Public Library Services to Canadian Ethnocultural Communities: An Overview

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Services to ethnocultural minorities emerged as one of the major trends in librarianship during the 1970s and in the coming decade will become a regular service feature in all public libraries which serve a population of mixed ethnic background. Obviously, the scope and type of services to be developed in each country will depend on the composition and background of the communities to be served. Although the purpose of this article is to give an overview of the Canadian scene with respect to library services in the nonofficial languages, it is impossible to present a clear picture without placing the subject in a historical and demographic context. The author also wishes to give recognition to those individuals from the library world and from the ethnic groups whose concern and efforts laid the cornerstones of present structures.

Historical Background

Canada, like its southern neighbor, is a nation of immigrants. With the exception of the native people, Canadians derive their origins from all corners of the world. According to official sources, Canada contains "over eighty ethnocultural groups, and practically every major race, creed, and culture is represented in it."1 Because Canada never officially accepted a "melting pot" approach to immigrants, and because multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was recognized in 1971 as the formal governmental policy,2 the Canadian citizenry represents a color-
ful mosaic in which most groups have retained, to a lesser or larger degree, an interest in their language and an attachment to the culture of their forefathers.

The first two centuries of Canadian history were a period of colonization and rivalry between the French and the British who were to hold power over this vast and rich territory. The first settlers of non-French and non-British origin were a group of Germans who arrived in the mid-eighteenth century and settled in Nova Scotia. After the American Revolution, United Empire Loyalists of British, German and Dutch origin migrated from the United States to Canada. By the time of Confederation in 1867, the date that marks the beginning of Canada as a state and also the formulation of a legislated immigration policy, there were, besides those groups already mentioned, settlers of Irish, Scottish, Polish, and Swiss origin, as well as some blacks.

The post-Confederation years witnessed a strong expansion westward. The building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad created a great demand for workers and started an influx of Chinese laborers, who settled later mainly in British Columbia.

Homesteading brought to Canada large numbers of people from eastern Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. Several groups, such as the Mennonites and Doukhobors, negotiated bloc settlements with the Canadian government prior to immigration; there also was a general tendency to settle near other immigrants from the same village or at least from the same country. Such group settlements slowed integration in the host society but contributed greatly to the preservation of ancestral languages and cultures. Although the majority of participants in the “Great Immigration” were farmers and unskilled laborers, it would be erroneous to think that pre-World War I immigrants had no interest whatsoever in books and reading. Need for the written word generated the creation of small ethnic libraries early in the century. They were usually housed in and administered by churches, which were not only places of worship but also centers of social and intellectual life in the community.

Even before the turn of the century, public libraries started to make certain efforts to add to their collections books in languages other than English. For example, Toronto Public Library bought in 1885 “a limited number” of French and German books. By 1909, the library made a substantial number of books in several languages available to the readers, and “Russian and Yiddish books circulated well in the 1920s.”
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The public library in Regina, Saskatchewan, started to buy books in various languages at the turn of the century. In 1908, $224 was spent to purchase 100 books in German; in 1912, books in French, and in 1914, books in Romanian and Russian were added. Even at this early date, funds appear to have been regularly allocated for the purchase of books in various languages.

Another library which pioneered in services in languages other than English was the Ottawa Public Library. It had from its beginning in 1906 a bilingual (i.e., English and French) collection, which at that period was a very progressive and innovative policy. One year later, the library also started to purchase books in German, and by 1909 these numbered 800 volumes. In 1910 a special amount of money was earmarked for the purchase of books in German, Scandinavian and other languages.

The report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Libraries’ Conditions and Needs in Canada, published in 1933, stated that: “Another bi-lingual library [apart from Ottawa’s] is found in Kitchener, but here the second language is German. This library is noted for its fine collection of clippings, pictures, and lantern slides, and the care with which they are arranged. One can conceive of a very interesting regional library that would have Kitchener as its center, for the surrounding communities are largely German.” The German collection there was started in 1904, and soon afterward books in Polish were added.

Books were donated to a library sometimes by individuals or ethnic organizations. Purchasing was often the result of pressures exerted by ethnic communities. For example, the library board of the Saskatoon Public Library received nine requests for books in Russian in 1916 and approved a budget of $20 for their acquisition. Later (1934), several hundred German books were donated by the Concordia Club of Saskatoon and a cultural association in Germany. In 1935, seven Ukrainian organizations asked for books in Ukrainian; the board agreed to make purchases and accept donations.

The years after World War I brought an interesting change in the type of immigrants who continued to arrive until the time of the Great Depression. The focus by immigration authorities shifted in the 1920s from farmers to skilled laborers. These immigrants settled mainly in Ontario, which soon became the richest and most developed Canadian province. The new arrivals settled in the mushrooming urban centers. They still tended to cluster in specific areas, often creating ethnic ghettos where their presence was sufficiently apparent to attract the attention of public librarians.
In 1929, the Ontario Library Association appointed a Committee on Books for the Foreign Born. The association charged the committee “to prepare a list of books suitable for use in Canadianization work among the foreign born citizens of Canada” in order to help “the absorption of the foreign born into our national life.” This reflects the spirit of “Anglo-conformity” which, despite some individual efforts to promote cultural pluralism, was the predominant ideology in English-speaking Canada from the beginning of the large-scale immigration period until World War II. However, it was stressed that Canadians “must not lose sight of the fact that the foreigner from the older countries of Europe has much to contribute to our new Canadian civilization.”

There was a decisive change in the type of immigrants who began to come to Canada in large numbers after 1940. Most of the new arrivals were from war-torn Europe, and were highly skilled and educated. They were politically sensitized, aware of the value of their own culture, and usually interested in keeping in touch and following the political, social and cultural developments in their mother country. Unlike earlier immigrants, they visited the public library in their new area within days of settling. Many of the “displaced persons” came to the library asking for dictionaries, language-learning aids and books in their language “to help them get through the first month of loneliness.”

Toronto Takes the Lead

Although the new immigrants were settling all over the country, Toronto attracted particularly large groups of newcomers. Between 1950 and 1960, about 380,000 people from abroad settled within Toronto’s city limits, raising the proportion of the population of non-British origin to almost 60 percent. Individual libraries then started to acquire material in various languages to meet the needs of their new patrons. Collections were built in a rather fortuitous way, however, without any coordination or clearly set goals. A lack of central records precluded interlibrary loans and made the books accessible to local patrons only. The chief librarian of the Toronto Public Library, H.C. Campbell, was aware of the situation and established a Foreign Literature Collection, officially opened on May 14, 1957, in an area with a large number of immigrants of various ethnic origin. The center was to serve local readers, as well as to act as a central distribution point for the whole library system. To ensure high standards of library material, a special selection committee of more than twenty members from the library staff
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was created. In addition, cooperation of several prominent librarians in Europe was secured for the periodical submission of suggested acquisition lists. Selection criteria were geared on the one hand toward recreational literature, standard classics and works by outstanding contemporary writers representing their national literature, as well as literary histories and other reference works, and on the other, toward language-learning material, both written and audiovisual. The following year saw the establishment of a self-instruction center for language learning with audiovisual materials, and the organization of a diversified cultural program, including book and craft exhibits, art shows, and ethnic dance and musical presentations. Renamed the Languages and Literature Centre, it opened a lending service on a rental basis to help libraries outside Toronto. Blocks of books were sent to requesting libraries for a renewable six-month period. Within a short time, requests for books started to come in from as far as British Columbia. The monthly (later quarterly) list of acquisitions published by the center soon became an important book selection tool for many libraries across the country. The year 1968 brought a major reorganization due to the establishment of the Metropolitan Toronto Library Board, a body created to coordinate library activities of the city and five boroughs, each of which had its own library network. The Languages and Literature Centre, with its collection of 31,000 volumes, was taken over by the new central body, and a year later moved to the central library building, its name abbreviated to the Languages Centre.

Parallel with administrative changes came changes in the character of the library. From the original branch library there developed a fine literature and language learning center. By the end of 1979 it had a collection of over 110,000 monographs in seventy languages, 5850 records, tapes and cassettes for teaching 130 languages as well as teaching English as a second language, and 282 serial subscriptions. Newspapers are received in thirty-seven languages and periodicals in thirty languages. About 75 percent of the monograph collection is kept in the Languages Centre and 25 percent is circulated through the Metro Library System in the form of deposits to requesting libraries.

Besides maintaining the Languages Centre, the library board established the Languages Coordinator Office. The incumbent's function was to coordinate the activities of all Toronto library systems in the field of multilingual library services and act as advisor and liaison officer for the system. As time passed, it became clear that not enough power was vested in the coordinator's office to allow effective direction of services throughout the city, and that restructuring was necessary. Following
the recommendations of the Metro Multilanguages Services Study (1978-80), the Coordinator's Office has now been replaced by a Regional Multilanguage Service Office. The manager will act as executive director of the Metro Multilanguage Services Committee, composed of representatives from all boroughs and city library systems. The service will develop a cooperative acquisition and cataloging program, as well as collections for circulating deposits in languages in which readership is not large enough to warrant acquisition by the individual library systems. The service will also administer deposits from the Multilingual Biblioservice of the National Library of Canada.

The organization of a Metro Toronto multilingual services system is the first serious attempt in Canada to create a functional, cooperative network in this area of library work. If successful, the system will gradually cover the whole province, creating an organizational model for other provinces or even other countries.

The Multilingual Biblioservice

The lending service of the Languages and Literature Centre had become so successful within a few years that the demands for assistance started to overtax its facilities, forcing the Canadian library community to search for another solution to the problem. In 1968 the Canadian Library Association initiated a survey to identify resources in and need for books in non-English languages; the results were published in the Canadian Library Journal. Seventy-three libraries reported collections in languages other than English—only 47 percent had collections of more than 500 volumes, and 17.8 percent had fewer than 100 volumes. Only six libraries reported holdings of more than 10,000 volumes, but even this figure must be cut by about half because it includes French collections. To avoid confusion in the interpretation of data given here, it should be remembered that despite the fact that both French and English have been lawfully recognized by the Official Languages Act of 1969 as Canada's official languages, many libraries, particularly those situated in predominantly English-speaking provinces, still include statistical data concerning holdings in the French language in their reports on "foreign" languages. (In accordance with the Official Languages Act, all data in this article have been adjusted to cover nonofficial languages only.)

*For readers not fully acquainted with conditions in Canada, it is useful to add that notwithstanding the Official Languages Act cited, the promotion of French-language material is a matter of great concern in many Canadian library communities where French is not normally spoken, and where the necessary efforts by libraries present the same kinds of problems as "other" languages. Individual efforts are supplemented by provincial government and by the (federal) Secretary of State Department.
The answers to the survey questionnaire showed that:

1. Many libraries are interested in providing services to all ethnocultural groups in their area.
2. Of those surveyed, 72 percent actually acquire books in several languages, although in the majority of cases the stock is built up mainly by gifts and occasional purchases.
3. Only the largest libraries can cope reasonably well with this type of material.
4. All would welcome assistance in this matter, preferably in the form of loans of fully processed books.

These findings suggested that a central agency was needed to serve as a backup for all public libraries across the country. In 1970 the Canadian Library Association voted to establish a committee to prepare recommendations.

The report of the committee recommending the creation of a multilingual library within the National Library of Canada coincided with the introduction of multiculturalism as the official ethnocultural relations policy of the Canadian government. The favorable political atmosphere contributed greatly to the positive attitudes toward the committee's recommendation, as well as to its ultimate acceptance and speedy implementation. In fall 1973 the Multilingual Biblioservice (MBS) began operation as a division of the National Library of Canada.

Public libraries in Canada fall under provincial jurisdiction, so MBS works through the mediation of provincial library systems rather than dealing directly with individual libraries. The service is regulated by a contract between the national library and provincial authorities. According to the agreement, provincial library systems survey their communities' needs for books in languages other than English and French, and channel their requests, which contain the bulk requirements broken down by language, to MBS. Books are then sent free of charge to designated provincial deposit centers. These centrally located libraries in turn circulate the books throughout the network of public libraries in their province according to local needs. Originally, the loan period of books was delimited and varied from six months to three years, depending on local requirements. In 1979, as a result of budgetary constraints, the regular circulation system was replaced by long-term deposits. Centers are now encouraged to exchange books among themselves, although this is limited by differing language requirements from one province to another. Books which will be of no use in the area can, of course, be returned to MBS to be checked, repaired or rebound, and sent to another part of the country. Despite these changes, the general distribution scheme is maintained. All twenty-seven deposit centers receive, by the end of the calendar year, a questionnaire listing all the...
languages in which books are available from MBS. The centers are requested to submit their needs before the end of February to allow proper work planning for the new fiscal year. Demand grew rapidly over the first three years (1974-77) and amounts presently to 65-67,000 volumes requested annually. The rapid growth in the first three years can be attributed to two factors: increasing realization by librarians and members of ethnocultural communities of the availability of books in other languages through the network of public libraries, and the yearly expansion of resources by covering five additional languages. Because only 40-45 percent of incoming requests could be filled, no new languages have been added to the present twenty-six since 1978. When at least 80-90 percent of book requests can be filled, or additional funds and manpower become available, operations will be enlarged.

In 1976 the Directors of Ontario Regional Library Systems (DORLS) formed a Committee on Multilingual Library Services to analyze their status in the province and to suggest improvements. One of the actions taken by the committee was a survey of languages handled in the various libraries, or for which the need was known (see table 1). The list covered fifty-nine languages; to this must be added the languages which are quite popular in other provinces. It can be said that a central library such as MBS must carry collections in at least sixty-five languages to fill the reading needs of the majority of Canadian citizens.

Inuit (i.e., Eskimo) and Indian languages constitute a group apart. Both peoples have basically an oral culture, and a written language is, in many cases, only recently being developed. Since MBS has not started to handle audiovisual material, Inuit and Indian languages are not covered by its mandate.

The material MBS presently concentrates on is primarily of a nonscholarly nature, intended for leisure reading. Collections consist of 40 percent contemporary fiction, 30 percent children’s books, and 30 percent subject-oriented works, such as biographies, and books on folklore (art, customs, costumes, dance, and music), travel, gardening, cooking, child care, etc. Classics of general interest and still in popular demand are also included in the collection. Whenever available, books in large print are also purchased. Unfortunately, of the languages handled by MBS, books in large print are regularly produced only in Dutch, German and Italian. Occasionally, large-print volumes can also be acquired in Swedish, Norwegian and Spanish.

**Acquisition**

The simultaneous acquisition of books in several languages presents a challenge which is often fraught with frustration and must be
## TABLE 1

**HOLDINGS OF ONTARIO REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEMS IN MAJOR NONOFFICIAL LANGUAGES, DECEMBER 1978**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Number of Volumes</th>
<th>Number of Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algonquin</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Ontario</td>
<td>15,310</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Ontario</td>
<td>21,373</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian Bay</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Erie</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Ontario</td>
<td>3,421</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Toronto</td>
<td>197,162</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwestern</td>
<td>5,851</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara</td>
<td>6,748</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>4,944</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Western</td>
<td>8,533</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>20,679</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern</td>
<td>36,153</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>321,200</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Multilingual Services Committee of the Ontario Regional Library Systems. For the purpose of the committee’s work, the following were designated as “major” languages: Afrikaans, Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Marathi, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish, Tamil, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Yiddish.

worked out by trial and error. Since a detailed article on MBS acquisitions of foreign-language material appeared recently in *Collection Building,* it should suffice to say here that MBS at present uses several methods of acquisition, from selecting individual titles from book review journals and trade catalogs, through off-the-shelf buying at local ethnic bookstores, to buying at book fairs and placing blanket orders. The last method, despite certain drawbacks, is the most efficient in terms of time. In general, MBS has been successful in establishing close contact with suppliers in several countries who provide excellent service. The collection is also increased by occasional gifts from embassies and various organizations and individuals, as well as by the exchange program of the National Library of Canada. MBS is also offered the opportunity to scan the books sent as surplus material by libraries across the country to the Canadian Book Exchange Centre operated by the national library. Particularly interesting material can be acquired from stock eliminated from university bookstores. About 5 percent of the
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MBS collection comes from such gifts and exchanges.

Processing

One of the major decisions each library starting collections in foreign languages must make is which type of cataloging to apply. It is a difficult decision because a choice must be made between in-depth cataloging and brief listing, with a variety of options between the two extremes. Elements which influence the choice are availability of language expertise, time and money necessary for full cataloging, access to appropriate bibliographic sources, speed of processing, and the format of entry best suited to the reader.

MBS faced a particularly difficult choice because it had to find a system acceptable to all libraries across the country. Since speed of processing seemed a very important factor, a simplified cataloging system was developed for the MBS collection. Both the Anglo-American and ISBD rules are followed, but the author's name is used as it appears on the title page. Authority files are dispensed with, and classification is also simplified. Letter symbols are used for children's books, biographies and fiction, and a Dewey classification number of no more than three decimals is used for nonfiction, poetry, and special literary forms such as drama and essays. The call number consists of a language designation, the class number and the first three letters of the author's name. For works in non-Roman alphabets, the letters indicating the author's name are replaced by an accession number, and the cards are filed in numerical rather than alphabetical order. For filing cards for the Chinese collection, MBS adopted the numerical system used by the Toronto Public Library, which consists of six numbers in two lines representing the number of strokes in the first three symbols of the author's name and the title. A unique feature of the MBS cataloging system is the provision of bilingual (English and French) annotations which replace the subject headings. Since the entry is in the vernacular, the annotation helps the librarian to provide competent assistance to the reader and also helps the reader to make a better choice. Catalogs are provided for each shipment and prepared by photocopying the shelflist cards, which is very tedious. MBS eagerly awaits the automation of its catalog, at least the part with Roman-script entries.

MBS acquires, processes and distributes about 30,000 volumes in 26 languages yearly. Although the permanent staff combined is fluent in fifteen languages, the work load nevertheless requires that language specialists be hired on contract to aid in selection, cataloging and preparation of shipments. In the selection of contract staff, special
attention is given not only to their language expertise but also to their knowledge of the literature of the given country.

The function of MBS is not to replace the collections of public libraries, but rather to supplement them with material of current interest which can be more efficiently used through a circulating system. MBS does not provide library materials inappropriate for circulation, such as reference tools, dictionaries, language-teaching materials, newspapers, and periodicals; these should be acquired by individual libraries.

Local Holdings and Acquisition Programs

It would be impossible to provide comprehensive information on all public library collections across Canada. More appropriate, it seems, is to give a brief description of the overall situation in each province, stressing the most important and interesting collections brought to the attention of the writer through a questionnaire sent to all MBS deposit centers and major public libraries. The data thus received were supplemented by telephone inquiries.¹³

New Brunswick

Public libraries here do not own collections in languages other than English and French, although at least forty different ethnocultural groups are represented in the province's population. The major groups are German, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Italian, Lebanese, Polish, and Ukrainian. They are served through collections deposited by MBS, except for readers of Danish; books in this language are not yet available.

Newfoundland

Public libraries do not buy collections in the non-official languages, except for occasional books in German, Spanish and Portuguese, which are bought to satisfy specific requests. The public library system relies on MBS services to satisfy readers' needs for books in languages other than French and English. Major language groups are German, Norwegian, Dutch, Chinese, Italian, and Portuguese.

Prince Edward Island

The smallest of Canadian provinces, Prince Edward Island has a public library system which is only fifty years old. No books in nonofficial languages are bought by the libraries. They rely on the MBS
collections, requesting books in six languages: Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, German, Punjabi, and Urdu.

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia is the only Atlantic province which reported holdings in nonofficial languages in all four regional libraries. Quantities, though, are very limited. The most diversified holdings are owned by Cape Breton Regional Library, which received a $500 reading stimulation grant from the Canadian Federation of University Women in 1960 to provide books representative of the diversity of ethnic groups in the area. It seems, however, that user response was limited, and no further steps were taken to continue the project. The collection in the library includes works in Russian, Hebrew, Italian, German, Norwegian, Polish, Greek, Swedish, Hungarian, and Gaelic. Because the collections are not regularly updated, Nova Scotia uses the services of MBS.

Quebec

According to the 1971 census, Quebec had more than 828,000 inhabitants of non-English and non-French origin. More than two-thirds of them live in the Montreal metropolitan area. This most cosmopolitan city has a large number of private ethnic libraries but, amazingly, public libraries do not have their own programs of book acquisition in the nonofficial languages. However, the Municipal Library of St. Leonard, which serves Quebec's largest concentration of Italians, has a collection of 8000 volumes in Italian and subscribes to eight Italian periodicals. Beaconsfield Public Library has a collection of over 1500 books and subscribes to 25 periodicals and newspapers in German, Dutch, Polish, Italian, and Spanish.

An interesting example of the fine cooperation between a public library and an ethnic organization can be found in the Fraser-Hickson Institute Library in Montreal. The library has housed, since 1972, a steadily augmenting collection of about 500 Czech volumes; they are the property of the Czechoslovak National Association of Canada, which provides the books and language expertise for cataloging. The library contributes the space and services the collection.

Quebec has a large deposit of books in fifteen languages from MBS. Books are distributed through two deposit centers, one in Montreal, the other in Hull.

Ontario

Ontario, the most populated Canadian province (Ontario inhabitants account for one-third of Canada's total population), is divided
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into fourteen regional library systems, Metro Toronto being one of them. After the transfer of the Languages and Literature Centre to the central agency, the Toronto Public Library was left with only 17,000 volumes in “other” languages. From 1970 to 1974, the multilingual budget, bookstock and circulation gradually increased. The Forrester report (1975) showed clearly the existing discrepancy between the per capita holdings of materials in English and in other languages.\(^\text{14}\)

To remedy this disturbing anomaly, the Library Board of the Toronto Public Library increased drastically its 1976 budget for multilingual purchases: $122,136 was assigned in 1976, compared to $21,000 in 1975, representing a 482 percent increase. The increased stock, combined with an extensive promotional campaign, boosted circulation by 64 percent in one year. By the end of 1978, holdings stood at 106,179 volumes,\(^\text{15}\) an increase of multilingual stock between 1970 and 1978 of 476 percent, and an increase in circulation of 478 percent. Neighboring boroughs (York, East York, North York, and Scarborough) have followed the example of the Toronto Public Library and are building with considerable success their own collections in a large number of languages. In 1979 the collection grew to 123,779 volumes. (This figure must also be reduced by about 8 percent to eliminate French books, for a net figure of 115,909 volumes.)

All but four of the regional systems of Ontario develop collections of their own in nonofficial languages. In 1976, as already mentioned, the Directors of Ontario Regional Library Systems appointed a Committee on Multilingual Library Services. The committee recommended an in-depth market survey, but only the first phase, an analysis of Ontario population by sex, age and mother tongue was funded and carried out. Although limited in its scope, the survey still provided libraries with useful data for further planning.

Independently of their own acquisition programs, all Ontario regional library systems make heavy use of MBS services. Requests from Ontario represented 39 percent of the total requests received by MBS in 1979-80.

Manitoba

Over half of Manitoba’s population is of non-English, non-French ethnic origin, with large concentrations of Germans, Ukrainians, Poles, and Dutch. Manitoba also has the largest Icelandic community in Canada and a considerable number of Italians, Norwegians and Swedes. Smaller representations of practically all other ethnocultural groups exist as well. Because of the typically rural character of the province, library activities are concentrated in Winnipeg. The Winnipeg Public
Library, the first major public library on the prairies, was established in 1895, but library services have never received adequate support or financial backing from the government. Although it has a small collection in “other” languages, holdings derive from occasional gifts and the collection is not regularly developed. Services are provided by borrowing books from MBS.

**Saskatchewan**

Although Saskatchewan, Canada’s “wheat bowl,” is also predominantly rural, the province has developed an extensive library service for its population of ethnic origin, which stands at over 50 percent. In 1959, responsibility for multilingual services was transferred to the government-operated Traveling Library, later renamed the Provincial Library. As regional library service gradually developed to encompass the entire province in the late 1960s, multilingual services became centralized, and individual libraries stopped buying foreign-language books of their own. The Provincial Library has presently about 20,000 volumes in seventeen languages. Most of the books are fully cataloged according to the Dewey system. In addition, there is an extensive native collection (about 6000 volumes), but this collection is mostly in English. The material is circulated throughout the province by means of deposits in branch libraries. The collections owned by the Provincial Library are supplemented by extensive loans from MBS, which make available to the people of Saskatchewan books in five additional languages.

Regina Public Library presently owns about 3000 volumes in thirteen languages, subscribes to 13 foreign newspapers and periodicals, including 5 periodicals for children, has language instruction records in 48 languages, and a collection of folk music from various countries. Although there are still needs which cannot be met with the available resources, Saskatchewan can pride itself in having a well-organized and steadily growing library service in nonofficial languages.

**Alberta**

According to the 1971 census, slightly over 48 percent of Alberta’s total population have ethnic backgrounds other than French or English. The largest groups are the German, Ukrainian, Dutch, Norwegian, and Polish. There is also a growing Chinese community, keenly interested in library services.

Real development of province-wide multilingual services started in May 1977, when Alberta’s government approved a three-year pilot pro-
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Project by creating Alberta's Multilingual Biblioservice, "set up to establish a province-wide distribution of books received from Ottawa and to purchase and maintain a collection of books in French and other languages not provided by Ottawa." MBS Alberta recently joined University of Toronto/Library Automation Systems (UTLAS) to gain access to its cataloging data base and services. MBS Alberta has wide-range development plans, such as offering free subscriptions to selected periodicals and newspapers to rural libraries, studying the feasibility of circulating popular periodicals, and adding to the collection audiovisual materials, especially for learning languages.

Calgary Public Library presently has a collection of close to 6000 volumes in thirty-one languages, subscribes to 17 newspapers and 2 periodicals in various languages, and has 350 recordings. The library is also expanding its language-learning section; it has already acquired recordings in twenty languages for learning English.

The development of multilingual services in Alberta shows what can be achieved in three years with dynamic leadership and proper government support. It is to be hoped that the government of Alberta will continue to show an interest in the service and further its development.

British Columbia

British Columbia is the third most densely populated province of Canada and has the nation's largest Chinese community. Besides Germans, Dutch, Ukrainians, and Portuguese, there is also a very large group of Scandinavians, including Finns, Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes.

The Library Services Branch (formerly the Library Development Commission), Ministry of Recreation and Conservation, began multilingual services in 1970 as part of the Open Shelf Division. Because of the rapid growth of requests for books in nonofficial languages, the commission purchased books in Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, German, Italian, and Swedish. It later added collections in Spanish and several East Asian languages, such as Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, and recently in Vietnamese. The total collection comprises about 2200 books. Audiovisual material is not handled, nor does the Open Shelf Division subscribe to any newspapers or periodicals. It operates a direct mail service which is free to individuals living in an area not served by an established public library or library system.

Vancouver, the largest city in British Columbia, has a very well developed network of public libraries. All seven library systems of
Greater Vancouver, i.e., Burnaby, New Westminster, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Port Moody, Vancouver City, and West Vancouver, belong to the Greater Vancouver Library Federation, which allows all member libraries to use each other’s collections. The federation had hoped to build a pool-type collection of books in nonofficial languages but funds for library development were cut, seriously affecting Greater Vancouver Library Federation plans. Vancouver Public Library has books in twenty-three languages, and its collections include monographs, newspapers and periodicals. Collections in branch libraries vary depending upon the type of ethnocultural communities in the area. Total holdings are 18,000 cataloged volumes (including 6000 Chinese) and 1500 uncataloged. In cooperation with school and college authorities, who provide specially qualified teachers, one of the branches is conducting a pilot project to teach adults English as a second language. Cassette tapes and visual aids permit individual learning. In addition, the library houses a basic equivalency tutorial service, for preschool to eighth-grade levels.

Victoria Public Library holds about 3000 volumes in eight languages, audiovisual material for teaching languages, and folk music records. The collection is expanded by purchases and gifts. The Cariboo-Thompson Regional Library System, created in 1974, has holdings in languages other than French and English numbering 4000 volumes in eleven languages at the end of 1979. The library also has audiovisual teaching materials in a variety of languages, and is starting a newspaper and periodical subscription program.

A very interesting example of a planned community with an integrated network of social institutions (churches, schools, libraries, etc.) is Kitimat on the Pacific coast. The library opened in 1958 and ethnic organizations immediately began to donate books in their mother tongues. The library now carries collections in Italian, Dutch, Danish, German, Greek, Spanish, Finnish, and Portuguese. Books from the last group were donated by the government of Portugal. The German-Canadian Club looks after the selection of their own books, which they change during the year as required.

Yukon and Northwest Territories

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Conclusion

In conclusion, MBS serves as a major source for nonofficial-language books in all the provinces and territories of Canada, and for eight of these twelve, MBS is the sole supplier. Nevertheless, the introduction of multiculturalism as an official policy of the federal government prompted many libraries to take a closer look at the specific reading requirements of the population they serve and to start building their own collections in at least the most popular languages.

As experience acquired in the last decade shows, the best results in providing library services to ethnocultural groups can be achieved by division of responsibilities between a central agency and individual libraries. To achieve a comprehensive and economically viable system, close operation is needed between the federal and provincial governments with firm commitment on both sides. Much has already been achieved in this area; however, much still needs to be done to bring library services to the level required in a truly multicultural society.

To complete this overview of the Canadian scene, some consideration must also be given to other cultural activities which have become an integral part of library services. Answers to the survey questionnaire implied that only Metro Toronto libraries and some regional libraries have regular ethnic cultural programs and also sponsor classes in English for new immigrants. But almost every library surveyed reported occasional involvement in ethnic festivals and organized exhibits, story hours in various languages, puppet shows, concerts, etc. This demonstrates that although much remains to be done, there is a growing awareness on the part of Canadian libraries of the need to provide adequate services to all members of the communities they serve.

References

3. 75 Years of the Toronto Public Libraries. [Toronto, 1958?], p. 2.


7. Ibid., p. 166.


13. The author wishes to thank all librarians who responded to the questionnaire, made necessary searches and supplied needed data.


15. This figure includes French books and should be reduced by about 8 percent to read 98,000.

