetan by Nguyen Phong

- Tra Ta Song Nui (*Return the Truth to History*), autobiography by Pham Van Lieu, published in USA
- *The Fountain of Youth* (Five exercises for rejuvenation), natural health, video tape and book produced/published in Australia
- Muc Tim (*Purple Ink*), magazine for teenagers
- *Dep* (Beauty), magazine published in Vietnam
- *Hop Luu* (Confluence), magazine published in USA
- *Lang Van* (Literary Club), magazine published in Canada
- *My Thuat* (Life and Art), magazine published in Vietnam
- *Khoa Hoc Pho Thong* (Popular Science), magazine published in Vietnam
- *Kien Thuc Ngay Nay* (Today's Knowledge), magazine published in Vietnam
- *Phu Nu Dien Dan* (Women's Monthly), magazine published in USA
- *Sunflower*, bilingual magazine published in Vietnam
- *Thoi Trang Tre* (New Fashion), magazine published in Vietnam

Appeal and access of multicultural resources for the community

All participants believed that there were many people within the Vietnamese community in Sydney that used the Vietnamese language collection in the library. These participants gave an example of a long waiting/booking list for borrowing Vietnamese language videotapes and books at the library. A large number of participants also advised that they were prepared to travel outside their home area to other public libraries to borrow new or recently published Vietnamese language titles.

Participants stressed the need to increase the accessibility of the Vietnamese language collection, through both increasing the cultural appropriateness of the library service and promotion of existing services and resources.

Most participants had seen promotional literature in libraries. Around half of these users had seen promotional brochures in English, whilst the remaining half had seen promotional brochures in Vietnamese, about library services including Vietnamese language collections. Users commented that the brochure provided very general information about the Vietnamese language collection as part of the library services but did not provide anything that they did not already know. One library user commented that the brochure would be good for a brand new library user but not for regular visitors who wanted more specific information about the Vietnamese language collection.

When asked the main reasons for a large number of Vietnamese people not using library services, all participants nominated the following reasons:

- Language barrier and limited or no English language skills
- Lack of awareness of Vietnamese language collections
- Lack of time to read due to work commitments
- Inability to read in any language
- Perception that libraries are for students and intellectual people only

Promotion It was suggested that the library should organise book launches and/or book introductions for Vietnamese readers as a regular library activity. Advertising newly arrived titles, including periodicals and videotapes would also increase the collections accessibility. It was also suggested that the library should produce a promotional handout, in Vietnamese, outlining the details of the Vietnamese language collection available in the library. Ideas for promotion include:

- Advertising newly arrived Vietnamese books, magazines and video tapes
- Organising Vietnamese books week
- Book or library talks on SBS Radio's Vietnamese language program

All participants nominated the following library activities or services of which they said they were aware of:

- Reference materials for research such as local or family history
- Books and other materials in English and community languages, including Vietnamese
- Community information
- Photocopier
- Computer facilities
- Toys for children
- Programs for children
- Services for housebound people

Feedback on possible future multicultural services

When asked what local libraries could do to improve their Vietnamese language collection, participants responded unanimously that libraries should acquire more Vietnamese language materials, published in Vietnam and overseas (North America and Western Europe).

Participants also advised that local libraries should maintain their Vietnamese language collection shelving in order and regularly promote their available services to the local Vietnamese communities.

All participants appear to be appreciative of the free, accessible and professional services provided by local libraries. However, they seem to have repeatedly stressed the point that local libraries' Vietnamese language collections are too small, and that local libraries should therefore acquire more Vietnamese language materials in order to satisfy the enormous library needs of Vietnamese speaking library users.

Appendix 2

The public libraries used by participants consulted during the research process include the following:

• Campsie	• Lakemba	• Bankstown
• Riverwood	• Padstow	• Willoughby
• Auburn	• Liverpool	• Parramatta
• Fairfield	• Waterloo	• Strathfield
• Penrith	• Mascot	• Eastgardens
• Waverley	• Hurstville	• Surry Hills
• Maroubra	• Dulwich Hill	• Wetherill Park
• Marrickville	• Cabramatta	• Carlingford
• Liverpool	• Ashfield	
• Kogarah	• Warrawong	• Casula
• Hornsby	• Unandarra	• Woolgoolga
• Wollongong	• Randwick	• Oak Flats
• Canterbury	• Petersham	• Sydney
• Leichhardt	• Merrylands	

