

***With Literacy and Justice for All:
Library Programs for Refugees and Newcomers***

Sabbatical Report



Still image from Ai Weiwei's Human Flow

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Submitted October 4, 2019

Nothing is harder on the soul/than the smell of dreams/while they are evaporating.

Mahmoud Darwish

Context

Across the globe, human migration is a huge crisis and, along with climate change, one of the gravest challenges of the 21st century. The UN High Commission for Refugees estimates there are currently 70 million forcibly displaced human beings on the planet. (UNHCR 2019) Millions of people have fled their homes due to war, political persecution, and the direct and indirect impacts of climate change such as drought, flooding, and economic collapse. Millions of people have no access to basic rights such as citizenship, paid employment, freedom of movement, or education. Twenty-five million people are refugees seeking asylum in another country, and half that number are under age 18.

Over 700,000 asylum decisions are currently awaiting approval in the United States. In 2018, only 54,000 cases were approved. (National Immigration Forum 2018) President Trump and Congress reduced the cap to 30,000. We are unlikely to reach that number this year. Since the travel ban was implemented, new approvals for asylum offered to any individuals from the top-three source countries of displacement (Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan) is ... zero.

It is in the context of a shamefully inadequate immigration policy that I undertook my project exploring how libraries support social justice through literacy with new citizens, refugees, and asylum seekers. For seven weeks in April and May 2019, I visited multiple libraries, and interviewed librarians about their programs for newcomers. My inquiry focused on programs and activities that libraries have in an explicit context of trauma, social marginalization, and displacement. I sought to understand how programs are shaped by cultural specificity, government support, public perception, and the local concerns in which libraries function.

I visited 11 libraries and interviewed librarians or library staff at all but 2 locations.

In the United States: Midland Branch of Multnomah County Library, Portland
Brooklyn Public Library Central, New York

In the Netherlands: Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (or OBA)
Centrale Bibliotheek Den Haag

In Germany: Stadtbibliothek and the Kalk branch library, Cologne
Freie Universität Bibliothek, Berlin
Asylothek
Zentral-und Landesbibliothek Berlin.

In Israel: Levinsky Garden Library, Tel Aviv
National Library of Israel, Jerusalem

The social history of libraries

I want to underscore the rich history of libraries in responding to social crises. American libraries have long offered a variety of services to refugees and asylum seekers; services that are grounded in the Enlightenment values on which many American library were founded. These include the intellectual freedom to pursue ideas without censorship, access to information in the support of democracy, and the betterment of individuals through literacy and knowledge. Recent examples include numerous public library programs for the unhoused/homeless, multilingual story times for children in almost every public library, and outreach to communities in poverty.

In multiple ways, libraries have been performing literacy triage since the establishment of the first public libraries almost 200 years ago, whether delivering books to remote locations by canoe or horseback, offering books and literacy services in Black communities in the age of Jim Crow, and taking bookmobiles to migrant work camps. (Brady) The promotion of literacy and

access to information are codified in the American Library Association's own code of ethics, which explicitly advocates for and upholds democratic values.

Carnegie libraries

Indeed, it is largely due to the efforts of an industrial capitalist that the US public library system developed with such rapid and pervasive effect. Between the years 1890-1930, the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie funded over 1600 public libraries in the United States from his personal fortune. Carnegie's interest in public libraries was a direct result of his own experience as an immigrant from Scotland. In childhood, Andrew came to the US and then worked for an uncle in the trades during his teen years. In Carnegie's free time, he borrowed books and magazines from the Tradesman Subscription Library in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; this experience radically shaped his view that libraries create a level playing field for the underprivileged. (Murray)

Information poverty

Current library programs for refugees and newcomers fuel similar concepts of social justice. I view these activities as "interventions" directly addressing the multitude of challenges faced by newcomers. I also used the concept of "information poverty" developed by Dr. Elfreda Chatman. Chatman was a librarian and sociologist who did extensive research in the 1980s/1990s with two marginalized communities: women prisoners and impoverished, rural communities in the American South. She explored how people living in closed systems of isolation (such as rural poverty or incarceration) are disadvantaged by the complexities of information. As a result, these communities struggle to understand what information is, how it works, and how it can improve their condition(s). This isolation ultimately results in distrust with information from outside the trusted network. We see parallel evidence of how this concept of information poverty has impact on insider/outsider knowledge in our political discourse today.

To shape my understanding of the programs I visited, I have borrowed a rubric of metaphors from the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), an organization that advocates for the recognition and promotion of libraries and library users globally. In June 2018, IFLA published a statement titled “Libraries’ Role in Making Refugees Feel Welcome,” calling on libraries to create guidelines for programs that recognize services to refugees and new citizens using the spatial metaphors of *sanctuary*, *storehouse*, *gateway*, and *bridge*. The following are selected examples of programs serving newcomers in the libraries I visited.

The Library as Sanctuary

What makes a library a sanctuary? Many newcomers experience significant grief and uncertainty, financial stress, and trauma. The Asylothek in suburban western Berlin is a volunteer-run library housed in a refugee resettlement house where approximately 30 people live in a cluster of houses in a leafy, residential neighborhood. Originally housed in the Templehof Refugee Intake Center—a vast former Nazi-era airport hangar turned refugee housing—the Asylothek provides a quiet space to read, study, and learn with collections of fiction, nonfiction and learning in multiple languages. It is homey and low-key, and offers a reading circle, computer access, and informal German language tutoring. (Germany took in over 1 million newcomers in 2015/2016, the largest number of any European country and exponentially more than the USA.)

The Asylothek is a deliberate antidote to the impersonal nature of refugee bureaucracy. While Germany has a sophisticated intake system for refugees and asylum seekers, the sheer number of people using this system is staggering. While public libraries in Berlin provide rich content and formal literacy programs, the Asylothek functions as a neighborhood “home base” for refugee residents to learn new skills and increase integration. The Asylothek attracts many volunteers, some who live in the neighborhood, who assist residents with programs such as dessert and movie nights, job searches, and facilitated discussions. Similar volunteer-run libraries have been established all over Germany: in small towns, in suburbs, and in large urban

areas. These programs provide promote personal well-being, and focus on building newcomer support for children and adults and social integration with local community.

Residential group housing lacks privacy and quiet, so the Asylotek also functions as a place for solitude in stressful conditions. A beautifully illustrated book on roses became a touchstone for a Syrian woman living in Berlin. After her home and garden were destroyed by bombing, she found that gardening books offered her solace and helped her cope with deep loss.

The Library as Storehouse

A storehouse primarily contains inventory of value and utility. At Multnomah County Library Midland branch, a multilingual collection serves library users in six languages: English, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese and Somali. Midland collects fiction, non-fiction, magazines and film/video in these world languages, which is then circulated across the Multnomah system. The program “We Speak Your Language,” centralizes the work of multilingual library staff who coordinate the library’s programs, collections, and outreach throughout Portland. In northern Europe, most asylum seekers have state identification allowing them to access services and resources. At Midland, library users’ status is entirely unknown. (Anyone can get a library card free with valid ID and proof of county residence.) Citizenship classes, ESL conversation circles, computer skills classes, storytimes for toddlers, and activities for elders (among other offerings) are coordinated by a diverse library staff. This group is responsible for planning and coordination of activities with other local social service organizations both on site and through “pop-up” activities at health clinics, schools, and neighborhood events.

Another storehouse is the EU digital project to collect personal narratives of refugees and newcomers at the Stadtbibliothek in Cologne. Over a 3-year period, the EU supported libraries in four countries to record and collect an archive of personal stories by newcomers. The result is *A Million Stories, Refugee Lives*, a digital repository of stories, drawings, videos, and interviews created by refugees now living in Germany, Greece, Sweden and Denmark.

This complex project offered newcomers an opportunity to be creative, to be expressive, and to be heard as individuals, sharing their lived experience. It also is an historical archive and witness to the conditions and realities of displacement and how our collective human experience is shaped by war and disaster.

The Library as Gateway

The gilded entrance to Brooklyn Public Library Central is massive and almost mythical. Brooklyn Public was actually the first stop on my itinerary, and a library I visited many times when I lived in Brooklyn in the 1980s. Walking into the grand portal is still overwhelming. Within a few feet of the door I could discern Spanish, English, Arabic, Turkish, French, Haitian Creole, and Yiddish, and multiple styles of English. Brooklyn Public is a comprehensive system of 59 branch libraries across Brooklyn; a sister to the New York Public and the Queens Public Library systems. Phenomenally, there is a public library branch within .5 miles of *every single resident* in Brooklyn. Over 120,000 individuals participate annually in programs specifically designed for refugees and newcomers at Brooklyn Public, including citizenship classes, English language learning, children's story times, job training and book clubs, and interview practice.

Workshops on opening a food cart, business development, and training for nannies are popular and the results of these programs are truly inspiring. A group of Bangladeshi women developed a successful baby-sitting cooperative that was born and nurtured by Brooklyn Public's support for small business planning. The library serves these newcomer's aspirations by designing tools and resources appropriately scaled for personal development.

The Brooklyn Public Library is a gateway in a more literal sense also: both the Immigrant Justice Corps and the Immigration Advocacy Network provide consultations at BPL Central. These organizations meet with thousands of asylum seekers every year to assist with paperwork, advise clients, and, in some instances, represent their cases. Finally, the library café, Emma's Torch, is a culinary training program for newcomers. Order a chai tea, Tibetan *momos*, or a mushroom *perogi*, and read a magazine in the library lobby while your baby chews on a board

book! (If we ever achieve peace among nations, it will transpire in a public library, and chances are high it will be at Brooklyn Public Library.)

The Library as Bridge

Creating connections between newcomers and local government is another paradigm for library programming. Libraries in the Netherlands and Germany benefit from and collaborate with government agencies that oversee refugee resettlement and integration. Within a week of the first massive exodus from Syria in 2015, many Cologne residents contacted the library seeking ways to volunteer. Now over 120 volunteers at the Cologne library are providing support for newcomers by connecting them with no-cost German language learning, assistance with job searching, and professional coaching.

Sprachraum volunteers are trained and overseen by the library staff, but the center functions independently of the library with its own hours, and has developed its own identity. For example, a group of Kurdish newcomers created an extensive support structure through the *Sprachraum* and hold informal concerts there. According to the Library's Program Director, Sarah Dudek, "the beginning was always putting out fires, but now volunteers understand that the process of integration is slow, even slower for some—and maybe even a lifetime." The library has arranged for experts to coach volunteers about issues of cultural sensitivity/difference, trauma awareness, and the effects of PTSD from the effects of war, refugee camps, and loss of family. Volunteer training is now more structured, and more effective. Dudek believes that offering asylum seekers and volunteers opportunities for sustained interaction and learning creates more grounded outcomes. Many clients have actually become volunteers themselves which helps affirm a place in the larger community.

Taalhuis (or Talk House) in Den Haag offers a variety of language learning opportunities at the library and in the community, including books for babies delivered to homes, and a variety of classes to support citizenship examinations. Dutch primary school is based on a common curriculum that incorporates themes delivered throughout the school year: democracy, poetry

and language, nature and biology, Dutch history, etc. The Dutch ministry of education has also developed materials for newcomer language learning for adults that follow these same themes. Thus, children and their parents are learning topics and vocabulary in support of each other, enabling newcomer parents to take a more active role in their children's learning and experience of school.

One particular story of a Turkish grandmother was especially resonant for me. Though she had lived in the Netherlands for almost two decades, a strict marriage had kept her very isolated from Dutch society. When her husband divorced her for a new wife, she embarked on learning Dutch at her grandchildren's elementary school. Now she regularly meets with friends to practice Dutch, read books in Turkish from the library's collection, and has discovered an entirely new level of freedom in her early 60s.

Conclusion

Each of us--as human beings of a particular place, time, and ability--is both an insider to specific bodies of knowledge and outsider to others based on our social status, culture, gender, beliefs, etc. Newcomers bring these same complicated selves. Newcomers bring knowledge, skills, and understandings of the world that are necessary and relevant to every society in which they land. The purpose of developing library services to refugees and newcomers is not simply to teach a person how to pass a test or get a job, though those outcomes are important. Libraries are mission-driven to help people reach potential as they themselves define it.

On the train trip between Cologne and Berlin, I happened to sit next to a young man, a refugee newcomer from Aleppo, Syria. Abdallah al-Mahmoud is a charming man--huge smile and open demeanor. He told me about his preparations for an entrance exam to study nursing; he was studying hard but also fearful of failure. He was new to German language and German society, but in less than two years was embarking on the education necessary to begin a new chapter in life. We chatted about my research project, exchanged contact info, and hugged at a suburban German train station. Several weeks later upon my return to the US, I happened to watch a film

called “Human Flow.” This film is a personal reflection on human displacement. Suddenly, there was Abdallah on the screen, engaging with the filmmaker in a mock “exchange” of identity, including their passports and domiciles: a tent in a refugee camp for a posh apartment in Berlin.

Between the time of filming in 2016 and my train ride in April 2019, Abdallah had not only found sanctuary, but he was actively learning a new language, and embarking on a meaningful journey of personal and professional development. He is a young adult with many of the same fears, hopes and aspirations as are present in this room today. Earning a living, finding friendship and love, dreaming of a future in which he is an active participant and not a victim. Already, through his courage, stamina and resilience, he is an asset to Germany. He is a shining example of why library services to newcomers are so vital to all our well-being.

Libraries are necessary for supporting newcomers as they seek to better their lives. By offering opportunities for increased social stability, skill-building, language development, and personal expression, library programs and resources can be foundational to refugee and newcomer success. Being conscious of and intentional about the multiple levels that library services and resources can do this work is an important step in creating meaningful, effective, and compassionate programs for newcomers.

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SUPPORT MATERIAL -- Notes and observations from site visits

March 18, 2019 -- LCC ESL department

Informal meeting with LCC associate and 2 volunteer tutors

Contact: Indira Bakshi, LCC faculty in ESL

Most important factor for imm/refs is comfort with language. Tutors can work with clients to improve confidence in both formal/informal settings to improve job opps and social interactions. Without jobs opps most newcomers will become dependent, or fail. They are also more vulnerable to exploitation with limited language skills/confidence. Sometimes it is a basic understanding of a situation (payment, conditions, expectations).

Community acceptance begins with interaction: BOTH locals and imm/refs benefit from this communication, esp with current resistance to newcomers since Trump.

Health promotion is also important: very basic ideas about dental care, bathing and hygiene, etc. are not always known by newcomers. This also helps with integration. Suggestion to develop a program at LCC Health Professions program for health promotion. Not only providing info but also providing a place for clients to ask questions. This could be a service learning opp through Catholic Charities Refugee group.

April 9, 2019 -- Brooklyn Public Library

Appointment with 3 librarians in Outreach program

Contact: Janel Peterson

Overview: Huge system with 59 branches, all w/in .5 miles of EVERY Brooklyn resident, and 120K clients use outreach services annually. Programs are developed centrally with input from branch libs and then distributed by location/need/community interest.

Janel has been in Outreach dept at BPL since 2013. Program includes services to incarcerated and their families, older adults, and social services to marginalized communities such as homeless, illiterate. Immigrant services started in 2013 under her direction.

Programs for imm/refs include:

- Storytime for children in multiple languages (dependent on neighborhood): French, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Russian, English
- Citizenship exam preparation (multi-part course with guidance)
- Immigration legal advice provided by fellows of Immigrant Justice Corps at main library re: green card, DACA, etc. but no representation

- Immigration advocacy and legal advice through Immigration Advocacy Network (IAN); no-cost and full representation
- and New Americans Campaign (NAC) (once a month orientation which may be all you need, or come back for more in-depth info/resources)
- Providing resources developed by NAC (ongoing) called “Navigator”
- English language lessons
- Small business programs through “Power Up” initiative for teaching business and computing classes (typing, basic bookkeeping, budgets, marketing, etc.)
- Focus on partnering with EXISTING organizations in the city. Huge number of services already exist and BPL hosts programs at the library to introduce patrons to new services inside/outside the lib itself.

Focus is on RESPONSIVE programs that meet newcomers where they are as promptly as possible: need language, need advice, need legal help, trauma, etc. Functions like social services agency in terms of referrals. Only legal assistance and language learning are provided directly at lib locations; all else is referral.

120K users of programs across branches annually. Primary services are offered by branches while legal services all happen at main so they can focus resources/training for volunteers.

Adult Learning program cycle is 10-11 weeks includes ESL and other skill-building classes (all free). About 600 students at main branch every cycle!!

Janel’s success story: KIM (Immigrant and Outreach)

Central American national (not sure where?) started using books & programs for children to share with her son. After improving comfort with English, Kim started citizenship prep classes and brought her son because he was not in full-day school yet. Everyone loved the son and his English improved rapidly. He became part of the class by asking questions and quizzing other students. Janel thinks he will ace American history/civics class when the time comes! Then BPL received IMLS grant to showcase program and DC office requested that someone from program attend gala in DC. Kim went to DC as rep from BPL; attended awards dinner and received recognition. Janel says it was incredibly moving.

Winnie’s success story: Mr. O. (Business & Career Center)

Mr. O is a Haitian immigrant who participated in the program for 3 years, taking English and computer skill-building classes. His idea for a laundry pick-up/delivery services was developed during one of the lib’s business planning classes. The participants had to research their idea and write a plan using budget and small business planning best practices during regularly scheduled library small biz classes. Then they presented to a community group who scored their proposals a la *Sharktank*, with the grand prize receiving 10K+ funding from Brooklyn area corporate

sponsor. He won and is currently operating his own business, and even looking for a larger space!

Other examples through small biz programs:

- Bangladeshi baby-sitting coop developed through a partner org & Power Up!
- Chinese and South East Asian immigrant restaurant projects
- Food trucks
- Emma's Torch immigrant-run café inside the library
- New Americans "Navigator" and resources for small biz opps

Lora's success story: Anna (Adult Learning)

Anna is a Russian-speaking immigrant who takes library English classes as a social activity. She's bossy and doesn't like to study but has her heart set on becoming a conversation leader. She is charismatic and other students like her, so she continues. Slowly, over many years, she has improved and is now working p/t in a paid position in the language learning program at BPL.

April 17, 2019 -- Book Buddies, Amersfoort, Netherlands

Met at café across the street from the train station

Contact: Cathy Spierenburg

Cathy is former education and television production background focused on child education and children's programming. We met at a café across from the Amersfoort train station for 2 hours.

Book Buddies is a non-profit charity providing books to children in rural Africa and refugee camps in Kenya, Zanzibar, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, and Indonesia. Cathy was motivated by the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia. Language = literacy and BB provides books to children in school settings.

Locally made bookcases and locally purchased books in local language + colonial language

Organization provides template and training for early child literacy using local teachers and products, including My Book Buddy (book for kids), backpacks and check out system for materials, plus:

- trilingual dictionaries created for programs
- illustrated workbooks
- reading-level specific collections
- training for volunteers (currently about 192) from Rotary and Soroptimist Society, etc.

Local students can become “ambassadors” for program which helps develop skills & expertise or become site librarian and sometimes go on for further teacher training/credential.

Assessment:

Surveys with interpreters and annual evaluations. Return is low, about 50% because teachers are afraid of low performance and program cuts Cathy speculates.

April 18, 2019 -- Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA)

Appointment with 2 librarians, Rob Visser, head and Jonathan Gesu, outreach librarian

Contact: Rob Visser

Great meeting with 2 libs at OBA in an amazing location. Rob showed me around the building with 8 floors, exhibition space, children’s area, teen maker area, study rooms, special collections, magazines, café, terrace, print/output area, and ... “mouse townhouse”
Second largest public library in Europe with over 1 million visitors per year. Small fee to join (about \$50. for basic membership) with family rates/minor-only rates.

Programs include Alliance Française, Instituto Cervantes, radio station, special events such as exhibitions, lectures, author readings, thematic panels, etc.

Leef en Leer (Live & Learn) is colab with city of Amsterdam and materials/training is distributed nationally. Many programs are available in province/city to integrate newcomers including:

- Taal Café (talk café)
- book clubs (currently reading detective novel)
- PC skill building workshops
- language skills with Dutch teacher in coordination with lib staff in Leef en Leer program
- specific collections developed for new immigrants
- designated area of lib is focused on these activities with exhibit space
- adult basic skills for job searching, perfecting Dutch, communication skills, networking

Lib does not provide language lessons, only the support for these programs with access to locations, infrastructure and materials. OBA provides 12 librarians + 2 liaison staff to partner with Amsterdam city programs.

Success story:

Mahmoud is a Syrian refugee about 22 years old. He’s been coming to the library for about 1.5 years and already his Dutch is excellent. He’s volunteering at the Windmill Museum and getting ready to take the university entrance exam (needs to pass both regular course proficiency and language level proficiency). He wants to pursue a degree in IT. He’s at the library and Taal Café almost 7 days a week and has made friends inside and outside the library programs.

Mahmoud is friends with Antoine, from Belgium who is learning Dutch at the library. He's a graphic designer keen to improve his Dutch for better work opportunities. He plays bike polo. He and Mahmoud practice Dutch together even with radically different backgrounds of privilege and displacement. Excellent example of how programs foster assimilation and individual agency.

April 19, 2019 -- Den Haag Municipal Library

Appointment with Reka Dekan-Makkai

Contact: Reka

Den Haag Library is housed in a multi-story municipal building with other city services. Den Haag is the D.C. of Netherlands and govt. services and offices are highly integrated with each other.

Primary focus of library's immigrant/refugee program is *TaalHuis* (pronounced dall house or Language House). Multiple services and efforts fall under TaalHuis: taalhuis.denhaag.nl

- low literacy programs for adults (immigrants, refugees, and Dutch nationals)
- program for new babies with free library card and a few books every month
- help with online forms (all Dutch social services are accessed digitally ...)
- help with job applications/job searching
- referrals to other orgs through national Reading/Writing program
- some programs have integration with What's App for chat, reminders and announcements

Taalhuis is always busy, so Reka considers it successful. Language learning is made fun with enthusiastic volunteers – 80% of Dutch citizens are volunteers, and Taalhuis sustains about 20 at a time. People rotate out when they are bored or circumstances change but some volunteers are long term. About 1000 “intakes” start some form of inquiry through the library; about 350 people are actively enrolled in classes or programs at any given time.

Welkom Den Haag is another program with movie nights and info sessions about elections and democratic values. They look at news articles and discuss for understanding. Getting folks to participate is fragile process – no testing is critical. “Make people feel welcome and they find what they need over time.” Sometimes it is social isolation to overcome, sometimes culture difference, homesickness, etc. Library has extensive referral system to social services but many feel most comfortable at the library.

Success story:

Reka has noticed many middle-aged/elderly women of Middle Eastern background coming to the library to learn. They experience lots of social isolation, often after their husbands divorce them and they are trying to maintain a relevance in the childrens'/grandchildren's lives. They are learning Dutch and making friends outside of family structures; meeting women from a variety of backgrounds. Many are finding a new sense of purpose. Story of Turkish woman who is especially outgoing and joining book-club, etc.

Also successful is the adult language ed at children's school campuses. Parents (mostly mothers) are staying for Dutch language lessons after leaving their children. They can request instruction from central refugee commission. The themes correlate to things students are learning at school so parents can be more involved in children's school life.

April 23, 2019 -- Stadtbibliothek Köln, Köln Central Public Library
Appointment with Sarah Dudek, head librarian for outreach
Contact: Sarah Dudek

The *Sprachtraum* (Language Room) started at the library in 2015 after almost a million refugees were received in Germany. Started with 20 volunteers (people were "coming through the woodwork" to volunteer), now there are 120! Really a volunteer program that is coordinated/hosted by the library. The *Sprachtraum* is across the plaza, not in the library itself. Library coordinated use of municipal building that was available, bought new furniture and PCs. Open 7 days a week 2-6 PM.

The library had to expand multicultural purchases and services. They now have liaisons for different ethnic groups that help them bridge various issues for outreach. The effort is not well-coordinated but has a lot of activities: legal clinics, housing and job support, health issues (lots of war trauma, especially with women and sexual assault). Lots of interest in health professions and many refugees are keen to get training, take courses, etc.

Volunteers have established very clear boundaries for their work. At first it was like "always putting out fires" but now volunteers understand that the process of integration is slow, and even slower for some, maybe even a lifetime. The library coordinated experts to talk with volunteers and that is now part of training: cultural sensitivity/difference, trauma awareness – basically most imm/refs have some level of PTSD either from war or escaping war, refugee camps, loss of family, etc.

The federal govt. coordinates language acquisition materials and levels up to about 600 hours of instruction, including "integration" classes about civic life in Germany, human rights, etc. The *Sprachtraum* is used for tutoring, information gathering, socializing, studying for state examinations, etc. Many imm/refs take leadership roles in bringing people together; some imm/refs have to be careful as they are political refugees and keep a low profile. A whole cluster of Kurds were working at a table while I was there, also many (central) Africans and Syrians.

A Million Stories: <http://refugeelives.eu/>

(c 2017 -2019) a program of EU Future Libraries included 4 libraries in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Greece. Each library collected stories from refugees at the libraries. They collected 160 stories in 2 years (from 30 minutes to 3 hours each). An Arabic-speaking intern helped at Koln library.

Success story:

Betty from east Africa (not sure where?) was a regular user for about 1.5 years. Learned German after very slow start ... German is hard! She maintained a very open & positive attitude even while struggling. Now she is a medical assistant and has brought other users to the site.

April 25, 2019 -- Stadtbibliothek Köln, Kalk Kapelle branch
Informal visit with 2 front desk library assistants (no librarian available)

Kalk Kapelle branch is a suburb of Koln with a dominant Turkish-speaking population. Getting off the U train was like landing on the outskirts of Istanbul, *pide* shops, barbers, low cost clothing and housewares shops, butchers, coffee shops, etc. Library was modest size but nicely designed; each area was decorated like a living room with couches, a carpet, cushions, small lamps, etc. All signage was in three languages, German, Turkish, English. Children's area has HUGE stuffed rabbit that takes up the whole room and children can climb on it, read upon it, and rest.

Small Makerspace with video gaming, legos, coding modules, coloring and small projects stored in bins. Not a lot of quiet space, all the rooms flow into each other but every room was in use when I was there late afternoon midweek.

April 29, 2019 -- Freie Universität Berlin
Appointment with Cosima Wagner and Zimone X., Andrea Tatai (program director) was out sick

Contact: Cosima Wagner

Program was originally intended to integrate professional refugees into library workplace. FU provided "internship" type opps by application from info professionals (2016) starting with a Syrian librarian. Proved a LOT of work to integrate into professional system. German library profession is highly competitive with a "guild" type training process so it was hard to offer a range of regular work. 7-8 total interns in 3 months so there was a nice group dynamic. The highest qualified candidates did the best work but there was no opp to offer them anything permanent. Resume building is important!

Characteristics of lib interns:

- Eager to learn!

- German language in profession setting is hard; very technical and nuanced language skills are required. Also complex computer programs
- FU has 24 institutes and multiple libs, very confusing where to “place” people, especially with limited language proficiency
- Wanted to meet expectations, some struggled to feel worthy

Sadly, program ended with the departure of Arabic speaking librarian willing to take it on. There is a demand for Arabic language skilled lib staff and neither Cosima nor Zimone knew if there was anything happening at higher levels to address this. They felt it will be an ongoing issue for Arabic language resources and also for Arabic-speaking students.

**April 27, 2019 -- Asylotek – now called Library of the Homelands or *Bibliothek der Heimat*
Informal visit with Dorte**

Projects started by providing information resources to imm/regs in Templehof holding area (a former airport hangar). Children’s books, social service info is available at a new site in refugee resettlement housing in west Berlin neighborhood.

Books available in multiple translation and interfiled on shelves. Example: contemporary and classic lit next in original language with translations in German and English and Arabic or Farsi whenever available.

Location is especially important for rest and quiet; lots of group housing results in lack of privacy. Story of immigrant drawing from gardening books, looking for solace and escape.

**May 8, 2019 -- Levinsky Garden Library
Informal visit due to holiday schedule; no library staff agreed to meet with me**

LGL is located in Levinsky Park, a public park situated in the roughest neighborhood I visited in all of Israel. Surrounded by low-income housing blocks, it looks like one of the *banlieu* quads outside of Paris. Many apartment houses had tarped roofs where it appeared that people were living.

Despite the gorgeous website and lots of photos, the operation is extremely careworn. The Library seems to function less as an information hub than a meeting point. Lots of broken bottles, etc. and men sleeping/hanging out in the open air foyer. LGL as a collection is extremely modest. I wish I could have seen more of the operation. Very limited hours and multiple national holidays precluded my being able to see it fully functional.

May 15, 2019 -- National Library of Israel, Jerusalem (on Hebrew University Edmond Safra campus)
Informal visit

I did not meet with any librarians at NLI; looked at Gershom Sholem Collection, Holocaust Collection, map collection, and reading rooms. Surprisingly small institution considering this is a national library. Also, very hard to find on campus and not especially welcoming to non-students ... I had to ask for help just to navigate the building, even with a printed map (not current).

No formal programs for refugees or newcomers but there is an international student community. All of the services provided to i-students are housed outside the library itself.

July 29, 2019 -- Midland branch, Multnomah County Library
Appointment with Rita Jimenez, branch manager and outreach coordinator

Excellent meeting in an amazing branch setting. Building is beautifully designed with excellent light end clerestory windows that open into view of woodland pocket park. Many services coordinated by small cohort of bilingual staff who then distribute programs accordingly.

“We Speak Your Language” = Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Somali and English language access including online web access/collections/programs across MLC system.

Pop-up activities at farm markets, health centers, and community centers. Traditional ref is diminishing across system, tech help needs are increasing -- MCL has seen a 17% increase in non-English users. MCL uses census data in county to explore expansion of service needs.

Visited story time area for kiddos (nice!) and community room for craft activity.

Rita measures outputs not outcomes. When events are not well-attended she takes a queue to discontinue, even if the coordinators think it's a great idea. Hard to let go of ideas and good intentions, even when they don't work.