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# The Role of Oulu City Library in the Integration Process

Research

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- + Vuolle Setlementti ry**
- + Oulun seudun ammattiopisto OSAO**
- + Oulun aikuislukio**
- + Kastelli School integration group**
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- + PSK-Aikuisopisto**

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## Abstract

This study is focusing on the role of Oulu City Library in the integration of foreigners into the Finnish society. In addition to the welcoming attitude, Oulu City Library has been very active in the last few years in playing a part in the integration process, through two projects: *Public library as a support of social integration* and *Branch library as a support of social integration*. Both the projects have lasted for a year and a half and aimed to introduce foreigners to the library services, making them customers of the libraries and integrate them into the Finnish society.

The aim of this study is to examine how successful the integration process by the library has been and how the immigrants rate the library in general and the services in particular. In order to answer those questions data is collected from foreigners living in Oulu.

The data for this research is collected through verbal interviews and surveys given to foreigners to fill in.

During the course of the research, the feedbacks of the foreigners from oral interviews and the surveys provide the researcher tools to draw conclusions. Most of the foreigners interviewed were not fully informed or aware of the services provided by the branch libraries of Oulu City Library. Moreover, a big majority would have visited the library more often if they had been more aware of the services. Furthermore, a small minority believed that the library had played a role in their integration into the Finnish society.

**Keywords: Foreigners, Oulu City Library, branch libraries, services, integration**

## 1 Introduction

Oulu City Library supports the integration by providing free access for all immigrants to a broad spectrum of literary and cultural expressions from many different cultures and in different languages, and a large amount of information that could be useful when newcomers are trying to orient themselves towards the new country.

The public library in Oulu have different potentials to play a role in integration, such as:

- helping society meet the challenges of multiculturalism and immigration,
- providing immigrants with the information they need to adapt to new circumstances,
- providing immigrants with the opportunities to keep in touch with their culture of origin,
- being the place for creating communication and connections between minority and majority cultures.

### 1.1 Theme of the research and dividing of the tasks

This research is focusing on the role of both the main library and the branch libraries of Oulu City Library in the integration of the immigrant population into the Finnish society of the city of Oulu. Besides the welcoming attitude, the library in Oulu has been very active in the last few years in playing a part in the integration process, through two projects: *Public library as a support of social integration* and *Branch libraries as a support of social integration*. Both projects have lasted for a year and a half with the aim of introducing immigrants to the library services, making them customers of the library and integrating them into the Finnish society.

The aim of this study is to examine how successful the integration process by the library has been, how foreigners rate the library in general and, in particular, the services the library offers. In order to answer those questions, data is collected from foreigners living in Oulu.

The roles within the working group were divided as follows:

- The researcher conducts all verbal interviews herself.
- The second person's (the project worker's) role in the team is to make translations during the interviews.
- The third person (a trainee from PSK-Aikuisopisto) visits integration courses in different organisations, where she gives immigrants the questionnaires to fill out and clarifies the terms used in the questionnaire.

### 1.2 Aim of the research

This research, which is the first of its kind in Oulu, is taking place in order to provide Oulu City Library with concrete data about immigrants' visits to the library and feedback about their view of the library's services. In addition, the research gives information of the immigrants' views of the library's role in their integration process. Given that the public library in Oulu is willing to play a crucial role in integrating immigrants, the outcome of the research can be used to improve the current services. Also it can be used as a small sample for future researches on the topic of public library's role in integration.

### 1.3 Problem statement

The problem statement focuses upon the potential role of the public library in relation to different life spheres, roles and stages in adapting to the new country. We are looking for the answers to the following questions:

- Which group of the immigrants visit the library most often and why? Which group visits least often and why?
- What are the immigrants' positive and negative experiences during library visits?
- What are the immigrants' needs and demands from the library?
- How can the library help in the integration process?

These are the overarching research questions to be addressed.

### 1.4 Indirect observations

During the research the project worker and the researcher made a four-day work trip to three cities in Germany and visited 29 libraries in Leverkusen, Dusseldorf and Cologne, in order to have an idea of the integration process in those cities. Leverkusen was chosen as the starting point to this trip, being a friend city of Oulu, and the project having established some connections there. The two other cities were chosen for their geographical locations very close to Leverkusen and having many public libraries.

In Finland the researcher and the project worker travelled to Helsinki, made observation in Helsinki City Library and had talks with some foreigners. The researcher visited also Turku and met there three foreigners who gave unofficial interviews to the researcher about their experiences of Turku City Library.

### 1.5 Research methods

Not complementing any earlier studies done in this field in Oulu, the research had to be planned entirely from scratch. Having the foreign population in Oulu as the target group, the researcher decided that the best way was to make surveys and reach out to the immigrants to answer, in addition to some verbal interviews. The researcher realized that the mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods would bring the best outcome in such a research.

The data collected will be analysed in the following ways:

- The statistics and the charts are shown as a part of quantitative analysis.
- The answers from the interviews will be divided to separate themes and analysed by the method of thematic analysis.

### 1.6 Research tools

Three tools were used in order to construct this research:

- surveys
- verbal interviews
- indirect observation.

It was concluded that the most appropriate forms of data collection were surveys and verbal interviews.

### 1.6.1 Surveys

The researcher made the final version of the survey comprising of 22 questions, and during the five-month period we got feedback from 68 people. The participants were volunteers from integration courses in Oulu, provided by different organisations: Vuolle Setlementti ry, Oulun seudun ammattiopisto OSAO, Oulun aikuislukio, Kastelli School integration group, Monikulttuurikeskus Villa Victor, as well as students from the University of Oulu and personal connections of the researcher and the project worker.

One assistant in the research visited integration schools and provided the research surveys.

### 1.6.2 Interviews

The interviews were conducted between January and June 2019 and were undertaken according to an interview guide. At the beginning of the interview the interviewer presented herself, explained the purpose of the interview and gave some practical information. The anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed, and they had the choice not to answer the questions they considered inconvenient. Next, the respondents presented themselves and they were invited to reflect upon their life situation in Oulu. Then they were asked to describe their public library use: How did they learn about the local public library, what services did they know of and which did they use? They were also asked to describe their library use in their home country. In the last section the respondents were invited to reflect freely upon the library's services and the role the local public library plays in their lives. They could also make suggestions to improve the services.

The interviews lasted from 50 minutes up to 90 minutes and were conducted in English or the respondents' mother tongue translated into English, and taken notes.

Out of 187 interviews, the assistant translated interviews in Arabic (19), Russian (20), French (7) and Armenian (1). The researcher conducted herself the interviews in Greek (8), Bulgarian (8), Serbo-Croatian (5) and North Macedonian (1). The rest 82 interviews were conducted in English and Finnish. In total we had 269 feedback responses.

### 1.6.3 Participants

The part which is always challenging in any research conducted is finding people to interview. However, in our research this went without any difficulty. The project worker had been working with immigrants for over a year, and it was a huge benefit to get interviews for us via his network of connections. In addition, the researcher, who also is connected to a large immigrant network in Oulu, further aided in the ease of carrying out the interview process. Another thing that helped us to reach the 187 interviews was that in 36 cases the interviewed people were suggested to bring a friend or a family member to take part in the research interviews.

The participants were residents of Oulu, from 62 different countries. The youngest were 18 years of age and the oldest 61 years. All participants in the survey (82) were students of some integration program within the city of Oulu.

The researcher divided the interviewed people into four categories:

- the people who immigrated for work
- the people who immigrated because of family reasons
- the people who immigrated for studies

- the people who immigrated as asylum seekers or refugees.

The researcher tried to keep an equal balance between the four categories, and we ended up interviewing:

- 52 people who immigrated for work
- 48 people who immigrated because of family reasons
- 46 people who immigrated for studies
- 41 people who immigrated as asylum seekers or refugees.

From the 82 surveys we had from the integration schools, there were people only from two categories: 40 asylum seekers or refugees and 42 who immigrated for family reasons. Therefore, after adding the verbal interviews and the surveys, our categories look like the following:

- 52 people who immigrated for work
- 90 people who immigrated for family reasons
- 46 people who immigrated for studies
- 81 people who immigrated as asylum seekers or refugees.

After adding all numbers, we end up having 269 feedback responses.

The research will separately discuss three cases:

1. A group of 12 Arabic people who took part in a course organised by the project in Arabic: the course consisted of discussing life in Finland, the Finnish culture, democracy in families, working life and immigrants' adaptation to the local culture (Chapter 3.1).
2. A case of 11 illiterate people taking part in a class organised by the municipality teaching them reading and writing (Chapter 3.2).
3. A four-day work trip which the researcher and the project worker made to three cities in Germany visiting 29 public libraries and making observations (Chapter 3.3).

## 1.7 Hypothesis

Prior to starting the interviews and feedbacks upon which we will draw the conclusions, the researcher theoretically argued:

1. Oulu City Library plays a big role in integrating immigrants. It has some activities that can help in learning Finnish language, has books that foreigners can borrow to learn the language and provides spaces to study.
2. Immigrants are aware of most of the services the library provides.
3. There is a wide collection of books for all ages and tastes to satisfy the immigrant community's needs.
4. Some immigrants have language difficulties when accessing library services.
5. A large number of immigrants do not feel included in events created by the city of Oulu, including within the library. They believe that those events are made for Finnish citizens only.

## 2 Analyses

### 2.1 Immigrant library visitors

Almost all of the refugees and immigrants for family reasons have been attending the main library of Oulu City Library while they have been enrolled in compulsory introductory programs on *Finnish language and society* organised by the Finnish immigrant authorities. Those programs include at least one mandatory visit to the library; therefore, the vast majority of those immigrants have visited the library. Three out of four of the immigrants who had come to Oulu for work reasons have visited Oulu City Library and only half of the interviewed foreign students of the University of Oulu have ever visited the library.

Table 1. Have you ever visited some unit of Oulu City Library? (N=269)

	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Refugees / asylum seekers	76	93,8	5	6,2	81	100,0
Immigrants for family reasons	88	97,7	2	2,3	90	100,0
Immigrants for work	39	75,0	13	25,0	52	100,0
Immigrants for study	23	50,0	23	50,0	46	100,0

#### 2.1.1 Case of asylum seekers and refugees

The impression we get from the interviews is that refugees and asylum seekers use the library far more often than the average of other groups of immigrants in Oulu.

Table 2. Frequency of the library visits by the asylum seekers and the refugees (N=81)

	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
Almost daily	2	3,4	0	0,0
1 to 2 times per month	42	71,2	10	45,5
Less than once a month	13	22,0	5	22,7
Never	2	3,4	7	31,8
Answers, total	59	100,0	22	100,0

Before analysing the numbers, it is important to mention that most of the refugees and asylum seekers had little knowledge of public libraries from their home country:

- 45,5% of the male asylum seekers or the refugees have never been in a public library in their home countries.
- 71,5% of the females have never been in a public library in their home countries.

## Male

When analysing the answers of the male asylum seekers and refugees, the results are very promising. 71,2% of them visit the library once or twice per month and two men visit the library on a daily basis. The numbers are positively surprising and show that those people have grown to use the public library of Oulu.

Some reasons for visiting library can be seen from these answers:

*I borrow books and I just come when I want to return the book and borrow another one.*

*I bring my children once in a while. They are both under five years old. I want them to love books. I want them to grow up smart and be successful.*

*I am new in Finland, I do not have a society around me, I visit the library once in a while to be around people.*

*I usually go if they have exhibitions. I am a fan of art. So I go three or four times a year only for this reason.*

Those who visit the library on a daily basis told:

*I am an old fashion person: I like to read newspapers, I come every morning to read some news, then leave.*

*I come almost daily. I just love it here, it is better than being at home. I go to the third floor to read some Finnish language books and make some grammar exercises. I feel much more active and productive here. Since I started coming, my Finnish language has improved a lot. Now I am confident and I use Finnish when I need it.*

Whatever the reason, many male refugees and asylum seekers find the library a good place to visit.

For many of those male refugees and asylum seekers who visit the library for less than once a month, the concept of the public library is new:

*It is still a new thing for me. I want to go more but I do not know what I will do there. I go once in two months. I sometimes use computers. I like comic books, I read those a bit.*

Although 96,6% of the male refugees and asylum seekers are visitors of the library, 22% visit the library rarely and 3,4% never. Therefore, work has to be done to make those people more willing to visit the library in the future and find the multitude of the offerings of the public library.

## Female

About the female population interviewed the numbers are telling a different story. While some of the refugee and asylum seeker men visit the library daily, none of the refugee or asylum seeker women does. And 31,8% of the refugee or asylum seeker women told they never visit the library.

22,7% of this group visit the library very rarely. Many women - as they stated - are the main caretakers of their homes and it limits their free time:

*I want to come more, but I do not have time. I have to take care of my home duties. Therefore, whenever I have time, I try to come for a few hours. It is a relaxing place for me and takes the stress away.*

45,5% of female asylum seekers or refugees told they visit the library once or twice a month. The ratio is 25,7% lower compared to men in the same category. For the women the reason for coming to library can be studying Finnish for free and at the same time give the children a safe place to play:

*I come with my children, they can play in the children playing room and I can read some stuff at the same time. They behave better when they are in the library, and it is a safe environment. This makes my studying easier.*

*I come to the library to study Finnish language, the material is very expensive to buy, and therefore I borrow them from here and do my lessons here.*

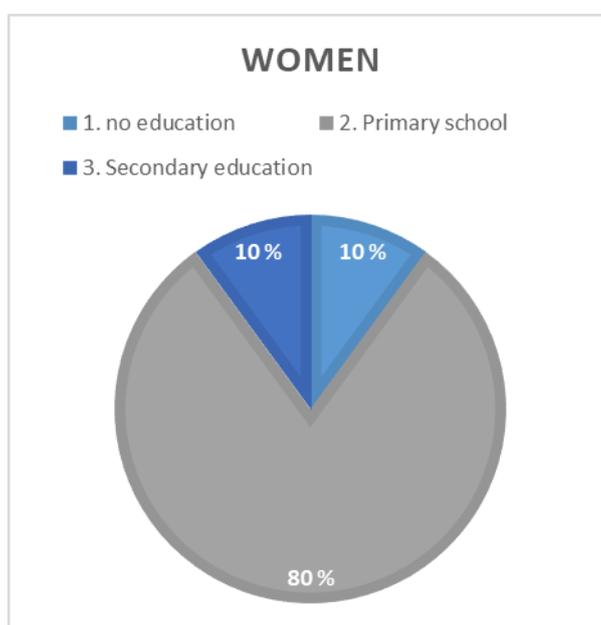
One of the women came to get books in her mother language:

*I come occasionally to check if they have any Arabic novel books. To be honest, the collection is very limited and old.*

When the person got to know that she could request a certain book, she became even more interested to visit.

Some women told that they do not visit the main library, because they live so far away from the center. Each one of those women was informed by the researcher that there is a branch library close to them and that branch library will have all the same services the main library has.

Before we analyse the part of the women asylum seekers and refugees who never visit the library it is good to look at the chart showing the educational background of the interviewed women, given it played a big role in their decisions not to come to libraries:



One out of three female asylum seekers or refugees never visit the library. The main reason they told was the lack of time because of the family duties. Another reason may be the fact that a big majority of those women were undereducated and thus did not see a purpose to come to

the library. As the chart shows, 90% of the interviewed women were either undereducated or had no education; thus many answered similar to the upcoming example:

*I cannot read and write, and have no common language to speak, what do I do in the library?*

One mother of five children said:

*I have no time for anything. I have to go to school and in my free time I am doing home duties.*

Three main points to sum up the female population's case are:

1. The undereducated women see no point in coming to the library.
2. The women without education or with low education may have a lack of self-confidence to be in cultural places, for example in libraries.
3. The women in this group think they are alone responsible for home duties and expect no help from their spouses. The home duties take a lot of their daily time and slow the integration process, let alone visiting library.

### 2.1.2 Case of immigrants for family reasons

Regarding the immigrants who immigrated for family reasons, we can see that library visit numbers are almost identical in male and female population. Like with asylum seekers who get the refugee status, they have to enroll in the integration course that includes learning Finnish language and Finnish culture. The only exceptions are the immigrants who get a job immediately when they arrive in Finland.

The following table and the figures describing library visits refer to the immigrants for family reasons.

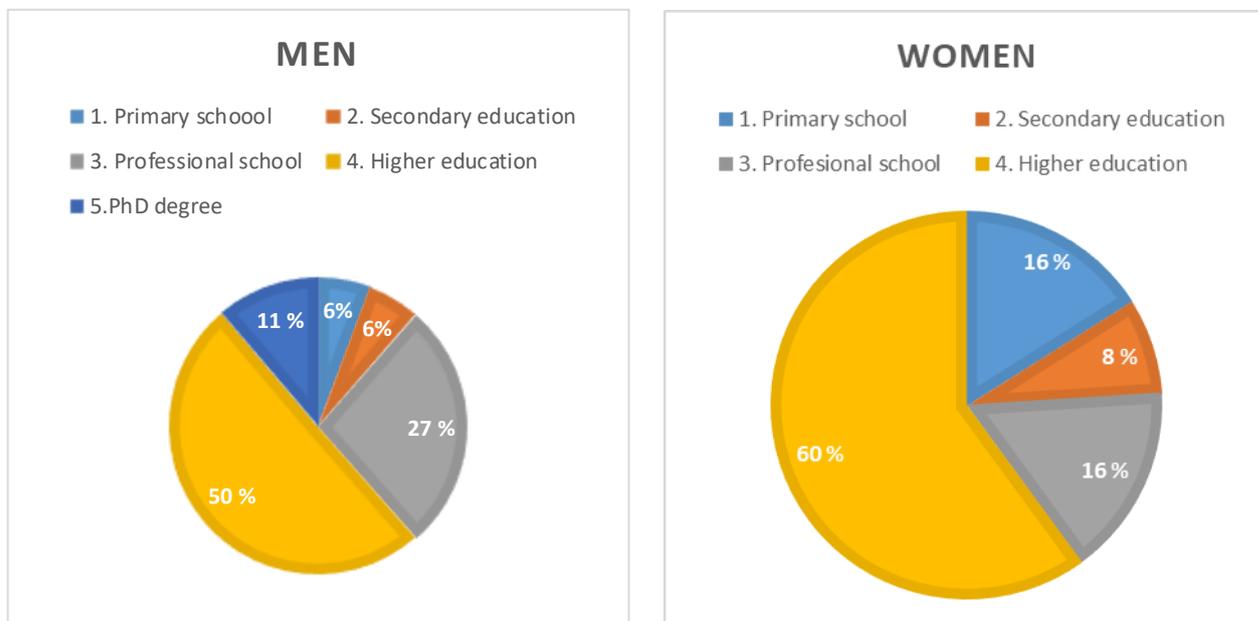
Table 3. Frequency of library visits by immigrants for family reasons (N=90)

	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
Almost daily	0	0,0	3	7,5
1 to 2 times per month	21	42,0	13	32,5
Less than once a month	21	42,0	18	45,0
Never	8	16,0	6	15,0
Answers, total	50	100,0	40	100,0

When we compare the oral interviews of male and female population, we get identical answers, which was a very rare feature in the previous cases about asylum seekers and refugees. For instance, for the question regarding the reason for coming to library a female interviewee answered: *I come to make some research. I am writing my Master's thesis in my home country.* A male participant answered similarly: *I go to the library to search for material for my Master's thesis. I am writing about the Vikings.*

Like the previous case, many respondents told they come to the library to study Finnish language, bring their children or read newspapers. The biggest difference was that many come for research purposes or doing a separate academic work.

The education backgrounds of the immigrants for family reasons are the following:



The survey shows that

- none of the participants are without education,
- 11% from the interviewed men have PhD degree and 50% of the men have higher education; 60% of the women have higher education,
- 27% of the men and 16% of the women have completed professional school,
- 12% of the men and 8% of the women have completed secondary education, and
- 6% of men and 16% of women have completed only primary school.

After checking the educational backgrounds between male and female population, which are very much alike, and the library visits, which are also almost identical, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. A higher educated person has a much easier path to integration.
2. Total equality or sometimes a relationship close to equality at home leads for more free time which most of the women will use for their benefit. Some of them will use their free time to integrate in the country they are residents in.

### 2.1.3 Case of immigrants for work reasons

The people who immigrated for work have an easy way to settle, but the longest path or the unwillingness for total integration. They arrive in Finland with jobs and housing already established and giving a kick start to their lives. But, in this group, almost 80% have difficulties functioning with Finnish language; at best they can deal with very basic tasks like grocery shopping or asking directions. 50% of the people immigrated for work spoke no Finnish at all, 29,4% spoke very basic Finnish, 6% spoke good Finnish and 14,7% spoke very good Finnish.

Learning the local language is one of the main tools to integrate in any country, but the people had reasonable answers for not having studied Finnish language:

*I do not need Finnish language here, almost everyone speaks English, even when I am with Finns they change the language to English,* said one interviewee who has lived in Oulu under a three years' work contract.

*I will just be here for two years and leave, I don't want to waste my time learning Finnish,* said one university worker.

On the other hand, there are people who come with work contracts and want to settle in Finland or who get that idea while living here. The problem is that they haven't managed to make friends with local people. As an interviewee puts it:

*I come from a country with very little civil rights. After working and living here, I really wanted to settle. However, me and my husband feel like outsiders in the society, we feel bored we want to enjoy the city with the locals. It seems to us that Finns prefer to be with each other mainly.*

Another woman shared the same view:

*I got a job in Oulu and I moved. My boyfriend who is from France came with me. We both felt like outsiders. Prior to moving here we lived in Sweden and everything was easier, the language, people being used to be with foreigners. My boyfriend could not even get job practice. We really wanted to come here, and we tried to integrate, but you have to do everything by yourself and it is very difficult. I mean, all the theatrical plays are in Finnish, most concerts in Finnish... It is as if globalization never got here. We decided to move away, and I am quitting my job soon.*

When asked about the library, none of the interviewees had a connection to it. Only in one special case, an interviewee who has dyslexia, was told by an organization that library can have special books for her, and she commented:

*I mean it is a special thing what they have, but I do not understand why they do not advertise it. Or other things they might have, they take it for granted, but they are special things for others.*

The following table and figures describing library visits refer to the immigrants for work reason.

Table 4. Frequency of library visits by immigrants for work (N=52)

	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
Almost daily	0	0,0	0	0,0
1 to 2 times per month	12	43,0	12	50,0
Less than once a month	0	0,0	6	25,0
Never	16	57,0	6	25,0
Answers, total	28	100,0	24	100,0

57% of the men and 50% of the women in this category visit library either less than once a month or never. However, during the interviews the researcher noticed that there are those who would like to settle in Finland and others who, even if they move for a short while away, want to integrate during their times here.

The role the library can play in the integration of the people who are ready to integrate in this group, is to help providing the initial contacts with Finnish people or to create a formation of some events to help those people get involved in the cultural life. The integration could be achieved or at least started by:

- making some cultural events in the libraries in other languages than Finnish, and
- advertising itself better online and in workplaces. It can be difficult to advertise in private sectors but some advertisements for people who come to work in the University of Oulu would be a good start.

#### 2.1.4 Case of immigrants for study reasons

The following table and figures describe library visits amongst immigrants for study reasons.

Table 5. Frequency of library visits by immigrants for study (N=46)

	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
Almost daily	0	0,0	0	0,0
1 to 2 times per month	5	25,0	9	34,0
Less than once a month	0	0,0	0	0,0
Never	15	75,0	17	66,0
Answers, total	20	100,0	26	100,0

In the case of the students who come to the University of Oulu to complete a degree, almost 66% of the women and 75% of the men never visit Oulu City Library – neither the main library nor the branch libraries. The reasons are for example their lifestyle or the interests, but also many other specific reasons:

*They do not have in public libraries the access to the scientific researches and publications.*

*When I lived in Holland, I went a lot to the library, they always had a guest speaker in English, I think it was twice a month, about various topics. I went once to the main library here in Oulu, they have great premises, but I never heard of them having any event.*

*I went to a certain branch library once, I appreciate the fact that they tried to speak English to me, but I could not understand what they meant, plus I wanted some brochures of any upcoming events and they were all in Finnish.*

The project worker tells that in the project they have had a Finnish language conversation class that lasted for five months in Kajjonharju branch library, which is very close to the University

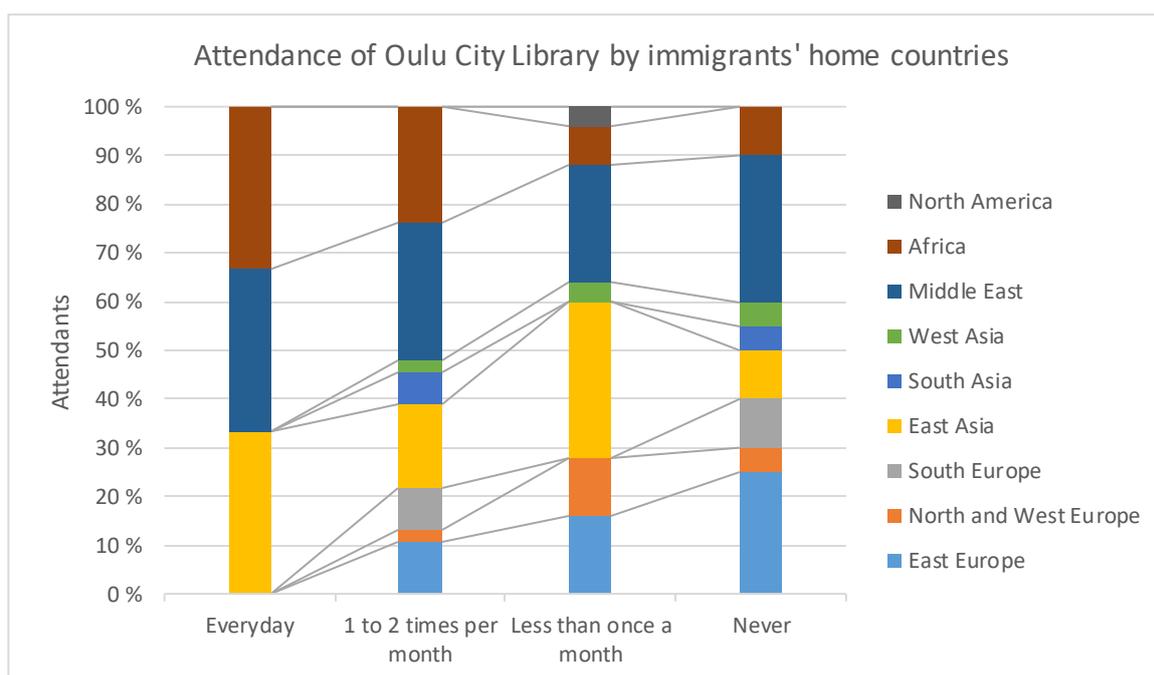
of Oulu, and the main target group was the university students. The project worker took part in the class and described it this way:

*We created a fun conversation class. We met once a week for three hours, watched simple Finnish cartoons, discussed simple topics and everyday topics and played games. The teacher who ran the class was a teacher of Finnish as a second language and the classes were run in Finnish and English according to the level of the participators. 12 university students attended the event during five months and many of them became visitors of public libraries, because parallel to the program we always provided a presentation of 15 to 20 minutes about library services and culture.*

Therefore, from the answers of the interviewees and the successful experiment of the project we can conclude: Oulu City Library needs to provide specific activities for university students to attract them, either some clubs in English and Finnish or some events where an English speaker is invited.

### 2.1.5 Frequency of library visits according to the home country

According to the interviews the largest immigrant groups that visit Oulu City Library are from Middle East, Africa and East Asia. The groups visiting the library the most rarely are from Europe and North America.



As the chart shows, for the everyday immigrant attendants of the library, it is almost equally divided between the immigrants from East Asia, Middle East and Africa.

In the category once or twice a month, over half of the visitors consist of the immigrants from Middle East and Africa. We also get 22% European visitors divided to 11% East Europeans, 2% North and West Europeans and 9% South Europeans. East Asians are 16% and 2% are from West Asia.

In the category of less than once a month, we have the following attendances:

North and West Europeans make up 12%, with East Europeans having 16% of all the visits. The biggest groups remain respectively from East Asia 32% and Middle East at 24%, 8% of visitors are Africans, 4% are from West Asia and 4% are from North America.

In the category of people who never visit the library we have: 30% from Middle East, 25% from East Europe, 10% from South Europe, from East Asia and from Africa, and 5% from West Asia from South Asia and from North and West Europe.

### 2.1.6 Frequency of library visits according to the educational level

The highest percentage of almost daily visits are for immigrants without education, but the same group also makes up the highest percentage of those who never visit. The immigrants with lower or no education are often in an educational process and during the process they must visit the public library. After that they divide into two groups: those who come back to the library again and again, and those who never come back.

Perhaps we should examine further the library experience of those immigrants who get the first presentation, but don't come to the library again. With the help of this consideration the library could and should make changes to the visits together with the organizations with which the library visits are arranged.

Table 6. Frequency of library visits in Oulu City Library by educational level (N=269)

<b>No education (N=60)</b>		
	n	%
Almost daily	15	25,0
1 to 2 times per month	15	25,0
Less than once a month	0	0,0
Never	30	50,0
<b>Basic education (N=59)</b>		
Almost daily	3	5,5
1 to 2 times per month	33	55,5
Less than once a month	10	17,0
Never	13	22,0
<b>Secondary education (N=72)</b>		
Almost daily	0	0,0
1 to 2 times per month	38	52,8
Less than once a month	25	34,7
Never	9	12,5
<b>Higher education (N=78)</b>		
Almost daily	2	2,5
1 to 2 times per month	34	43,5
Less than once a month	21	27,0
Never	21	27,0

## 2.2 Immigrants' experiences with Oulu City Library

### 2.2.1 Satisfaction with the library services

The majority (63,5%) of the foreigners involved in our research answered that they are very satisfied with Oulu City Library's services. 23% are quite satisfied, 10,7% rate the services as average and 2,7% were not satisfied with the library's services at all.

Table 7. Satisfaction with the services of Oulu City Library (N=230). Not all answered to this question.

	n	%
Very satisfied	146	63,5
Quite satisfied	53	23,0
Average	25	10,8
Not satisfied at all	6	2,7
Answers, total	230	100,0

More than half of the interviewed people expressed their admiration for the services provided by the library, saying that the library services are modern and easy to use - for example in this way:

*Usually the service is good. Staff are friendly, and it is very easy to search for what you need because everyone helps.*

The library was also seen as a perfect place to combine one's social life and biggest hobby, reading:

*I like to meet friends here and at the same time, I can check new books or borrow some, all this for free.*

One interviewee was thrilled to have all the services free:

*In my country, you pay for the library card, and you have to pay a certain fee every month. Also there are no free services. It is unbelievable to have all those for free.*

Another one who had moved to Oulu with the family said:

*We love it here, we come all of us once a week or once in two weeks to borrow some room and watch a movie. It is an activity we all are waiting for.*

Almost one out of five customers were quite satisfied with the services, but they think the services would need some improvements. A man, who visits the library often, almost on a weekly basis, wishes to get messages from the library in English:

*It is great that everything in the e-system is in English; however, I would like to receive private messages and emails from the library in English as well.*

One comment was that if you want to take part in the events, you don't get the information of them:

*I like everything in the library, but I also want to take part in more events and I do not know how to find that information.*

One out of ten visitors believe that the services are average. A student in the integration course said:

*I came many times to search for one specific Finnish language learning book I needed in my integration course. They have it in the library but not enough for everyone and these books are too expensive to buy.*

A very small minority is not satisfied at all with the library services. A man who is interested to use the library to borrow books for his children and use the playing rooms, said in the interview:

*I like to come with my children, to borrow some books and let them play in some rooms. The children's book collection in English is very limited, and the toys in the playing rooms are few and mostly broken. I cannot even park my car outside the library; there are no signs in English. Also the workers in the library do not always understand me when I speak to them in English.*

A woman from Japan, who moved to live in Oulu with her husband shares:

*There are no Japanese books in the library or just I can't find them.*

As a summary we can conclude:

1. The biggest expression of satisfaction that occurred more than any other during the interviews, was the positive surprise of people they have had when finding out that all the services provided were free.
2. The biggest problem was that information was not reaching the customers, for various reasons. It is either a language issue or immigrants are not aware where to look for a specific information.
3. There is a certain group of people who think that the services are average or not good at all: 13,5% of the interviewed said that their worries and complaints should be taken into consideration to improve results in the future.

### 2.2.2 Most used library services

Table 8 represents the percentage of people using a certain service offered by the library. There were also people who didn't give answer to this question.

Most of the library usage is related to borrowing books and reading or studying in the library. Those are the services that almost all the interviewees were aware of and they exist almost in every country that has the concept of a public library.

Table 8. The most used library services (N=230). Not all answered to this question.

	n	%
Borrowing books	87	37,8
Reading in the library	37	16,1
Studying in the library	11	4,8
Books in mother language	11	4,8
Meeting friends	11	4,8
Going to the cafeteria	11	4,8
Using the web page	10	4,3
Different children´s activities	9	3,9
Attending events	6	2,6
Attending language café	6	2,6
Using e-materials	5	2,2
Watching movies	5	2,2
Searching books in English	5	2,2
Having meetings	3	1,3
Reserving guidance	3	1,3
Borrowing DVDs	3	1,3
Printing, copying or scanning	3	1,3
Using library rooms	3	1,3
Borrowing music	1	0,4
Answers, total	230	100,0

The numbers keep decreasing until under 1% in some services, not because those services are unattractive to people, but - as the interviews showed - in the majority of the cases the interviewed people were not aware of those services. Here are some reactions of people when figuring out that a certain service exists:

*Are you kidding me? I can really come here and have a room with friends and watch a movie!*

*I was looking all the time for a place to play FIFA on PlayStation. I can come here and play that! Wow, no one told me this before you. I can also play pool. Those are my two favorite hobbies!*

*I am trying to start a business in Oulu, and I usually have my meetings in some coffee shop. It is not suitable for all meetings, but my partners and I have no office yet. Do you know how helpful this information is, to know I can borrow a private room and run a meeting here.*

*I play guitar. I want to practice at home, but I am worried that I bother the neighbors. I cannot afford to rent a private room to practice. Now I know this is possible in the library, you just made my life much easier. I was looking for so long to find a cheap place to practice, and you tell me this is free! Amazing!*

*I like to read online magazines, and I do it every day but I did not know I could read for free with a library card. This is great!*

As the examples above show, it is quite safe to draw the following conclusion:

The percentage of the readings is not a proof of the popularity of one service over the other – rather it is a result of the lack of information in the immigrant community in Oulu about the services of Oulu City Library.

### 2.2.3 Finding information about Oulu City Library and its services

How do the immigrants in Oulu get information about the units of Oulu City Library? Does the information reach everyone? Answers to these questions give us important information. It seems that there are groups of immigrants who get the information easier than others, and there are some who are not informed at all. For example, for the immigrants who do not speak any Finnish or English it is more difficult to get information about the services of Oulu City Library.

Tables 9 - 12 show from where the immigrants in Oulu had received information about Oulu City Library for the first time. Some people had received information from more than one source, therefore we may have the total number over 100%.

Table 9. From where was the information about Oulu City Library got for the first time: Refugees and asylum seekers (N=81) \*Some interviewees chose more than one source.

	n	%
From the integration course or reception center	58	71,6
From friends	12	14,8
From internet	12	14,8
I was looking for information myself	9	11,1
From a partner or relatives	3	3,7
From social media	3	3,7
I have received no information	3	3,7
Answers, total	100*	123,4

Table 10. From where was the information about Oulu City Library got for the first time: Immigrated for family reasons (N=90) \*Some interviewees chose more than one source.

	n	%
From the integration course	61	67,8
From a partner or relatives	26	28,9
From internet	18	20,0
From friends	12	13,3
I was looking for information myself	11	12,2
From the social media	2	2,2
I saw brochure or poster	2	2,2
Answers, total	132*	146,6

Table 11. From where was the information about Oulu City Library got for the first time: Immigrated for work (N=52) \*Some interviewees chose more than one source.

	n	%
I was looking for information myself	22	42,3
From friends	18	34,6
I have received no information	15	28,8
Answers, total	55*	105,7

Table 12. From where was the information about Oulu City Library got for the first time: Immigrated to study (N=46).

	n	%
I have received no information	19	41,0
From my university	9	19,6
From friends	9	19,6
I was looking for information myself	9	19,6
Answers, total	46	99,8

Refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants for family reasons usually participate in the integration course, which includes a visit to the main library. The tables 9 - 12 show clearly that the largest percentage of the interviewees are familiar with the library precisely as a result of this course.

As the numbers show, only three people of refugees and asylum seekers and none of those who immigrated for family reasons are not informed at all about the library. As mentioned above, the role of the integration courses, where the vast majority of refugees and those who

immigrated for family reasons attend, is huge, as they take the initiative of introducing their students to the library by booking library tours.

The situation is different for the immigrants who came to Oulu for work or studies. Often, they seek information on their own or receive information through a friend. Also, a big percentage - 28,8% of those who immigrated for work, and 41% of those who immigrated for study - hadn't got any information about Oulu City Library, until they were informed about library's services during the interviews. A man who has been working in Oulu for many years confirms:

*I have been working in Oulu for five years and no one has ever told me about any of the services. I hear them for the first time from you. I am positively shocked, because everything is free and I would like to read the e-magazines from different countries.*

Another immigrant said:

*Those are pretty interesting services. I had no idea about any of them to be honest, and in my four years here, I have never visited any library. But after what you told me it is worth paying that place a visit.*

40% of the foreign university students have never been informed about the public library system. A student writing here Master's degree in the University of Oulu commented:

*It's weird that they don't advertise. Probably they assume everyone knows about those services, because as you said Finns are introduced to them from early childhood. However, they cannot assume we foreigners have any clue about what goes on inside the libraries. However, now that I know I am definitely becoming a customer to the library.*

Concluding from the interviews we can say:

1. There is not enough advertising available to inform immigrants about the services of Oulu City Library.
2. The non-informed people of the services get interested in the library after they receive the information needed.
3. There should be a strategy to inform all immigrants about Oulu City Library services. Those categories of people interviewed, who were totally informed about the services, are a result of the co-operation and mutual informing between Oulu City Library and Immigration Centre of Oulu. The obligatory integration course of Immigration Centre includes the introduction to the services of Oulu City Library. We suggest that the library would create same kind of co-operation with the University of Oulu and the firms in which foreign people work or are having their work practicing.

## 2.2.4 Difficulties faced by immigrants in the library

How easy is it for immigrants to use Oulu City Library services and do they have any difficulties while using them? The interviewees gave us different answers, which are described in the table 13.

Table 13. Difficulties in using the library services (N=230). Not all answered to this question.

	n	%
I have no difficulties	122	53,0
There is a language barrier	41	17,8
I do not know what I can do in the library	21	9,1
I cannot find books alone	16	6,9
The library is too far away	14	6,0
I am not aware how to use the library services	9	4,0
I do not dare visit the library, because I think it is only for Finnish people	7	3,0
Answers, total	230	99,8

About half of the interviewees said that they had no difficulties and all the services were easy and accessible for their use. Another half told they do have some kind of difficulties in using the library services.

17,8% of the library visitors have a language barrier in the library. The language barrier is most difficult for the immigrants, who do not have any common language with the library staff:

*I try to speak Finnish. I have been living here two years already. My Finnish is bad. The workers immediately change it to English. I do not speak English at all. The perfect scenario is if someone speaks Russian. I have so many questions but I cannot find answers.*

*I would visit the library or other cultural institutions when I speak enough Finnish. I am also trying to learn some English. However, I can only function perfectly in Arabic, so given they have no one who speaks the language, I am not brave enough to go.*

As a summary of the interviews and questionnaires, we can sum up that the immigrants with no experience in using a library and those who come from countries with different or less developed library services than those in Finland, have the following problems:

- They do not know what they can do in the library.
- They cannot find books independently.
- They do not visit the library because it is too far away. They weren't aware about the existence of any of the branch libraries within Oulu.
- They have no knowledge of how to use the services of the library. The reason for this is the lack of experience.
- They think the library is for Finnish citizens only. One reason for this is that inside the library you do not see information in other languages.

## 2.3 Immigrants' needs and demands

### 2.3.1 Needs to integrate

In the following tables, we see the description of the different needs of the interviewees to integrate. In addition, we can extract from the results the role Oulu City Library plays or could play in the future to help the integration.

#### Refugees and asylum seekers

Table 14. Main tools to integrate: Refugees and asylum seekers (N=81)

	n	%
To learn Finnish language	15	18,5
To find a job	14	17,2
To find a place to study	12	15,0
Maintain my culture traditions	11	13,5
To spend time with my own cultural community	10	12,5
To understand Finnish culture	8	10,0
To find Finnish friends	6	7,5
To practice my religion	2	2,4
To complete my education	2	2,4
To move away from Oulu	1	1,2
Answers, total	81	100,2

In the group of the refugees and asylum seekers, learning Finnish language seems to be thought as the main tool to integrate: 18,5% of this group rates learning of the language as the most important path to integration. 17,2% believe that finding a job is the most important step to integrate into the society. 15% of the interviewees rate the continuation of their studies – thus finding a place to study – as the most important aspect for their integration.

13,5% say that maintaining their own culture traditions is an important aspect to integrate and 12,5% believe that spending time with the people from their own culture might be helpful to understand the Finnish culture, and in that way reach integration at some point.

#### Immigrated for family reasons

In the case of the people who immigrated for family reasons, we see similarity with the previous group in the first three categories (table 15). Those immigrants also rate the learning of Finnish language as the main target to reach integration: 26,7% of the interviewed have this aspect in their answers. 20% of the interviewed find the employment as the main aspect to integration. Moreover, 13,3% of interviewees in this category state that finding a place to study is the main way to integrate. Therefore, this group has a similar priority list as the refugees and asylum seekers, with slightly having an emphasis on learning the language.

Contrary to the previous group, understanding Finnish culture as a path of integration was ranked higher than maintaining own culture traditions and spending time with their own cultural community.

Table 15. Main tools to integrate: Immigrated for family reasons (N=90)

	n	%
To learn Finnish language	24	26,7
To find a job	18	20,0
To find a place to study	12	13,3
To understand Finnish culture	11	12,2
Maintain my culture traditions	8	8,9
To find Finnish friends	7	7,8
To spend time with my own cultural community	6	6,7
To practice my religion	2	2,2
To complete my education	1	1,1
To move away from Finland	1	1,1
Answers, total	90	100,0

### Immigrated for work

In the case of the people who immigrated for work, integration might not be their main target, therefore 19,2% think that maintaining their own culture is the biggest priority during their time in Oulu. Completing the previous aspect 15,4% say they want to spend time with people from their own cultural background. 11,5% of those who immigrated for work see that completing their education would help them to integrate better.

Table 16. Main tools to integrate: Immigrated for work (N=52)

	n	%
Maintain my culture traditions	10	19,2
To spend time with my own cultural community	8	15,4
To complete my education	6	11,5
To learn Finnish language	4	7,7
To find a job	4	7,7
To find Finnish friends	4	7,7
To practice my religion	4	7,7
To move away from Oulu	4	7,7
To move away from Finland	4	7,7
To understand Finnish culture	2	3,8
To find a place to study	2	3,8
Answers, total	52	99,9

## Immigrated to study

People who immigrated to Oulu because of a study place told that learning Finnish language and understanding Finnish culture are their main tools to integrate while being here. However, naturally they value completing their education as the top priority. The result shows that almost a quarter of them ranked this to be their first priority when thinking of integrating to Finnish society.

Table 17. Main tools to integrate: Immigrated to study (N=46) \*Some people in this group had more than one thing considered as the priority, so they gave more than one answer.

	n	%
To complete my education	11	23,9
To learn Finnish language	7	15,2
To understand Finnish culture	7	15,2
To find a job	5	10,8
To find Finnish friends	5	10,8
To practice my own religion	5	10,8
Maintain my own culture traditions	5	10,8
To move away from Oulu	5	10,8
To move away from Finland	5	10,8
Answers, total	55*	119,1

When thinking of immigrants' needs and demands to integrate to Oulu we can sum up:

- Learning Finnish language, getting a job and a place to study are the main priorities for people who immigrated as refugees or asylum seekers or for family reasons.
- Understanding the Finnish culture is a common interest for people who immigrated for study, as refugees or asylum seekers or for family ties, but plays no big role for people who immigrated for work.
- Other than the students who were most willing to find Finnish friends, all the other three groups emphasize the need to spend time with their own community. However, people who immigrated for work seem to prioritize this aspect the most.
- In all four categories, a small group has a priority of practicing own religion. Numbers are between 2% and 11%.
- Almost no one of the refugees and asylum seekers and those who immigrated for family reasons would like to leave Oulu or Finland, whereas the numbers grow to 8% in the category of people who immigrated for work and to 11% in the category of students.

### 2.3.2 The biggest challenge

Immigrants with non-western background probably face greater challenges related to integration compared to immigrants coming from countries culturally closer to the receiving country (Svanhild Aabø, 2010). The tables below give information about the biggest challenges for the immigrants in Oulu to complete their integration process. The results could be a starting point of how Oulu City Library could help people in their integration process in the future.

#### Refugees and asylum seekers

It seems that the biggest challenge for the refugees and asylum seekers in Oulu is the Finnish language, which they have to learn in order find a job in Oulu. They spend at least a year and a half in learning Finnish at integration courses, provided by the National Integration Program.

Table 18. Biggest challenge for the refugees and asylum seekers (N=81)

	n	%
To learn Finnish language	35	42,9
To find job	20	25,0
To find Finnish friends	10	12,5
To communicate with locals	7	8,9
To maintain my own cultural traditions	6	7,1
To find internship place	3	3,6
Answers, total	81	100,0

Nearly 43% of the group of refugees and asylum seekers believe that learning Finnish language is the biggest challenge on the road to integration. Already the previous headline numbers showed that learning the language is the most important aspect considered by the same group for integration.

Learning the language is most difficult for the illiterate refugees and asylum seekers. They have to learn reading and writing and at the same time also a new language, the Finnish. An illiterate man at the age of 56 shares:

*Every day I attend a course in Finnish where I try to learn. But the little one I learn I forget the next day.*

Getting a workplace is on the second place on the list of the most challenging things: 25% of the respondents stated that the biggest challenge in Oulu is to get a workplace.

12,5% of the refugees and asylum seekers think that finding Finnish friends is their biggest challenge. They rarely speak with people they do not know. 8,9% have huge difficulties in communicating with locals and consider that difficulty as their biggest challenge.

7,1% think it is challenging to maintain their own cultural habits and traditions, therefore that is their biggest challenge in their time in Oulu.

3,6% of the interviewed have struggled to find an internship place. Consequently, they consider this aspect as their biggest challenge, which can be read from a reply of an interviewee:

*I started studying in a vocational school because I have a lot of work experience, but no diplomas. My training includes work practice. I was looking for internship place throughout Oulu, but I was not accepted anywhere. After that I found, through acquaintances in Espoo and I moved to live there. I'm disappointed by Oulu because I haven't even got a chance.*

### *Immigrated for family reasons*

We find again similarities between this group and the group that immigrated as asylum seekers or refugees. The biggest challenge remains learning Finnish; almost half of the interviewees confirmed it (Table 19).

In addition, one third believes that finding a workplace is the biggest challenge in Oulu.

7,3% think that finding Finnish friends is the biggest challenge and the same percentage name communicating with the locals as their biggest challenge. One man explained that he is not afraid of speaking with Finnish people, but thinks they are afraid from him:

*I have the feeling that people are afraid of me when I try to talk with someone on the street.*

Rest of the interviewed named maintaining their own cultural traditions, finding a study place or having self-motivation to be their biggest challenges while living in Oulu.

Table 19. Biggest challenge for those immigrated for family reasons. \*Some interviewees mentioned more than one challenge. (N=90)

	n	%
To learn Finnish language	41	47,3
To find job	28	32,7
To find Finnish friends	6	7,3
To communicate with locals	6	7,3
To maintain my own cultural traditions	5	5,5
To find study place	2	1,8
To have self-motivation	2	1,8
	100*	103,7

### *Immigrated for work*

For the people who immigrated for work, the biggest challenges differ from the previous two groups: 25% of them find the most difficult challenge being to communicate with locals and another 25% believe that maintaining own cultural traditions in Oulu is the biggest challenge. 16,7% believe the biggest challenge would be to continue their contract or get a new job and another 16,7% see loneliness they suffer from is their biggest challenge in living in Oulu.

Learning Finnish language and finding Finnish friends are also mentioned as the biggest challenges. A woman describes her difficulties:

*I would like to have more Finnish friends, but it is difficult to make contact. People here are nice, but I feel that they keep a distance. It is difficult for me to understand that, maybe because of my different cultural background.*

Table 20. Biggest challenge for those immigrated for work (N=52)

	n	%
To communicate with the locals	13	25,0
To maintain my own cultural traditions	13	25,0
Work situation	9	16,7
Loneliness	9	16,7
To learn Finnish language	4	8,3
To find Finnish friends	4	8,3
Answers, total	52	100,0

### Immigrated for study

Like the immigrants for working reasons, the immigrants for studying reasons find that communicating with the locals is their biggest challenge in Oulu. One third of the interviewees from this category confirmed this.

20% think finding a job in Oulu is the biggest challenge and another 20% believe that maintaining their own cultural tradition is the most challenging aspect of life in Oulu.

The rest of the biggest challenges were finding a Finnish friend, learning Finnish language and loneliness.

Table 21. Biggest challenge for those immigrated to study (N=46)

Biggest challenge	n	%
To communicate with locals	16	33,3
To find job	9	20,0
To maintain my own cultural traditions	9	20,0
To find Finnish friends	6	13,3
To learn Finnish language	3	6,7
Loneliness	3	6,7
Answers, total	46	100,0

### 2.3.3 Books, magazines and materials from home country

Oulu City Library has collections in the languages of different groups of immigrants. The respondents seem to value that service, even though not everyone makes use of it. Like Auduson et al. have stated, the development of such a service is important for the immigrants, because in addition to being a useful service, the bare existence of it develops trust and confidence by signaling that the country accepts their culture and traditions. Movies and literature from

immigrants' home country are often used to soften homesickness. (Audunson RA, Essmat S and Aabo S, 2011.)

The following table shows the level of importance of having books in immigrants' mother languages.

Table 22. The importance of reading books from one's home country (N=269)

	n	%
Very important	87	32,3
Important	67	24,9
To some extent	40	15,0
Not important at all	75	27,8
Answers, total	269	100,0

57,2% of the interviewees found that it is either important or very important to read books in their own mother language. It became obvious during the interviews that the shorter the stay of the person in Finland was, the bigger was the need for books in their own language. This aspect has been related to homesickness at the start of living in a different country (Audunson et al. 2011). For instance, in two different interviews, two newcomers from Eritrea confirmed that they really would like to have books in Tigrinya language.

Most of the interviewees were really positively surprised when they heard they can read online magazines in their own language; in this case in Portuguese:

*It's the best news for me, it's changing my life! I have been living in Oulu for eight years and have always paid on websites to read the press from my home country, but now I can read for free. I like Oulu library a lot and I often visit it, but I did not know about this opportunity before this interview.*

Almost a quarter of the interviewees see that having books in their mother language is important. An immigrant man living in Oulu for over 30 years stated:

*When I first moved to Oulu it was very nice to have all magazines in German and a lot of books. I really enjoyed it and looked forward towards reading German. As for now I can see the importance, maybe for others more than for me. I just like to read the language does not matter. However, as a German it is always nice to see a big collection of literature in my language.*

15% of the interviewed believe it is important to some extent to have books in their own language. A Chinese woman believes that the library should have many books in different languages and suitable for different cultures:

*The collection of books in different languages should be richer in Oulu libraries. The variety of languages and books makes the place more multicultural.*

Around 28% see no importance of having books in their own language. A man immigrated to Oulu for 12 years ago stated:

*I don't need at all any books in my language, I understand Finnish perfectly and I prefer to read in Finnish.*

### 2.3.4 Receiving information

As the previous parts of the research have shown already, there is not enough advertising of the library services. Many foreigners were not aware of the numerous aspects of the library functions in Oulu. Therefore, the interviewees expressed that they would like to receive information about the library (table 23).

Almost a quarter of the interviewees would like to receive information from their integration schools and/or university. Integration schools - as discussed earlier - play an important role in the introduction to the library and its services. There should also be more emphasis on the universities' role in advertising. For this aim Oulu City Library needs to cooperate with the University of Oulu.

24,1% would like to get information about services and events through emails. Some of the interviewees say they receive emails from Oulu City Library, but the emails are always in Finnish and not everyone understands them.

Social media is a good media to get information, say 16% of respondents. Also, the interviewees share that the information about Oulu City library in social media is always in Finnish and not everyone understands it. Thus, the majority of foreigners in Oulu remain uninformed about future events and they feel excluded. They would like to have information in other languages; most of them prefer English or at least *selkokieli*.

11,1% prefer information from the library while visiting there and 8,1% prefer to get information from the web pages of the library.

7% would like to receive some information from their workplace, especially those who immigrated for work – as we found earlier: they are the least informed people about libraries. Some of the interviewees working at the University of Oulu say that during the first working days they receive full information about all institutions in the city, but not about Oulu City Library. They would like to receive information about that library in the same way.

5,9% prefer information through brochures and 2,6% from the official institutions when they register officially in Oulu. For example, the offices of official institutions may have brochures providing information in different languages about the library services and the locations of Oulu City branch libraries.

Table 23. From where you would like to receive information about the library services? (N=269)

Preferred source of information	n	%
From my integration school or university	67	24,9
By email	65	24,1
From the social media	43	16,0
From the library, on place	30	11,1
From the web pages of the library	22	8,1
From my work place	19	7,0
By brochures or posters	16	5,9
By the official institutions when I first register	7	2,6
Answers, total	269	99,7

## 2.4 What other services should the library offer

Table 24 shows the needs of the immigrants from the library to enhance their integration process. Almost one fourth of the interviewees would like the library to help them in the process of learning Finnish language. The motivation to learn the language was clearly high, but the services and materials were determined as too few or inappropriate:

*I want in the library to have more learning materials in Finnish, in order to have the opportunity for more choice and better learning.*

The interviewees said also they would like to get language courses or language cafés from the libraries. There has been a language café once a week, but the interviewees were either unaware of it or would like more gatherings. Finnish language courses and language cafés do not need to be a responsibility of the libraries, but they can collaborate with volunteers and other organizations.

20,4% would like to get help from the library to understand Finnish culture. One interviewee stated:

*I would like to understand the Finnish culture. What are their traditions, history, what are important events for them, what are their values, etc.? I wish library could make some events and explain those things to people who have similar interest like me.*

20,4% would like to feel included in the libraries' programs and events or maintain their cultural traditions and spend time with people from a similar cultural background. An immigrant said:

*I would like to have, for example, a Thai week in the library. A week dedicated to Thai traditions. There is much more in Thai culture than the Thai food and Thai massage that people know of. I would also like to take part in cultural weeks of other cultures to learn more about them. Hope the library can organize such events at some point.*

11,5 % of the interviewees would like the library to help them with sourcing material for finding study places. For example, where and how they can apply? Are there entrance exams and in what way should one prepare for them? 9,6% of the interviewees told they had made requests to have an internship chance in some units of Oulu City Library, but hadn't got one.

9,6%% would like to get help from the library to find Finnish friends. One of them stated:

*I am a sociable person. However, I have been in Oulu for three years and have found no Finnish friends yet. I hope that at some point the library can organize some activities or meetings between foreigners and Finns, and maybe I get a chance to meet a Finn with similar interests and be able to build a friendship.*

2,9% hope that the library would organize different courses:

*I would like to be a part of, for an example, a course on how to search for jobs in Finland. Maybe a course that explains how to improve my CV, how to perform in interviews, etc. I am also interested in any course that will provide me with a certain skill that might be appreciated in the job market.*

*I would like to be part of some dancing course for an example. I like to dance and that's a great way to meet new people.*

Table 24. What would you like the library to offer you? (N=269)

	n	%
More educational material, dictionaries for learning Finnish, language cafés and language courses	68	25,2
Increasing awareness of the new country	55	20,4
Programs including immigrants; events for different cultures	55	20,4
Materials and information to apply for degree places	31	11,5
Encounters between immigrants and residents of the area	26	9,6
More internship places in the library	26	9,6
Different courses	8	2,9
Answers, total	269	99,6

### 3 Models of success

#### 3.1 Democracy in families

The project had difficulties to activate the Arabs and make them attend events until the project worker asked PhD Talal El Saghir to run a course for Arabic speaking society:

*Our project's goal is to introduce the branch libraries in general, and the library's culture to the foreign communities living in Oulu, Finland, and make them constant visitors to the libraries. We try to achieve those goals by making different events while advertising the libraries. We had many failures to activate the Arabic speaking society in Oulu, until we had the idea to make a course in Arabic, and hand it to a PhD trainer doctor Talal El Saghir who prepared different lectures and discussions. The course lasted for eight months; we met twice a week in Puolivälinkangas library for three hours each time. All the attendants and many of their family members and friends became constant visitors to the different branch libraries in Oulu.*

After a planning discussion the professor and the project worker decided to have a course in Arabic. The course was named *Democracy in families*, but the discussions were planned to deal with broader themes of society, too.

- Changing the way of thinking. Subtopics:
  1. Prior beliefs
  2. Differences of the Finnish culture
  3. Using abilities to get a job in Finland
  
- Communication skills. Subtopics:
  1. With the family members
  2. Role of every member in decision making, concentrating on women's role
  3. How to behave with Finns (for example: keeping a bit distance, shaking hands when you meet, be a good listener, being on time)

- Time management and productivity. Subtopics:
  1. Learning the language daily
  2. Applying for jobs
  3. Making connections
  4. Learning new skills
  5. Attending cultural events
  
- Democracy. Subtopics:
  1. Art of disagreeing
  2. Majority's rule
  3. Respecting other's opinions even if they are so different from ours

The lectures and discussions started on September 2018 and lasted until May 2019. During the last three months of the course the focus was to help the attendants in writing job applications: *Three people found jobs and many attended job interviews*, confirms the project worker.

Why was this model a successful one?

The first idea, as we see, was to gather a few Arabic speaking people to a library. When the lecturer who is an Arab himself, took the duty of advertising the event and brought people from his own society to attend, people joined because they had a connection to a trusted lecturer:

*When doctor Talal invited me to this course, I just joined and did not even ask what it was about.*

*I just got a message from Talal if I am free to attend a lecture he will do, and I replied yes. I joined the first time and have been attending since.*

The second idea was to activate the attendants. *There must be a lot of information about the differences in cultures and way of life, plus an introduction to the Finnish society's norms*, said doctor Talal and added: *It helped a lot that the information was coming from someone they consider as one of them. It doesn't feel at that point that a random person is telling you that you are living or acting or behaving different and you should change. It gives credibility to the message.*

Therefore, this step is successful as well, because when learning about the Finnish laws and way of life, the attendants made the first big step towards the integration:

*Now I understand that if I talk in a high voice on a phone in a bus Finnish people can be bothered. I do not do it anymore. In my country, no one cared. But I respect how the locals might feel.*

*I could never understand before this course, that if I am five to ten minutes late to an appointment to KELA or TE-toimisto, why they are angry. Ten minutes!! It is not the end of the world I thought. Now it is clear for me it is a big deal to respect appointments here and I have never been late in the last six months for any meeting.*

A person who got a job adds:

*Always thought I had a good background to get jobs, but I realized my CV was not on a Finnish standard, I did not have numbers and contacts of people or organizations that confirm that I had done a certain work. I fixed all those things and learnt to make a cover letter and I started getting many interviews, and finally got a job as a car mechanic.*

The third and the main idea was to make attendants to become permanent visitors of the branch libraries in Oulu: *From the first 12 attendants we had only one who had ever been to any branch library*, tells the project worker.

Doctor Talal says:

*I knew this was the main idea. However, you cannot talk about it in the first few meetings. The first few lectures and discussions were about the everyday life and problems of the attendants. When they got interested and started, constantly coming we started introducing the library's services and culture. All of them became visitors, and many brought their family members and friends.*

The project worker concludes: *I think because of this course we got over 70 new visitors to the branch libraries.*

Three important things were realized during the course:

1. Some people from certain backgrounds need a trusted figure in order to attend an event. Advertising works differently with different people.
2. There are professional ways to pass certain information, especially the ones related to the way of life in a certain country. It should not sound that the one who is passing the information is teaching or lecturing the person.
3. Usually foreigners get the entire service information during their first visit in Oulu City Library. There is a lot of information passed in a very short time. It would be a more successful way to gain a person as a constant visitor to a certain library and encourage the person to become attached to a certain event before introducing all the other services the library provides.

### **3.2 Case of Eleven illiterates in Kastelli Library**

A visit of eleven illiterate immigrants was made to Kastelli Community Center in Oulu, a center that includes a primary school, high school, a library and a youth center. In addition, integration and language classes are offered in these premises. During the visit the researcher and the project worker, who acted as translator, met with a special integration group that included 11 illiterate people. The group comprised of six males and five females, aged between 18 and 67. Because of common languages by the project worker, we could communicate with nine of them.

In the interviews the first question was: *What do you think of the library?* The answers we got were:

*It is a place full of books and I can't read how do you want me to feel? It is as if I ask you how you feel about my bike. You have no connection with it right?*

*Looks like a nice place, I see it always full and hosting different activities, I sometimes want to get in, but I don't know what to say, what to ask or what to do...*

*I want to visit many places, not only the library, but I only speak Arabic. I live in Finland so I should learn Finnish, but until I learn, my life is coming to this school and going home, I cannot do anything else.*

*I am learning how to read and write, when I become good at it I will read many books. I wish they had something like someone reads you the book sometimes I really like to listen to stories", answered one interviewee. "But the library offers sometimes story reading in different languages", the person was told. "Wow! I wish you can tell me when those things happen", replied the interviewee.*

To the surprise of the researcher, the majority of this group was really interested in the library in general: for example they wanted to get in, look at some books or try to read a bit. However, none of them had ever been in the library except when it was in the course program on a particular day. The main reason for not coming to the library was the lack of a common language.

The interviewees were informed of all the services they could get from the library and all of them were positively shocked:

*Are you serious I can come and play PlayStation for free?*

*All those things and free, and it is also free for foreigners! This is so nice from their part. Really! For the first time I feel I am welcomed in this country!*

This raised another important question: All the group's attendants were introduced to Oulu City Library during their course and they were told about the library services. So why is it that this information came by surprise?

This question led us to interview the teacher, and he stated:

*I can communicate in Finnish and English. I also use a drawing to explain things. They use each other's help to explain a few things but I can never be sure if they got the meaning right. We had a visit to the library where we gave them a tour and explained all the things they could do. However, it is very difficult to predict how much they understood.*

Other than this particular group, there is a huge number of immigrants who live in Oulu and do not speak either Finnish or English, and feel left out of the library and other institutions - therefore from integrating.

It takes only the smallest steps to make the person welcomed and this will lead to a successful integration. Whenever a person feels left out, integration become very difficult to follow through with implementing. Therefore, as a suggestion for these small steps to the library, it is necessary to have help in other languages than English and Finnish. As for introducing the library services, an animated non-text based, fully visual introductory video, explaining all the library services would be more than enough to make many more people become customers, therefore enrolling into integration through the library.

### 3.3 Work trip to Germany

The project worker and the researcher made a four-day work trip to Germany. The idea of the trip was to visit as many public libraries as possible and check the integration programs there observing the interaction of immigrants, and bring new ideas back to Oulu City Library. The starting point of the trip was the city of Leverkusen, given that it is a friend city of Oulu and it was easy to settle meetings due to previous contacts with some organizations there. Later on, we also included the cities of Dusseldorf and Cologne in the trip, being geographically close to Leverkusen.

In four days we visited 29 libraries. We brought back with us the following ideas:

1. *Community gardening*. People gather to discuss gardening techniques and ideas, then they go on a field trip and make gardening together. The idea was to create interaction with people having the same interest.
2. *3D printer classes*

3. *One full day virtual reality classes.* After having these classes the customers may use the virtual reality glasses in the library.
4. *Digital introduction.* How to use email, attach files, pay bills, use Facebook and other social media.
5. *Helping in job applications.* Foreigners use this a lot. When they find an interesting job and want to apply for it they receive help in the library. It is important to mention that the library worker does not make the full application: the person applying for the job writes the application plus the cover letter, the library worker proof reads them and gives some feedback.
6. *A cartoon styles video introducing all library services.* The video has no words.
7. *A Sports library.* A huge library of three floors specialized only in sports materials. Covering over 40 sports in different languages. This library is extremely popular and it was the most crowded library we visited.
8. *Generations passing knowledge.* Many times an elderly citizen and a young person pass knowledge to each other. Usually an elderly person needs some help in technology and the young person needs help in handicrafts in fixing some things. Or sometimes they just want to sit together and have a discussion.
9. *English speaking circles* in the international library. The international library has activities in English like yoga and different events. People who have recently moved to the country and have no knowledge in German go there often.
10. *Gaming society.* A group of people organize video game competitions inside the library or online. Football on PlayStation is very popular and over 200 people take part in championships organized every three months.

Out of those ten new ideas, there are only two that are made specifically for foreigners. The idea of introducing the library services in a mute video in order to break any language barrier, and the English activities in the international library.

The digital introduction classes and getting help in job applications are mostly used by foreigners in the cities we visited. However – we were told - some Germans also use those services.

What makes the integration model so successful in the libraries we visited in Germany is that the majority of the activities and services provided by libraries are not specifically made for any nationalities or certain backgrounds. Those activities are made according to certain interests that the attendants have. People interested in virtual reality have their own groups; people interested in gardening, in gaming, in discussions, in language exchange, in sports etc., all have their own groups. Libraries are playing an enormous role, by providing the space and activities and doing the “match making”. People from many nationalities and backgrounds are united by the libraries under a common interest. When interaction is created, integration is in process and when a common interest is the reason of interaction, there is a huge chance of creation of friendships. Therefore, the level of integration reached in Germany is great and the role played by the library in it is an example to follow.

## 4 Conclusion and suggestions

The research studied the role of Oulu City Library in the integration of immigrants into Finnish society. In order to analyze this aspect, the research relied on feedbacks from immigrants living in Oulu. 269 feedbacks were collected through surveys and oral interviews.

The answers were analyzed thematically and they provided answers to the following questions:

- Which group of immigrants visits the library more often and why? Which groups visit less often and why?
- What are the positive and negative experiences that occur during library visits?
- What are the immigrants' needs and demands from the library?
- How can the library help in the integration process?

Furthermore, the immigrants were divided into four groups according to their reason of immigration to Finland and every category's answers were analyzed separately. Those categories were:

- people who immigrated for work,
- people who immigrated for family reasons,
- people who immigrated for studies,
- people who immigrated as asylum seekers/refugees.

The feedback showed that asylum seekers and refugees, and people who immigrated for family reasons, visit the library the most. Almost 60% of the immigrant library visitors were from the Middle East and Africa. People who immigrated for work or for studies visited the library the least. The main reason for the lack of visits was the lack of knowledge about the library's services. Therefore, there is a big emphasis on how the library should advertise its activities in the future. Another commonly occurring reason for the lack of visits is the language barrier. The library serves in Finnish and English, and the people who could speak neither of those two languages felt like outsiders and could not understand anything during their visits. Therefore, the researcher argues that there is a need for some kind of services in Russian and Arabic even for limited times during the week.

Almost two thirds of the visitors have had positive experiences in the library and were very satisfied with the services. They were happy that all the services are free and easy to access. One third told not being satisfied or rated the services as quite good or average, because they hadn't got certain books or they had problems with the online system.

A big group wanted the library to provide more Finnish language courses to help their integration process. Another big group expected more cultural events from the library to help immigrants understand better Finnish culture. Some people hoped for cultural events, potentially their own, from the library, so that they could have a chance to meet people from their own culture living in Oulu, or know better about other cultures. Finally, some people believe that the library should play a role in being a matchmaker, taking a role in forming friendships between Finns and foreigners, through some multicultural events or organized activities for people with similar interests. This can be reached through cooperating with both integration projects existing in the city of Oulu and the local organizations and societies. The library probably has more contact-facilitating properties than most other venues. A certain group of immigrants believes that integration happens, if they get a job or a study place and would like to receive more help from the library in order to achieve those goals.

The library can help in the integration process by responding to the needs and demands of foreigners. The biggest need was to learn or improve Finnish language skills. So language

courses, homework support for the integration courses' students and reading groups offering language practice could be a suggestable start.

As for jobs and study places, there might be a few hours consulting per week where a worker from the library helps in job applications and finding a study place, like the model they follow in Germany. A successful idea with a good potential, is giving immigrants an opportunity to do internships in the libraries, as a way of practicing Finnish language skills, while at the same time helping in serving their own minority groups. In addition to more resources to serve more groups, the employment of librarians with immigrant backgrounds might be another strategy for facilitating integration. For example in a Danish study (Atlestam, 2010) an interviewee found many people feeling insecure and ashamed of dealing with library staff when they had not yet developed the language skills required. Workers with an immigrant background were believed to better understand immigrant customers and also considered to be useful, for example, in the selection and listing of foreign language material.

Oulu City Library can play an important role in the integration by providing information that increases the ability of immigrants to navigate and cope in Finnish society. In order to make all the immigrant groups to reach the information about the library, the information must be in a language they understand. Good practices from Helsinki and Turku have shown that direct invitations for visits significantly increases the attendance rate from immigrants.

Of the course *Democracy in families* we can learn that certain people need different ways to start their integration process. There should be different ways of advertising and passing knowledge. In the case of Arabs for instance, who formed the attendants of this course, the advertising should be done through a person they all know and trust. Moreover, passing the knowledge should be in a friendly way and during discussions about various different topics.

The work trip to Germany helped the researcher and the project worker to bring ten new ideas to Oulu City Library. In Germany, the integration is very successful, and the public library plays a big role in the journey towards integration. The main key for the success was that the activities were not made for certain groups of ethnic backgrounds or nationalities, but for the people with similar interests. Therefore, gathering people with various common interests would be a good model to follow. It would definitely lead to friendships, therefore integration.

In the case of *11 illiterates in Kastelli*, the lesson we learnt was never to leave a group out and consider it as an impossible case to integrate. All the participants had interest in the Finnish culture and wanted to know more about the country and its traditions. They wanted to visit the library they but were hesitating because of no communication skills. The lesson we learnt was that by making them welcomed they will become more interested in their new country and maybe this would be a motive for them to learn faster - and the road for integration would open.

Before the study was conducted, the researcher argued the following hypothesis:

1. Oulu City Library plays a big role in integrating immigrants. It has some activities that can help in learning Finnish language, has books that foreigners can borrow to learn the language and provides the space to study.
2. Immigrants are aware of most of the services the library provides.
3. There is a wide collection of books for all ages and tastes to satisfy immigrant community's needs.
4. Some foreigners have language difficulties when accessing library services.
5. A large number of immigrants do not feel included in events created by the city of Oulu, including within the library. They believe those events are made for Finnish citizens only.

After the study we can conclude:

1. Hypothesis number one was found to be partly correct; however, more activities and services in other languages are needed in order to help the library play a bigger role in the integration.
2. Hypothesis number two was found partly wrong. In fact, most of the foreigners were aware of two to three services of the library on average. The library has a big role in advertising itself and its services better.
3. Hypothesis number three is also debatable. Many people acknowledged that there is a big collection of books from different languages. However, very rarely people were satisfied with the collections being wide. In fact, many requested a larger collection of children's books and books also in other languages than Finnish.
4. Hypothesis number four ended up to be correct. Anyone who cannot communicate in either Finnish or English cannot be served in the library.
5. Feedbacks showed that theory number five was also accurate. Many foreigners felt left out from the library events, mainly because the events were only in Finnish language, and were never advertised properly.

In the end, this research provides a huge amount of feedback on the problems with satisfaction levels of foreigners with the Oulu City Library, their needs and demands from the library, and their ideas on how the library can help them more in the integrating process.

Besides the information we got from the feedback, Oulu City Library should study the good practices in other libraries and create the services they provide on this basis. Work for immigrants always requires cross-administrative cooperation. The implementation requires joint action by several agencies, as well as the public, private and third sector. At the same time, the libraries in Oulu have the opportunity to provide services in collaboration with other local actors.

The results of this research show that the services provided by Oulu City Library are valued. However, they have been used by only some immigrants and remain largely unknown. This is probably partly due to the fact that other people, agencies, reception center and organisations, working with immigrants in the municipality, are unaware of or don't perceive the services of the public library.

This research can open doors for future researches studying the role of other public institutions in the integration process. Other researches might take place if the library changes its approach and takes the feedback of the participants in the research into consideration. This would allow researchers to study the improvement of integration after taking the immigrant's needs and demands into consideration.

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