Multilingual/Multicultural Collections And Services

A Draft Proposal

Working Group on Collection Policies

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September 19, 2001
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MULTILINGUAL/MULTICULTURAL COLLECTIONS AND SERVICES

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

Multilingual/multicultural Canadian society

According to historian and journalist Gwynne Dyer, Canada is becoming “the most spectacularly diverse country in the world”\(^1\), indeed the most diverse society that has ever existed. In 1967, Canada opened its gates to immigrants of every colour, faith and language and this decision changed our country forever. Canada is now becoming “the world in one country”\(^2\). It is also a country that does not try to impose a new uniform identity on its immigrants and even encourages them to maintain their identity, their language, and their culture. In 1971, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy. The Canadian Multicultural Act affirmed the value and dignity of Canadian citizens regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, their language or their religious affiliation. This Act also confirmed the rights of Aboriginal peoples and the status of Canada’s two official languages.

Multiculturalism in Canada has moved beyond the original role of providing special programs and services to new immigrants. Our diversity has now become a national asset. Canadians who speak many languages and understand many cultures make it easier for Canada to participate globally in education, science and technology, trade and diplomacy. Globalization and recent advances in technology are producing a borderless, multilingual world where international communication and international trade are more important than ever. “With globalization and increased migration, the focus of multiculturalism is expanding to include not only local minorities within a national context but also ethnocultural groups within a global society and economy. In a global society we are all members of a minority ‘tribes’ interacting and developing as individual human beings in a multicultural context”\(^3\).

Canadian Population

The linguistic and cultural mix of the Canadian population is clearly changing rapidly. Some basic information on the most recent demographic breakdown for heritage languages in Canada, including language spoken in the home, illustrates this point. The visible minority population has doubled between 1986 and 1996, and in Toronto and Vancouver comprises almost one third of the population. In the ten years from 1986 to 1996, the Chinese language has almost tripled; Arabic, Tagalog, Punjabi, Russian, Korean and Spanish have more than tripled; Vietnamese and Polish have increased two and a half times; while Italian and Ukrainian languages have decreased slightly. The most recent Citizenship and Immigration Canada annual report Facts and Figures 1999:

\(^1\) Dyer, Gwynne, “Visible majorities”, *Canadian Geographic*, Jan/Feb 2001, pp. 44-51
\(^2\) Ibid.
Immigration Overview lists the following top 10 countries for immigration to Canada from 1997 to 1999: China, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Korea, Iran, U.S.A., Taiwan, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Russia, Hong Kong. It is not known which linguistic groups are immigrating to Canada from the U.S.A and U.K. During the same period, the origins of principal applicants and dependants breaks down as follows: 50.77% from Asia and Pacific; 20.50% from Europe and the U.K.; 17.62% from Africa and the Middle East; 8% from South and Central America; 2.9% from the U.S.A and .21% not stated. It will be interesting to see how the results of the 2001 census further fine-tune these trends.

The rapidly changing mix of the Canadian population has an increasing impact on information and library services in the country. Today, Toronto has the distinction of being the most multicultural city in the world and is representative of the trend toward amalgamation of several smaller municipalities into “Mega-Cities” that have a great variety of linguistic groups and cultures in their make-up. In this increasing complex multilingual and multicultural climate, public libraries have to develop new and creative approaches to their collections and services.

Knowledge of demographic numbers alone however is not enough. Libraries have also to recognize and constantly adapt to cultural and linguistic differences when designing their collections and services. As well as specific individual information needs, immigrants bring with them the attitudes to reading and learning and to libraries as institutions that are prevalent in their home country. These factors affect whether they use libraries and for what purposes. As an illustration of this point, public librarians from New York City indicated that the Chinese, Philippine and Russian newcomers use library services most. They read for pleasure, they seek information sources and they learn English through many different services provided by these libraries.

Multilingual Biblioservice

In 1973, the National Library of Canada (NLC) created the Multilingual Biblioservice (MBS), a central distribution system to provide library services in heritage languages to interested Canadians. It was an ambitious and soon to be internationally renowned program. The service was created as a direct response to the Cabinet directives on the Multicultural program of the 1970s and the CLA resolution of 1970 to study the distribution of multilingual books from a central point. The Multilingual Biblioservice was initially intended to supplement materials in local library collections, but as the financial and human resources of public libraries diminished, many smaller libraries became totally dependent on the service. Materials were distributed with catalogue records and circulation within the province was handled by the provincial library services. Lists of publishers were produced to aid libraries in selecting and acquiring materials for their own collections. As the linguistic mix of different regions or even cities changed during the last decade, the need of member libraries for different languages and different types of reading material also changed. After twenty years of successful operation, book distribution through MBS ended in 1994, as a result of the NLC’s response to Program Review. Collection materials were redistributed across the country to the participating libraries.
In 1994, following consultations with the multilingual library community, the National Library of Canada also developed and released guidelines for multicultural collections and services in the publication, *A World of Information: Creating Multicultural Collections and Programs in Canadian Public Libraries*. This tool, directed primarily at small and medium sized libraries, covered topics such as building collections, demographic profiles, promotion and programs, community involvement, and staff training.

Since 1995, there has essentially been no new or revived activity in the multilingual/multicultural area at the National Library of Canada. Today, the methods for building multicultural/multilingual collections and services at the NLC can be approached in a variety of ways but not necessarily though a countrywide central distribution model. New technologies, particularly the Internet and electronic publishing, allow for innovative ways to deliver materials and services to diverse linguistic communities. It is therefore necessary to rethink these services and adapt them to the new realities.

**CANADIAN SOLUTION**

**Heritage collections and services**

More and more, researchers and politicians stress the four population factors in Canadian society: the Aboriginal peoples, the French, the English and the Ethnic. The last group, diverse in all its cultural and linguistic attributes, will eventually outnumber the French and the English. As a national library, our collections and services should better reflect the current linguistic and cultural reality. People seek information that is a representation of themselves, whatever the medium, and as “a library for all Canadians”, we must ensure they seek and find themselves here.

The Working Group on Collection Policies decided to take a global approach to the collections and services in heritage languages in Canada. Not only collections and services at the National Library of Canada were considered but also services coordinated or supported by the NLC, but delivered from the local library, and those resources and services that could be made available from international sources.

An initial analysis of the needs of Canadians for heritage languages materials and a review of the initiatives currently in place in the country to meet these needs was done by the Working Group through a series of meetings, conferences, and personal contacts with many activists in this area. These consultations confirmed a need for heritage languages materials and also a need to improve and expand on existing services. The consultations also illustrated that the NLC should return to playing a leading role in developing and expanding multilingual and multicultural collections and services in the country, including expanding the NLC’s own collections and coordinating collection efforts both nationally and internationally.
The Working Group on Collections Policy reviewed several approaches the NLC could take to multilingual/multicultural collections. Different models currently in place both in Canada and abroad were investigated and evaluated. A survey questionnaire was sent to the 22 Canadian public libraries that were participants in the MBS program to determine the current status of their multilingual collections and services and in order to better understand and define their needs. (See Appendix I) All but one of the libraries contacted responded. The survey answers provided basic information on the current situation for large and small libraries in all regions of the country including, for example, the size of collections, number of heritage languages collected, the percentage of budget allocated to heritage language materials, and the language expertise of staff. The libraries were also asked to indicate their support for a variety of potential roles and programs of the NLC and their interest in certain national initiatives.

The survey results revealed that most small to medium sized libraries have little or no budget dollars allocated to develop their heritage languages collections and that these collections have remained basically unchanged since MBS was disbanded. These smaller libraries with static collections were therefore very interested in potential initiatives such as grant programs for collection building or support through centralized distributed collections. Indeed, all the libraries surveyed supported the idea of developing a grant program with appropriate library authorities for assistance in the acquisition of heritage languages materials. The larger libraries surveyed were actively developing their collections and services and were most concerned about specific issues such as the shortage of language specialists and inadequate technological support. There was strong support by the majority of libraries for partnerships and coordinated collecting; for the provision of collection development tools, such as directories, lists of suppliers, new publications alerts; for the creation of a NLC Web site window to organize relevant information on collections in Canada; for the development of a NLC Web portal with organized links to electronic resources in various languages around the world; and for a formal study to be conducted on the needs for other language materials in Canada. Many of the libraries saw a role for the National Library as a promoter and advocate for multilingual/multicultural library services in Canada at the national level.

The Working Group also investigated in more detail the collection models and activities of several Canadian libraries in the provision of multilingual collections and services, including Toronto Public Library, Calgary Public Library, Vancouver Public Library, and the Provincial Library of Saskatchewan. The Working Group concentrated its investigations on public libraries providing direct services to multicultural communities. Provincial libraries as a whole were not consulted, as they appear to be in a transition period concerning their role in the provision of multilingual services. Studies on multilingual library services done by British Columbia Library Services Branch and by the Ottawa Public Library were also reviewed. The findings and recommendations of these two studies, the results of the individual library investigations, as well as the survey responses, have all been incorporated in the recommendations of this report.
More research and more consultations, however, are needed on some general issues such as: the amount of reading done in original languages by different ethnic groups, the relationship between language spoken at home and library services, the relationship between the length of stay in Canada and the type of material requested/borrowed/accessed by new Canadians, and the use of new technologies by different linguistic groups. It would also be useful to determine why some groups are benefiting from libraries and others are not, and how to encourage the use of libraries among non-users. In addition, there is a need to study the impact and value of library services on the future lives and careers of these clients. Such future studies could reside on the NLC Web site and be accessible in electronic format to other libraries.

Collection models used internationally for different languages materials were also considered to determine which model/models could have relevance for the National Library of Canada and whether international cooperation could help in the delivery of services in Canada. Included were the methods of collection currently being used or contemplated by other national libraries, such as the National Library of Australia and the national libraries of Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland. The approaches being taken by the Nordic and Australian state libraries and the models used by New York, Queens, and Brooklyn public libraries were also reviewed.

Library services for the New Millennium

It is clear that new collecting models and new means of service delivery for heritage languages resources have to be considered for the future. The role the National Library of Canada will play in coordinating or creating these services has to be determined and re-defined. The underlying assumptions are that these services should be available to all and everywhere in the country and should come from a variety of sources. The sources would include: from the National Library of Canada, collections of Canadiana, foreign Canadiana, digital collections, and general, middle level materials in heritage languages (not popular and not academic); from public libraries and some ethnic libraries, mainly local information resources and reading for pleasure materials; and from well organized and accessible Internet sites and Web portals, links to resources worldwide, links which could potentially be jointly created and maintained through some type of international consortium, for example, under the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

The vision and global, integrated approach taken by the Working Group in its recommendations therefore encompasses collections of the National Library of Canada, collections of a variety of Canadian libraries, i.e., public, research, and ethnic, as well as collections of other world libraries. All formats are considered, printed and electronic, physical and on-line. Virtual global multilingual resources, created currently in a variety of languages on the Internet and evaluated by libraries in U.S.A, Europe and Australia, and links created with multilingual access on their Web sites, are included in this vision.
The use of the most current technology (operating systems, browsers) and Unicode to deliver services in all languages are also important elements of the approach. The Working Group also recognizes that for all these collections and access services to be effective and relevant, they have to be provided at the local level. Local libraries are in tune with their local communities, and provided with appropriate assistance at the national level, they will be better able to meet the demands for services in heritage languages.
Recommendations

I. NATIONAL LIBRARY ROLE

1. General

(a) Re-establish a leadership role for the National Library of Canada in supporting, promoting, coordinating, and delivering multilingual collections and services to all Canadians,
(b) Consult further with libraries and ethnic communities, and working level specialists, to discuss such issues as: information needs of ethnic groups, collections contents, access, required technology and human resources; through venues such as, national conferences, meetings, workshops, individual consultations, etc.,
(c) Coordinate the review and update of national multicultural library services guidelines for Canadian public libraries found in A World of Information, 1994.

II. NLC COLLECTIONS

1. Canadiana Collections (includes titles in all formats in heritage languages published in Canada, also called, ethnic Canadiana)

(a) Increase efforts to acquire all titles under legal deposit. Purchase older materials not subject to legal deposit. Expand collecting to include local histories in heritage languages in cases where these materials are not collected at the local library level,
(b) Develop outreach program to ethnic publishers. Increase number of legal deposit information sheets in heritage languages and make them available on the Web. Make information sheets available to ethnic media and organizations,
(c) Organize and promote multilingual/multicultural collections held by the NLC and showcase these through AMICUS, CD, bibliographies and guides, exhibits, music programs, articles in the ethnic media, etc.,
(d) Use Unicode to provide access in the language of the publication (non-Roman scripts),
(e) Increase visibility of ethnic press and other ethnic media at the NLC, e.g. through "New Books" project,
(f) Create quarterly “New Acquisitions” listing on the Web, searchable by language, to market titles,
(g) Digitize ethnic Canadiana, such as earliest ethnic newspapers.
2. **Foreign Canadiana** *(includes titles in all formats published abroad, by Canadians, or about Canada/Canadians, many in heritage languages)*

(a) Increase acquisitions efforts, increase collection budget; involve ethnic media, ethnic organizations and resource centers, cooperate with the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS), research community, and Canadian citizens,

(b) Showcase and market titles, create exhibits and bibliographies, co-operate with other national libraries, Canadian studies centers, and ethnic organizations to receive copies, or be alerted about foreign Canadiana,

(c) Use Unicode to provide access in the language of the publication (non-Roman scripts),

(d) Include these titles in the “New Acquisitions” product.

3. **General multilingual/multicultural collections**

(a) Expand the National Library of Canada’s collection policy in support of the study of Canada to include standard/seminal works of the cultures/countries represented in Canadian society. Materials collected to include, for example, works related to the country of origin’s political systems, philosophy, religion, economic structure, social practices, literature and culture; collected in original languages, or in translation, as well as in English and French. Collection would be for all Canadians, new as well as established,

(b) Revise existing collection policy to allow for collecting in other languages and remove references to exclusion of other languages, or predominance of English and French in collecting,

(c) Begin acquisition of works of the three to five largest linguistic groups (based on most recent Census). Obtain support of appropriate ethnic groups, help from Ottawa diplomatic community, and renewed or new agreements with exchange partners to reduce costs of acquisitions,

(d) Develop a new model for language and subject specialists: establish network of languages specialists within the NLC and in the National Capital Region, within the ethnic media, ethnic schools, and different translation professionals. When needed, consider full time specialists with needed language and subject knowledge to support this expansion of collections and services. Integrate activity with that for heritage languages Canadiana collections,

(e) Promote access to these resources, provide interlibrary loan on this collection. Market it through the “New Acquisitions” list, reviews in ethnic press, exhibits and outreach program. Organize festivals, concerts and other events to promote multicultural resources.

4. **International reference works**
(a) Maintain both current and retrospective collections of national bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and current information resources about countries of the world, in languages of interest to Canadians,
(b) Make these works easily accessible to all Canadians, e.g., onsite, locate materials in the Reference or Reading Rooms
(c) Provide access to the online electronic resources in NLC collections and also to those available from other national libraries sites,
(d) Use Unicode to provide access in the language of publication (non-Roman scripts),
(e) Promote and market these resources.

5. Publications of international organizations

(a) Update the existing collection policy on a regular basis to reflect current Canadian interests,
(b) Maintain a record of collection policy decisions for specific international organizations and make it available on the NLC Web site; indicate other Canadian libraries now designated as depository libraries or those holding comprehensive collections of documents, including loan information, e.g. University of Alberta Library for printed publications of the World Trade Organization, University of Ottawa Library for World Bank publications, Library of Parliament for OECD publications,
(c) Provide access as well to relevant online publications by linking to electronic publishing and sites through the NLC Web site,
(d) Link to and benefit from sites providing comprehensive access on-line created by other Canadian and American research libraries,
(e) Develop global approach and selectively archive electronic Canadian content from these organizations, regardless of language,
(f) Determine human resources needed to acquire and provide access to these resources.

6. Publications of foreign governments

(a) Implement approved revised collection policy, Official Publications of Foreign Governments, continue collection concentration on three countries: France, United Kingdom, and United States, publicize the revised policy,
(b) Designate “national collections” of foreign official publications in Canadian libraries for countries not collected by NLC, make information on collections readily available on-line,
(c) Continue to hold foreign official exchange agreements at the NLC, but have materials sent directly to designated libraries,
(d) Distribute collections of foreign official publications now in storage and unwanted collection materials currently received through Gifts and Exchanges to designated libraries,
(e) Prepare and sign agreements with all designated libraries on access and services. Use model of UBC and Chinese publications, make information on agreements readily available on-line,
(f) Increase access through the NLC website to electronic government resources of different countries (electronic databases and links to the Internet resources),
(g) Appoint someone to the specialist-librarian position for foreign government publications with combined responsibilities for foreign printed, electronic materials and online (Web) materials.

III. CANADIAN LIBRARIES

1. Collections

(a) Create a window on the NLC Web site for an interactive directory of multilingual collections in Canadian libraries. Add links to libraries’ catalogues,
(b) Investigate with Canadian libraries the opportunities for partnership and coordinated collecting.

2. Selection, acquisitions and access

(a) Provide collection development tools, such as directories, guides/lists of suppliers, vendors, bookstores, new publications alerts,
(b) Create an interactive site to exchange selection and acquisition information as well as brief abstracts in English/French and source language, when applicable,
(c) Set up an agency service or consortium for centralized (online) selection, ordering and cataloguing,
(d) Create a union catalogue of heritage languages collections to aid shared cataloguing data and ILL (records contributed by participating libraries),
(e) Develop and make available to Canadian libraries technical support and information on software needed to provide access to collections and services in heritage languages (Unicode, operating systems, browsers).

3. Internet services

(a) Create NLC listserv for Canadian libraries and interested Canadians to exchange ideas and information on issues related to multicultural library (MCL) services,
(b) Provide online access to up-to-date statistical information on newcomers and Canadian ethnic communities. Create guides and provide access to studies on these communities including information available on collections and information services,
(c) Provide online access to up-to-date information on grants available to support MCL in Canadian libraries, ongoing initiatives, guidelines, best practices, etc.,
(d) Develop online lists of published resources related to MCL services and collections, bibliographies, studies, conference papers, etc.
(e) Link with, or provide information on, “MCL” (Multicultural Library, a Nordic joint venture initiated in 1996) and Australia’s “mclforum” (established in 2000), in order to facilitate discussion on issues and ideas involved in the provision of Multicultural Library Services,

(f) Develop cooperative ventures to digitize Canadian multilingual and multicultural heritage. Consult with ethnic communities and Canadian research communities prior to digitizing selected titles or languages (e.g., newspapers, publishing of local ethnic organizations),

(g) Create a NLC multicultural Web site providing access to evaluated Internet resources in heritage languages. Link to other resources evaluated by other libraries, e.g. Queens WorldLinQ, State Library of Victoria (Australia) Open Road, or Denmark’s FINFO.

4. Financial and human resources

(a) Develop, in consultation with appropriate library authorities, a grant program for provinces and territories for acquisition assistance for multilingual materials,

(b) Create at the NLC a permanent position of Multicultural Librarian (in National and International Programs) to coordinate library services, maintain contact with ethnic communities, keep abreast of new developments and new technological approaches, as well as maintain national and international involvement. Consider staffing this position for a three to five year period as assignment for librarians from multilingual Canadian or international libraries,

(c) Create a forum of Canadian libraries: research, provincial, public and ethnic, to better understand the needs of multicultural communities and to coordinate/develop appropriate services. Benefit from the knowledge and expertise of Canadian librarians such as Marie Zielinska, Stan Skrzeszewski, Chryss Mylopoulos and Sylvia Crooks, to name just a few. Use teleconferencing and/or on site meetings in libraries with extensive multilingual services,

(d) Develop a Canadian directory of language specialists (librarians, library assistants, translators, and ethnic media),

(e) Develop a recruitment initiative similar to the LS Aboriginal trainee program in order to increase languages and cultures represented in library staff and to address the shortage of language expertise, consider as well a program geared to library technicians and subject specialists.

5. Consultations

(a) Consult, on continuing basis, with public libraries, library associations, ethnic libraries and organizations, as well as Canadian citizens, on all approved recommendations,

(b) Support studies of information needs and reading for pleasure materials of Canadian multicultural communities,

(c) Create a national Multicultural Consultative Committee to establish protocols and guidelines for consultative processes at the national and local levels.
IV. INTERNATIONAL LIBRARIES

1. Virtual international multilingual library

(a) Participate in the creation of an international “virtual multicultural/multilingual library” to provide interactive, cooperative services to Canadian libraries and also directly to Canadians. Support appropriate software and technologies to properly display non-Roman characters. Contribute “Canadian view”,

(b) Co-operate with IFLA, the American Library Association (ALA), American public libraries, Australian libraries, as well as the Nordic countries, to develop global approaches and collaboration similar to the CDRS (Collaborative Digital Reference Service),

(c) Actively participate in IFLA’s Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations. Renew membership in this section; contribute to information and staff exchanges.