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Public Libraries : Celebrating Diversity

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Public Libraries: Celebrating Diversity.

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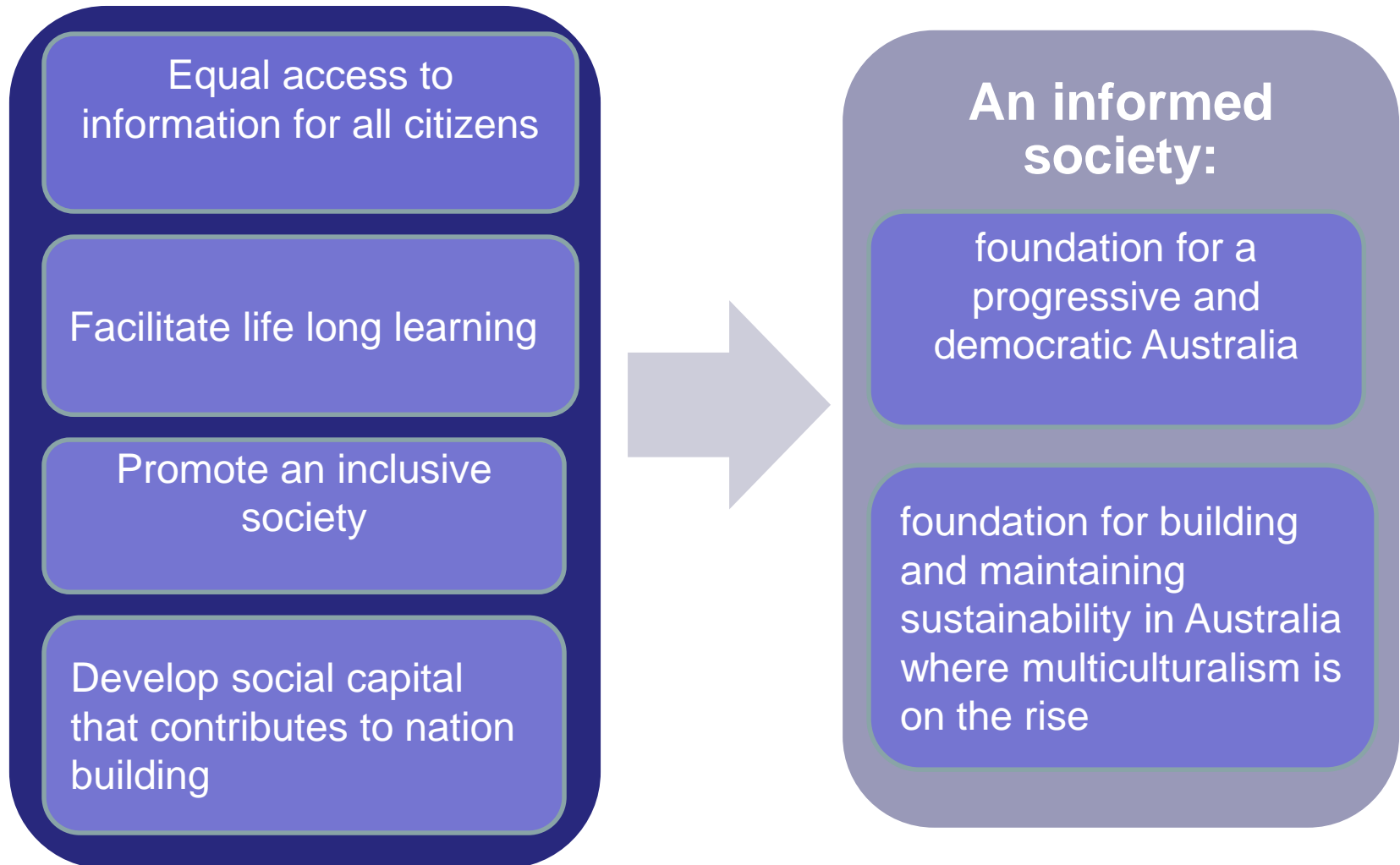
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Why are public libraries critical to community:



Over the previous 50 years:

Technological Revolution:

- search engines, databases, World Wide Web/Internet, Emails, multimedia, CD-ROM, social networking
- Communication & information seeking instantaneous
- Individual: global citizen

Cultural Revolution: caused by migration shift

- Dispersion of stateless peoples due to the wars.
- Willingness of people to move between nations/states and settle in greener pastures.
- Result: emergence of large ethnic communities outside their country of origin

- The digital facilities, programs and resources in the public library enable new migrants to ease into their adoptive environment (Audunson, 2005).

Library facilitates migrants' transition to mainstream culture (Brophy, 2007) because ethnic library users perceive the public library as a democratic, free and safe space.

HOWEVER

There are still many marginalized segments-
unable to access public library services

(Usherwood, 2007).



Segments of populations

Problem:

How do we address these challenges of accessing information for people in society who are often:

information poor

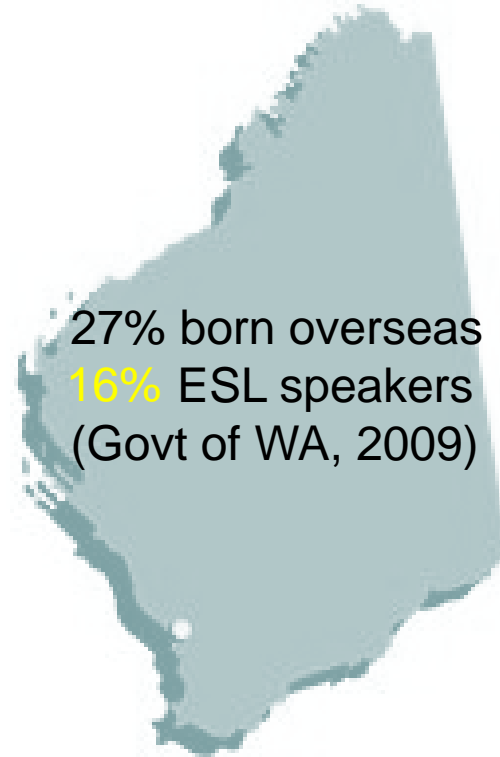
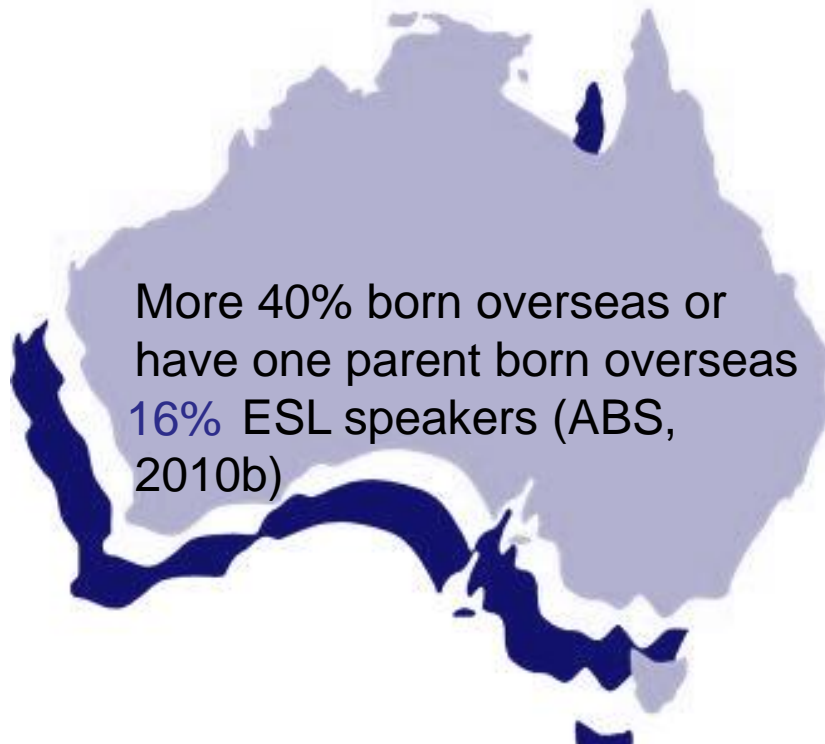
low socio-
economic status

marginalised

disempowered

ESL speakers

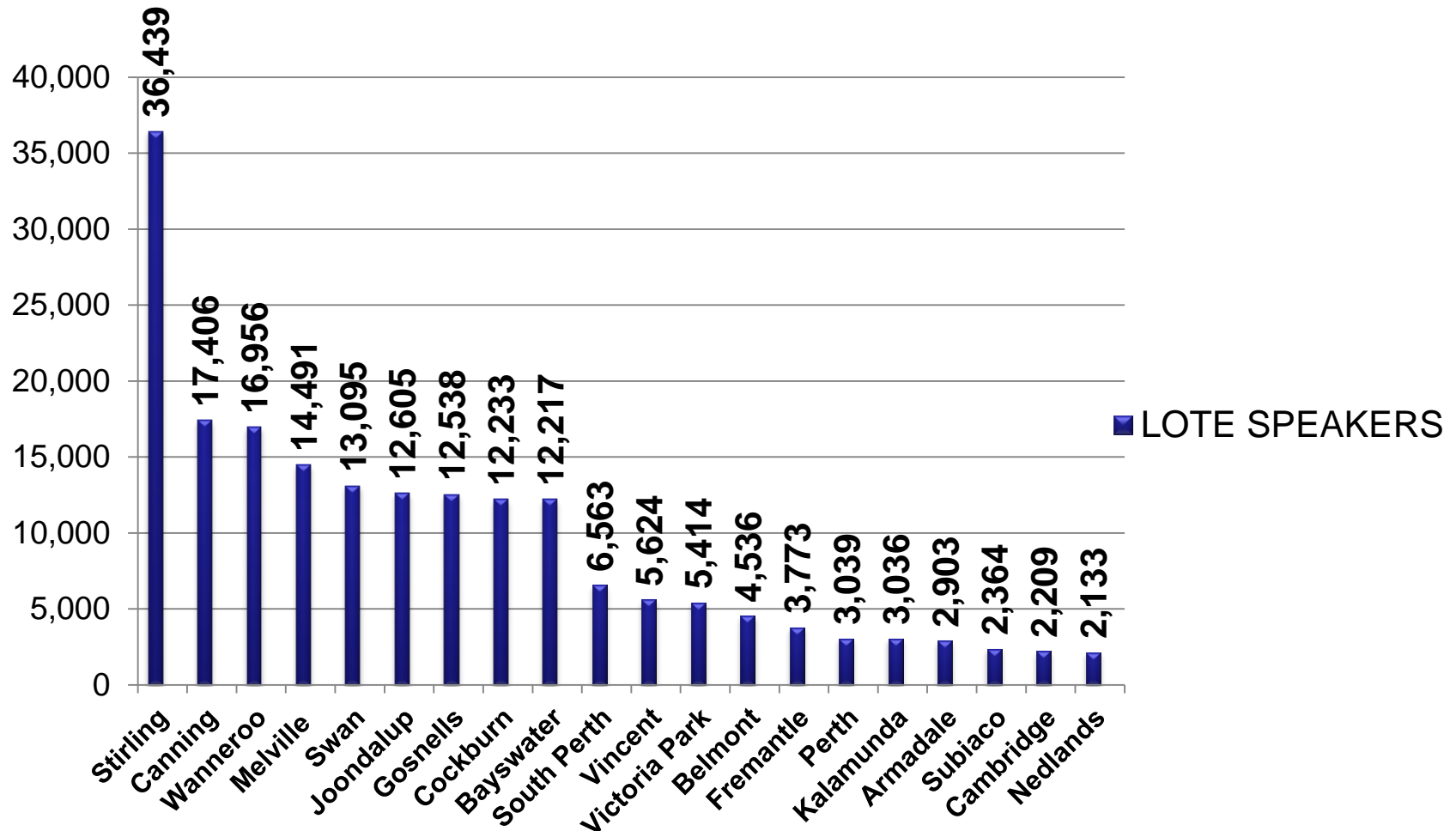
Australia: increasing ESL speaker figures



Figures likely to have increased due to increased migration

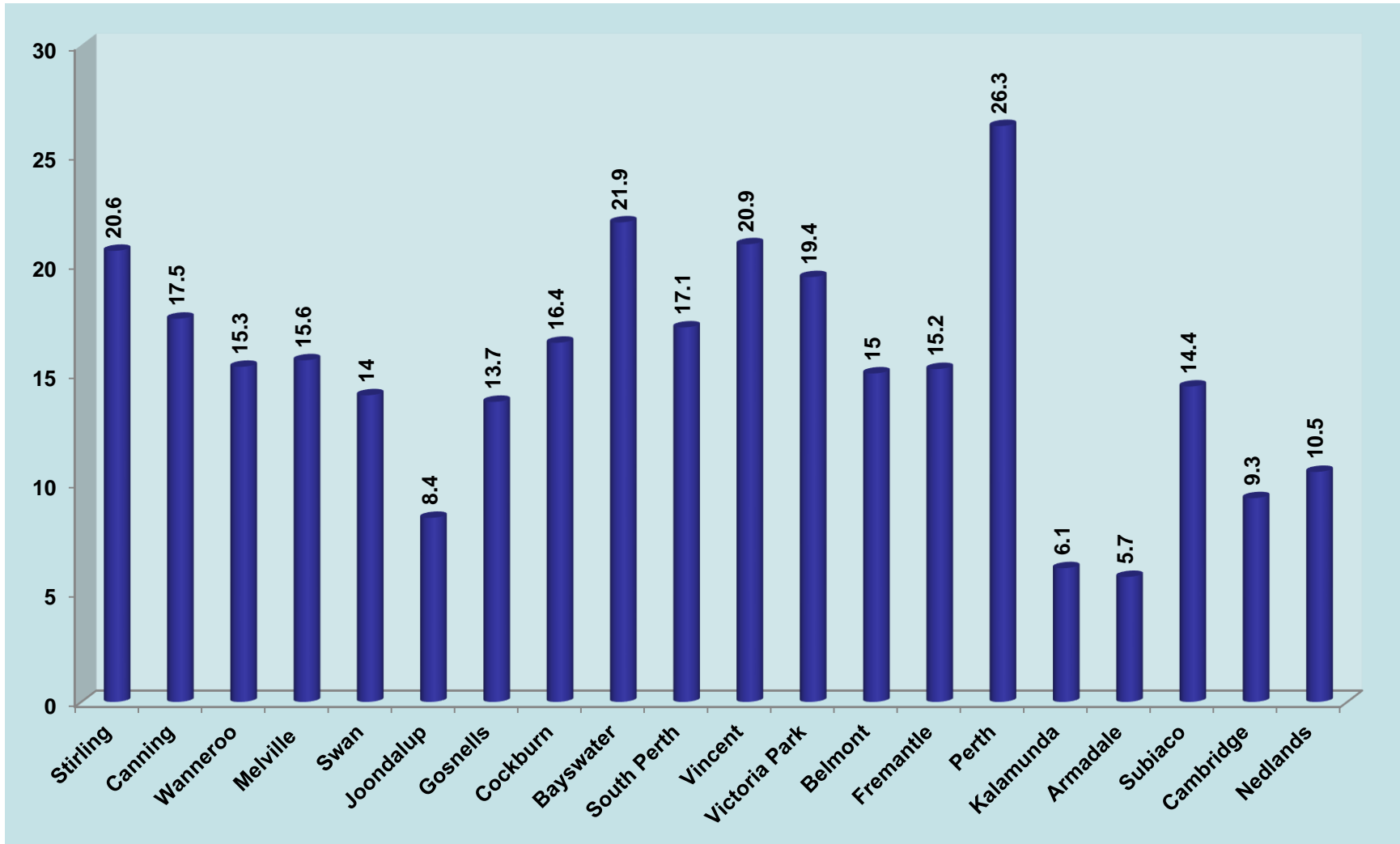
Ethnic population in metropolitan Perth

ESL speakers metropolitan Perth (WA Govt, 2009)



Further evidence of large ethnic population

% of ethnic numbers in each LGA (WA Govt, 2009)



Background to Public libraries: WA

1533 public libraries in Australia

238 public libraries in Western Australia

73 public libraries in Metropolitan Perth
(sample for the study)



WA public library system-

Based on Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951

no specific policy addressing information needs of ESL users despite increases in migrant applications, boat arrivals and asylum seekers.

State Library of WA manages the 238 libraries

Local Government Authority (LGA)	State Library of Western Australia (SLWA)
1. Link between the WA State Government and the public library system	1. Provides access to its main catalogue to all 238 public libraries
2. Provides the infra structure: premises, equipment, parking space ...	2. Coordinates regular exchange of collections among 238 public libraries.
3. Employs public library staff	3. Stocks Collections of print and non print resources: book, newspapers, CDs., DVDs
4. Funds library's operating costs	4. Oversees Inter Library Loan facility

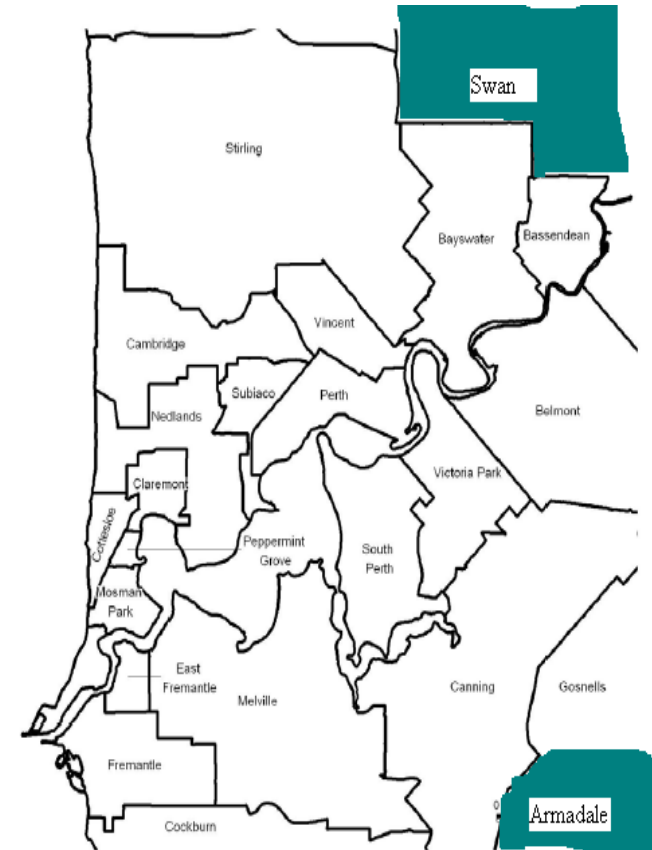
Public library ESL programs: WA

2 documented public library ESL programs from a sample of over 60 libraries:

1. City of Swan and its 6 branches
Adult ESL classes via Read Write Now program

2. Armadale Public library
World of Words (WOW) English Language classes

***The positives....
Melville, Ballajura, Joondalup***



Public library ESL services: Eastern States

Localised programs to meet user needs

Absence of research, some professional staff presentations at Library Summit



In Brisbane, *Fabric of Holland* project, violence between Somali and Sudanese in library premises.

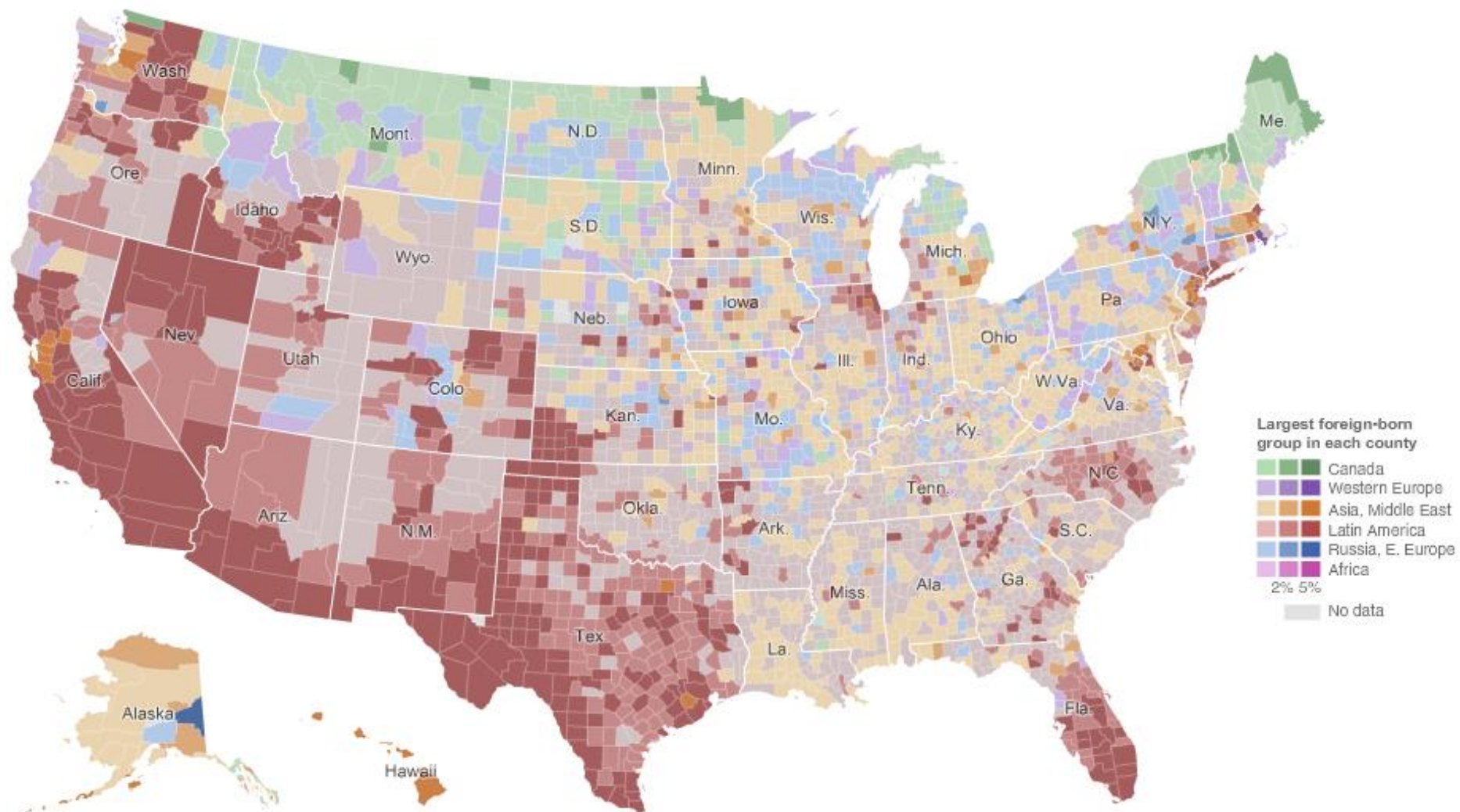
Sydney: Fairfield Library-signage, ethnic staff, ethnic resources

My Language Consortium, (2010):partnership among NT, WA, SA, NSW, Queensland and Victoria network of support services in ethnic languages.

Melbourne Hume Global Learning Village, collaboration - Public library and educational institutions: training, education and employment to
Tasmania: Living Library Project

State Library of Victoria (2004-2008) addressed language needs of ESL users with, “dream that any person can go into any public library and access online resources in any language”

Diversity in the US: 47% of the US population are born overseas



The New York Times. (2009). *Remade in America*. Retrieved May 18, 2011 from <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/03/10/us/20090310-immigration-explorer.html>

Public library ESL programs in USA.

Prevalence of research/ethnic programs/policy/collaborations

Recruit and train ethnic librarians (Kyung-Sun & Sei-Ching, 2008)

Welcome immigrants as valued clients

Ethnic members serve in library committees

Inter active workshops

Librarians attend Ethnic Association functions & showcase library services

Multilingual Brochures

Assist in citizenship tests

ESL classes (USCIS, 2010).

UK: Public library first est. 150 years ago to reduce the class divide

1. Studies over 30 years addressed diversity & minority needs .
2. Concern over, “ lack of high profile action... into public libraries and cultural diversity” (Roach & Morrison, 1998a).
3. Conflict between “needs and reads”; decision left mainly to local councils Pateman, (2004).
4. “Gap in public libraries between the homogenous nature of the staff and the increasingly diverse make up of communities” Pateman, (2004).

Denmark & Norway :actively addressing changing library environment

1. Concern over highly segregated ethnic groups , no contact with locals,
2. Several on going projects, increased funding, extensive research, staff collaborations with ethnic groups and cross cultural programs.

Libraries hold potential to function as anchors for neighbourhood integration.

Public library multicultural policies

- In Victoria *Standards for Multicultural Public Library Services* were documented in 1982 in recognition of the increase in ethnic diversity in the public library user community.
 - *Reviewed 2001*
 - New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland have addressed Multicultural Public Library Services and subsequently reviewed their policies. The Working Group on Multicultural Library Services (NSW) established in 1983 with the vision statement:
 - *Every public library in NSW will have an excellent resource collection and services that meet needs of CALD (ESL) communities.*
 - *Reviewed as Strategic Plan 2006-2011 by the State Library of NSW (State Library of NSW, 2006).*
- 

In August 2010 the Western Australian State and Local Government Authorities Agreement on reform was signed by the Premier:

- 1. increased consultations between State and local governments;**
- 11. more meetings and discussions on strategic policies; and**
- 111. proposed benchmarks for funding core public library services (WALGA, 2010. p 4).**

The prospect for addressing

- 1. current diversity in population
- 11. technological changes appears to be a low priority.

Absence of specific mention of **increasing numbers** in ethnic population or **addressing multicultural information needs** or **multicultural library policies and services** is evident.

How these will be addressed operationally is cause for concern in Western Australia.

Absence of National Public Library Policy

The President of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) announced the need

“to develop a united voice

create a national vision

and framework for public libraries

play a central and valued role in strengthening communities

developing people and achieving social inclusion” (Richards, 2009).

Australian Federal Government

Lack of recognition

Absence of funding for public libraries throughout Australia

Undervalued

Absence of national public library policy

Director General of the National Library of Australia stated

Local Government Authority funding

Is limited for their public libraries

Is dependent on individual Council’s budget allocation

(Fullerton, 2009).

Significant role of Public libraries: build Social Capital

Social Capital:

Bridging Social Capital: integration

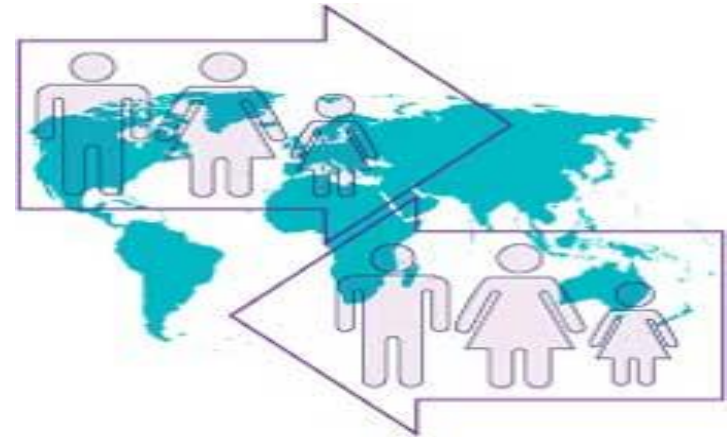
- Transcends social, cultural & political barriers
- Interacts with people **unlike** themselves
- Builds ties, values of trust, cooperation
- Functions across groups
- Reduces cultural divide
- Universally structured

Bonding capital: potential for unrest

- Nurtures ethnically structured groups
- Hinders transition to mainstream culture
- Absence of cross cultural interaction

Nowadays, the marginalized sectors of the population are made up of minority groups include:

1. large numbers
2. possess the intellectual capacity and
3. resources to demand socio-political and economic rights



The Secretary General of the United Nations explained that, “in the 21st century, the international community has increasingly come to recognize the responsibilities of governments to their citizens...the popular uprisings in North Africa and Middle East have shown what can happen when governments are inattentive to the needs of their people” (Ki-Moon, 2011).

The library could optimize the knowledge seeking habit

Brophy (2007) explains that

“human activity is almost always a social process. We do not act, make decisions or learn in isolation but within a process of interplay between individuals collaborating or competing ...in the context of their users’ and social environment” (Brophy, 2007, p.54). Local residents interact with local community, neighbours, schools and public library

Library

Community

The public library has infrastructure and equipment to provide knowledge

1. ***Within the normal living environment of its users,***
2. ***At no extra cost and***
3. ***In an informal mode.”*** (Brophy, 2007, p.206)

The library of the future is potentially positioned to become the bridge between the knowledge seeker and the information.

Evidence of Endorsement by International Organisations.

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) in its , *Multicultural communities: guidelines for library service*, states “that library services to ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities should not be seen in isolation or as additional to normal services. They must be seen as integral to any library service: **each library service should continuously assess the nature and needs of its community, in consultation with ethnic, linguistic and cultural minority groups, and should base its services upon such assessments and consultations**” (Library Board of Victoria, 2001 p.9).

Multicultural Library Manifesto:

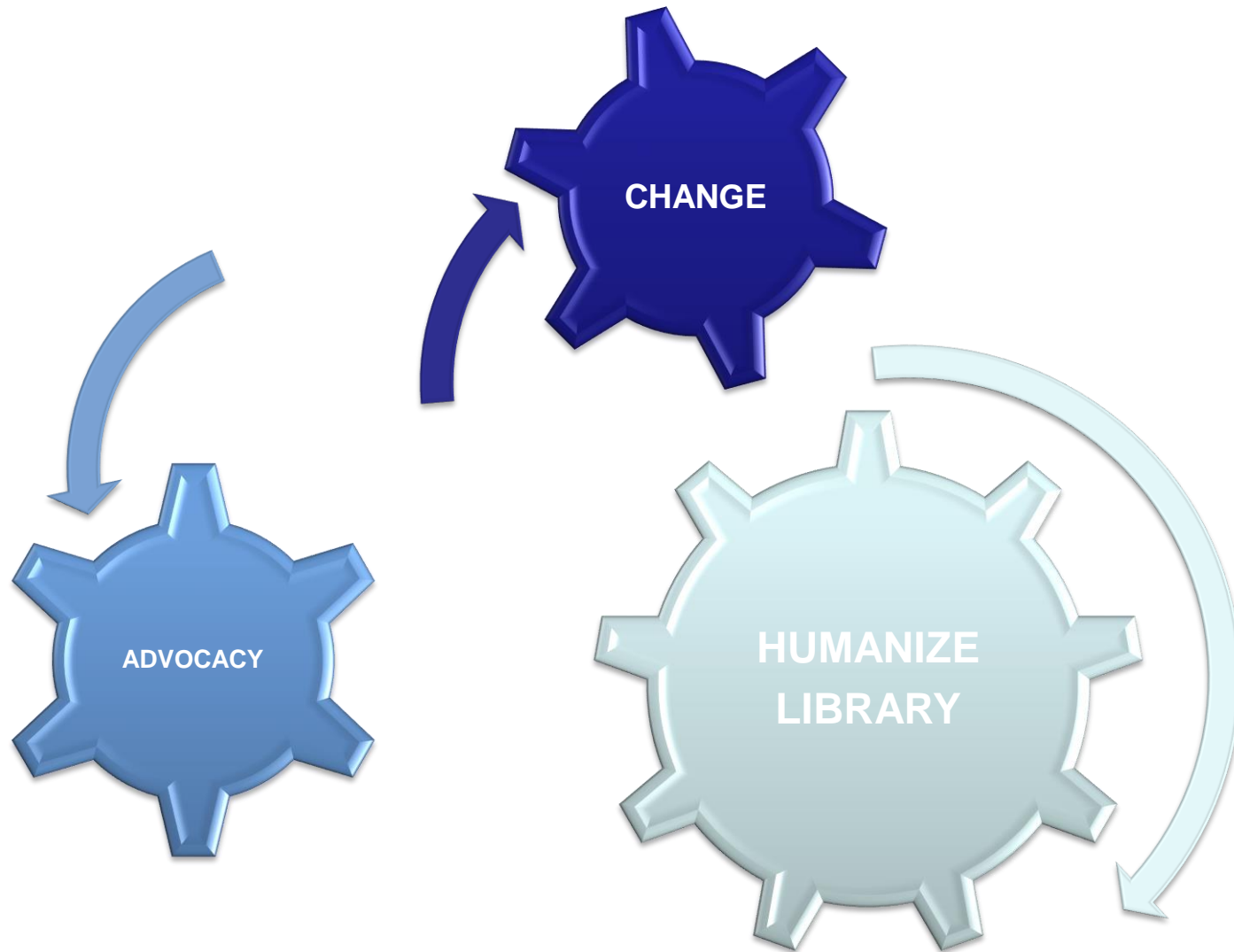
- joint document by IFLA and UNESCO for all nations:

Declaration states: The public library, **[is] the local gateway to knowledge**, [and] provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and [the] cultural development of the individual and social groups **and equality of access for all** regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, languages and social status” (UNESCO, 1995).



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Any Questions?



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