New Immigrants Centers at the Austin Public Library

Diana Miranda Murillo

What are the New Immigrants Centers?

They are a group of services and products the library offers to the immigrant community in Austin, Texas.

Demography of Austin

- Population: 656,562 habitants

- Foreign born: 16.6%
  - 30.5% Hispanic
  - 4.7% Asian
 - 0.5% other ethnic group

Demography of Austin

- Language spoken at home

  - Other than English 31%

    - 24.5% Spanish

    - 3.4 % Asian (Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese)

    - 3.1 % other

Demography of Austin

- Data from the Metropolitan Statistical Area (includes Austin and San Marcos)

  - 1,249,763 habitants

    - 12.2% were born in a foreign country

    - 10.5% speak English "less than good"

Demography of Austin

Ethnicity Shares History and Forecast
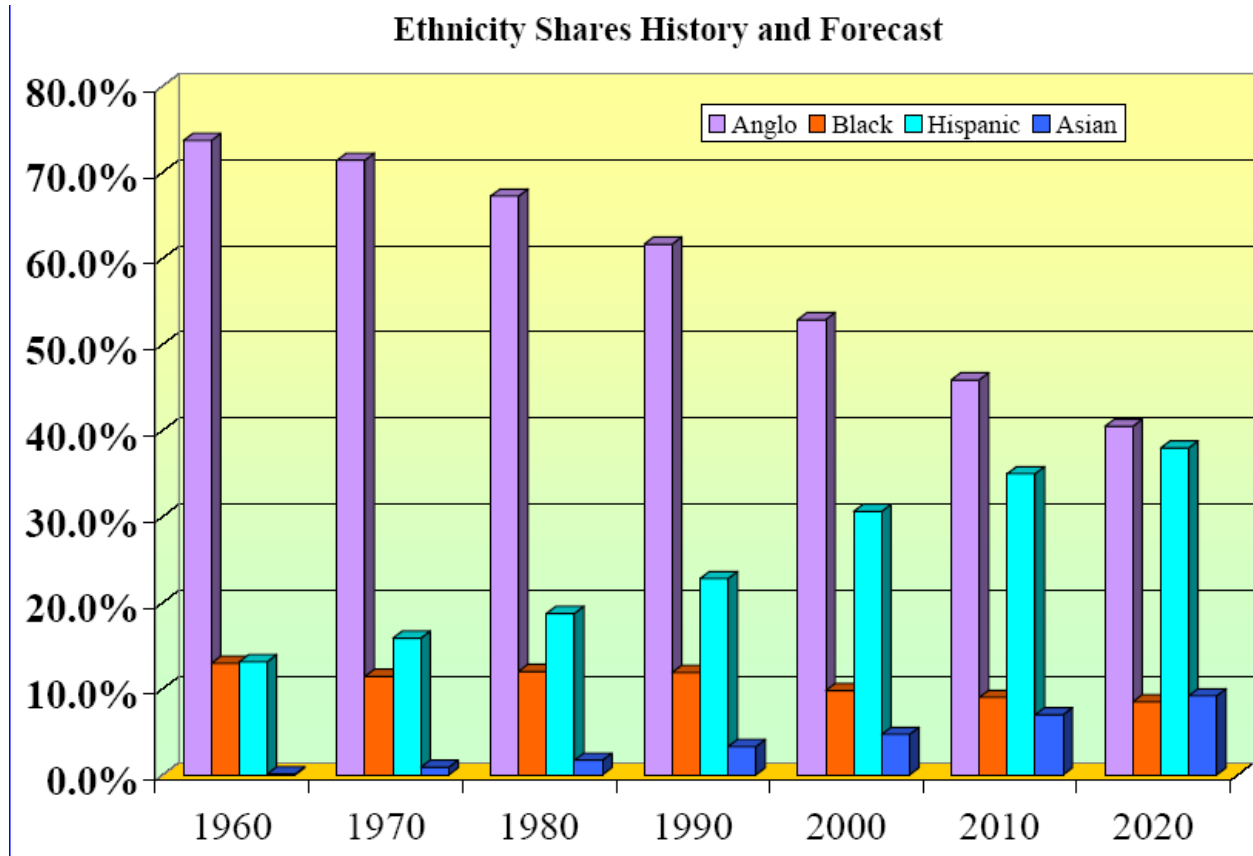
Immigrant Community

- Characteristics
  - Diversity
    - Social class
    - Rural/Urban Settings
    - Languages
    - Legal status
  - Fear
    - Undocumented
    - Speak a new language
    - New culture and traditions

Immigrant Community

- Needs
  - ESL, computer and health classes
  - Legal help
  - Job information
  - Literacy classes

History of the New Immigrants Centers (NICs)

- In 1997, the Austin City Council created the Austin Task Force on Immigration Issues

- This committee recommended in 1998 the implementation of the New Immigrants Centers

- This program started in three libraries. Currently, six libraries have NICs and two more libraries are in the process of implementing their NICs too

Foreign- born population concentrations and distribution of the New Immigrant Centers

Porcentajes

- Más de 30%
- 20% a 30%
- 15% a 20%
- 10% a 15%
- 5% a 10%
- Menos de 5%
- 0%
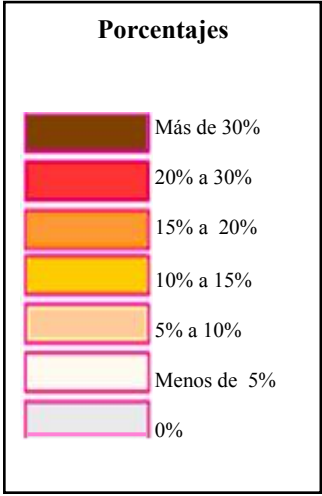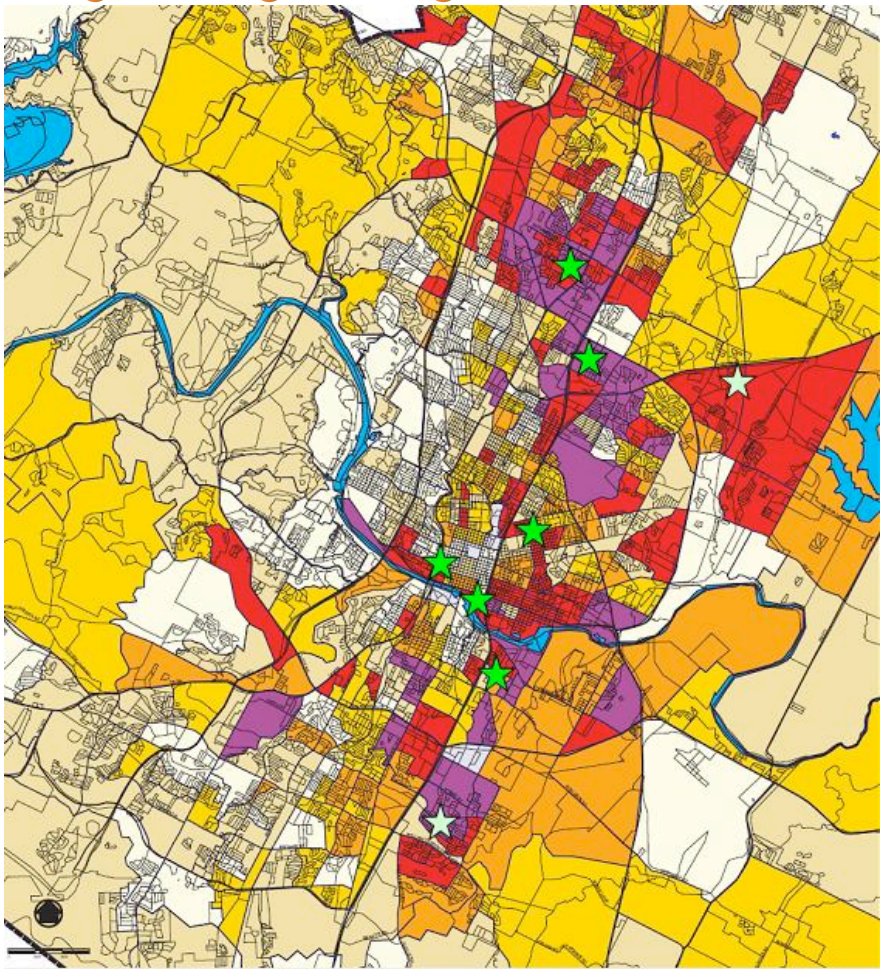
Services the NICs offer

- Study Centers

  - Study centers have ESL books, videos, audio cassettes, compact disks, and DVDs.

  - VHS, CD and audio cassette players.

  - Computer with Internet access, Rosetta Stone, Oxford Picture Dictionary Interactive, Road to Citizenship, and Global Writer.

Services the NICs offer

- **Study Centers**
  - Pros
    - Audio and video materials are always checked out and very popular.
  - Cons
    - Computers with Rossetta Stone and other software are not heavily used. (Not everybody knows how to use a computer)
    - Audio cassettes and VHS are frequently damaged
    - Patrons try to use the audio cassette, CD and VHS players to watch movies or listen to CD music.

Services the NICs offer

- Talk Time
  - Talk Time is an English conversation class hosted weekly at eight branches.
  - It provides a safe and relaxed environment for non-native English speakers to practice their listening and oral language skills.
  - Volunteers facilitate these sessions that are held in spring, summer, and fall.

Services the NICs offer

- **Talk Time**
  - Pros
    - Volunteers enjoy their work very much.
    - Participants provide good feedback.
  - Cons
    - Enrolling, placing, training and marketing the program is time consuming.
    - Audience vary from one to twelve people, that worries and discourages volunteers.

Services the NICs offer

- **English Classes**
  - Some libraries with New Immigrant Centers host free ESL classes.
  - Right now, St. John's partners with the Austin Independent School District, while the Little Walnut Creek and Cepeda branches partner with Austin Community College.
  - People interested in these classes have to contact the providers directly for information and registration.

Services the NICs offer

- **English Classes**
  - Pro
    - Libraries only host the classes and provide information about them.
  - Con
    - If the classes are bad, the libraries' reputation is affected.

Services the NICs offer

- NIC tours
  - The librarians in charge of the New Immigrants Centers in each branch offer special library tours of the centers.
  - In these tours, librarians show patrons the equipment available to learn English and other materials.
  - These tours are offered to ESL schools or any organization, for profit or non-profit, working with immigrants in Austin.

Services the NICs offer

- NIC tours
  - Pros
    - Librarian gets to interact with patrons one on one.
    - Outreach.
  - Cons
    - Time-consuming.
    - Never sure of the results or impact made on the people in a tour.

Services the NICs offer

- Computer classes
  - Faulk Central Library, Little Walnut Creek Branch, and Ruiz Branch offer free monthly computer classes in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Staff and volunteers teach these classes.
  - The topics covered by these classes go from basic computer skills to building web pages.
  - There is also a bilingual class (English - Spanish) on how to use Rosetta Stone, software installed on the centers computers to study English.

Services the NICs offer

- Computer classes
  - Pros
    - Provide an opportunity for people to get started with computers in a very simple way.
    - Patrons can take the classes multiple times
    - Classes are free.
  - Con
    - Attendance is low.

Services the NICs offer

- **World languages books**
  - Each New Immigrant Center has fiction and non-fiction materials in multiple languages, including Chinese, French, German, Italian, Hebrew, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
  - This collection may vary depending on the origin of the immigrant communities that live close by the branches. Little Walnut Creek Branch has more books in Asian Languages and Terrazas branch has more books in Spanish, for example.

Services the NICs offer

- **World languages books**
  - Pro
    - Help people maintain a connection to their roots and culture.
  - Cons
    - Small budget.
    - Expensive books.

Services the NICs offer

- **Spanish Book Club**
  - Four to five patrons meet once a month with one librarian to discuss a book of their choice.
  - Initially, librarians suggested reading titles. Now, participants select their own books and are expanding the program.

Services the NICs offer

- **Spanish Book Club**
  - Pros
    - Patrons are very participative and involved in the club.
    - Native speakers and non-native speakers attend this club.
  - Con
    - Low attendance.

Services the NICs offer

- NIC Web site ([English-Spanish](#))
  - Contains information about free ESL classes, computer classes, legal help, citizenship, cultural groups, job searching, and social services.

Services the NICs offer

- **NIC Web site (English-Spanish)**
  - Pro
    - Provides information about various topics of interest for new immigrants.
  - Con
    - Information is frequently dated.

Budget and Grants

- Local government provides $1000 per center every year for materials.

- Equipment and materials for the last three NIC's were bought with money from grants like: The Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Friends of the Austin Public Library, Austin Public Library Foundation, Rachael & Ben Vaughan Foundation, Texas Book Festival.

Challenges

- Budget.

- Immigrant community diversity and culture (not use to visiting the library).

- Communicating with the immigrant community.

Phoenix Demographics

- Total population: 1,321,045 hab. (Phoenix)

  656,562 hab. (Austin)

Foreign born: 19.5% (Phoenix)/16.6% (Austin)

- 34.1% Hispanic (Phoenix)/30.5 % (Austin)
- 16.4% other ethnic group (Phoenix)/
  0.5% (Austin)
- 2.0% Asian (Phoenix) /4.7% (Austin)

Ancestry (Census Information, Phoenix, Arizona)

- **ANCESTRY (single or multiple)**
- **Total population. 1,320,994 100.0**
- *Total ancestries reported 1,357,108 102.7*
- Arab 5,172 0.4
- Czech1. . . . . 7,703 0.6
- Danish 7,129 0.5
- Dutch 18,765 1.4
- English. 105,835 8.0
- French (except Basque)1 . . . . 31,987 2.4
- French Canadian1 . . . . 7,918 0.6
- German 181,124 13.7
- Greek. 4,770 0.4
- Hungarian 5,925 0.4
- Irish1. . . . . 123,927 9.4
- Italian 58,578 4.4
- Lithuanian 2,467 0.2
- Norwegian. 22,052 1.7
- Polish 32,050 2.4
- Portuguese 2,722 0.2
- Russian 10,601 0.8
- Scotch-Irish. 15,707 1.2
- Scottish 20,873 1.6
- Slovak 1,914 0.1
- Subsaharan African. 5,963 0.5
- Swedish. 19,294 1.5
- Swiss 3,460 0.3
- Ukrainian 2,417 0.2
- United States or American. 53,479 4.0
- Welsh. 7,728 0.6
- West Indian (excluding Hispanic groups) 1,614 0.1
- Other ancestries 595,934 45.1