

The influence of the new immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the 90's on public libraries and the appearance of alternative libraries / Sotnik Jenny

Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine the system of Israel public libraries and the emergence of alternative institutions providing Russian language library services in response to the wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union during the 1990's.

The literature describes a rich experience of dealing with immigrants both internationally and in Israel in particular during their absorption into their new country. Sensitivity to their special needs was developed as well as special services designed for ethnic minorities and immigrants in public libraries.

Over the last decade 830,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union have come to Israel. The research into their influence on various sectors of Israeli society is very complex. In the short term, their effect is felt in the spheres of employment, economy and society. Public libraries in Israel reflect the changes affecting Israeli society as a whole. My research focuses on the effect of the 1990's wave of immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union on Israeli public libraries: have special services been developed? What changes in acquisitions in the Russian language have taken place. The research covers all the public libraries in Israel and was carried out with the aid of questionnaires completed by library staff. Statistical data was gathered from the National Bureau of Statistics and the Library Department of the Ministry of Culture. Additionally, the emergence of alternative institutions focusing on Russian literature is examined.

Four research questions were asked:

- Have special services been provided for new immigrants by public libraries
- Have Russian language acquisitions increased in Israeli public libraries and, if so to what extent
- Have bookstores been established exclusively in the Russian language

In the quantitative section of the research it is proposed that most public libraries have added services for new immigrants. During the last 10 years 40.96% of libraries in Israel have established a Russian language collection. In the qualitative section, networks of Russian language bookstores established in response to the special needs of these immigrants have been identified and described.

This research will contribute to a deepening of the information regarding the influence of Russian immigration to Israel on public libraries. Its findings should contribute to an improvement in library services for new immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union and thus to aiding their more successful integration.

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