

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN AN IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORHOOD: ITALIAN
IMMIGRANTS' INFORMATION ECOLOGIES IN NEWARK, NEW JERSEY,
1889–1919

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Public Library in an Immigrant Neighborhood: Italian Immigrants' Information
Ecologies in Newark, New Jersey, 1889-1919

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Dr. Marija Dalbello

This historical study of Italian immigrants' information ecologies addresses the current lack of research on immigrants and libraries. The objective of this research is to develop a textured understanding of the information ecology of Italian immigrants, the exemplary group chosen for this study. The study is situated in Newark, which was the site of immigrant settlement and vibrant immigrant information circuits during the last decade of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century; a time when the reforms of the Progressive Era, an influx of immigrants, and the effects of urbanization intersected with a growing public library movement. A new conceptualization labeled the Information Neighborhood was developed in this dissertation as a framework to capture the rich information networks within Italian enclaves at the turn of the twentieth century. This framework draws on the work of Robert Darnton's communication circuits and provides a structure for the descriptions of Italian information resources within their information ecologies and for the exploration of communication media and modes within immigrants' enclaves. This research and the concept of the Information Neighborhood

was informed by Michel de Certeau's theories of appropriation and of strategies and tactics. Subaltern Studies was employed as a novel approach to the investigation of library history. Subaltern Studies Group's metatheoretical approach to history from the perspective of marginalized groups positions immigrants as subjects of their own histories. Subaltern Studies also provided a methodology for reading institutional and official sources against the grain to document Italian immigrant print culture and the library's practices. This subaltern reading revealed tensions in the discourse over Americanization and reading in foreign languages. It established immigrants as actively demanding foreign language material in the library. Both immigrant and librarian discourses revealed cross-cultural and cross-class tensions as well as power imbalances. The research also revealed that the acquisition of Italian language material was positioned within the discourse of the "fiction question" that championed high culture over popular culture. This study advances the understanding of the complex relationship between immigrants and public libraries, privileges Italian immigrant perspectives, and provides a deep examination of their holistic information worlds and practices.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My husband, Steven Pozzi

My wonderful son and daughter, Matthew Pozzi and Meredith Pozzi

To my father, Gene Nordland, who did not see me begin this project,
and my father-in-law, Richard Pozzi, who did not see me finish it.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation began as an inquiry into cultural and moral institutional censorship at the turn of the twentieth century. While reading library history in preparation for developing my dissertation proposal, the realization that very little had been written about immigrants' use of public libraries raised another set of questions that demanded attention. In the library history literature, immigrant users were presented as passive recipients of information about Americanization. But how did immigrants perceive and use public libraries? Did immigrants' needs and perceptions align with libraries' visions and services? How did public libraries fit into immigrants' information ecologies? Answers to these questions are scarce in existing library history literature.

The contexts of these questions are two-fold. First, at the turn of the twentieth century, public libraries were emerging as important cultural institutions in many cities, providing access to material chosen by a new professional class of female librarians. They were part of a cultural elite in libraries that Dee Garrison referred to as the "genteel class" ([1979] 2003), who were interested in situating the library as a moral and cultural guide for the working poor and immigrants. These goals intersected with the Progressive Era mission of social reform, as well as concerns that constitute the second context: increasing immigration rates, urbanization, and industrialization. Between the years 1880 and 1920, many cities were experiencing population growth that included nationalities that had not previously traveled in significant numbers to the United States. Immigrants settled near each other in cities, creating ethnic enclaves such as Chinatowns and Little Italies, and developing their own cultural spaces within these geographical areas.

Little has been written, however, about the history of immigrants' use of American public libraries in the U.S. during this wave of immigration between 1880 and 1920. The focus of much of the existing library history literature pertaining to immigrants concerns library services and collections, particularly as they pertain to the Americanization of immigrants. This literature fails to articulate or explore the viewpoints of immigrants as users of public libraries. This institutional perspective has led to a limited understanding of the overall role of the library in the print, reading, and information cultures of immigrants at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a consequence, an understanding of immigrants' perspectives is largely missing from the history of the formative stages of the American public library at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

This dissertation seeks to begin to address this gap in immigrant user perspectives, breaking out of an institutional focus by means of a case study focusing on Italian immigrants' information ecology in Newark, New Jersey, between 1889 and 1919, a period that coincides with the influx of immigrants to the northeastern U.S., as well as the social reform movements of the Progressive Era and the establishment of the library profession. Using a conceptual framework of immigrants' "information neighborhoods," the function of the Newark Free Public Library in immigrants' experiences of reading, texts, and culture is investigated, allowing for a rich examination of complex interactions. As discussed below, Italian settlement within Newark, as well as the establishment of the public library, exhibited characteristics reflecting trends in other cities and in the broader U.S., making this an interesting and fruitful time and place for study.

From the late 1800s through the early 1900s, Newark was expanding its manufacturing base and engaging in major civic improvements, both of which created jobs and attracted more workers, including many immigrants. It was already home to a large immigrant population that increased as the city continued to prosper and grow. Italians were one of the largest groups of immigrants moving to the U.S. and to Newark specifically in the early 1900s; many lived in enclaves, or Little Italies, in cities across America, including Newark. Similar population shifts were occurring in other cities at the same time, and Newark was representative of the broader immigration patterns in the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century.

Newark participated in another national urban trend when it established a free public library in 1889. While Boston Public Library was established in 1848, much earlier than most public libraries, other libraries in major cities were established at around the same time as the library in Newark. The Chicago Public Library officially opened in 1873, Philadelphia opened its first free library in 1892, and New York began planning its main building in 1895.¹

The Newark Public Library has a rich archive of institutional records from this early period in its history, including all of its annual reports from 1889 to 1919, various library publications, staff notebooks, and scrapbooks of newspaper clippings about the library beginning even before the library opened in 1889. Despite the existence of such interesting primary sources, the Newark Free Public Library is understudied, as is immigrants' use of this library. The first two directors, Frank Hill and John Cotton Dana,

¹ Drawn from history pages of the libraries' websites: Boston Public Library: <http://www.bpl.org/general/history.htm>, Chicago: <http://www.chipublib.org/aboutcpl/history/index.php>, Philadelphia: <http://libwww.freelibrary.org/75th/founding.htm?page=his>, New York: <http://www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl/history>.

managed the library consecutively from 1889 to 1929 (with the exception of one transitional year between directorships filled by interim director Beatrice Winsor). Both men served as president of the American Library Association and were active members of an elite group within the community of librarians, leading the still young organization as it developed policies and practices. Hill and Dana took part in the professional conversation of librarianship; Dana in particular wrote articles and gave speeches about the importance of libraries and shared his opinions concerning all aspects of library practice through articles and speeches ([1914] 1991). The Newark Free Public Library was an institution that reflected and refracted the evolving practices of librarianship at the turn of the twentieth century, and therefore, it is a key institution to study within the discourse of public libraries and their relevance as sites of contact with immigrants.

This dissertation is laid out in nine chapters. Chapter 1 situates this study within the literature of American library history and details the gaps in the scholarship about immigrants as library users. This research is placed within the context of the trends in library history scholarship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which provides insights into strengths and weaknesses of the various previous approaches. An argument is developed for the adoption of a user-centered approach to the history of immigrants' information ecology guided by the focus that library historian Wayne Wiegand advocates in his call to study the role of the "library in the life of the user" rather than the more often studied role of the "user in the life of the library" (1991, 24).

Additionally, literature from multiple disciplines informs this study. The focus on immigrant library users is combined with an examination of immigrant and ethnic print cultures within which use of the library is framed. Relevant literature from the field of

print culture reviewed in Chapter 1 informs the study of immigrants' use and transmission of information, both orally and in print. Research from the field of literacy studies, also reviewed in the chapter, provides context for examining the methods and media used to distribute information throughout the information neighborhood.

The final areas of literature reviewed in Chapter 1 are immigration and Americanization studies, which contextualize the study of immigrants in a social milieu, a necessary perspective for understanding where the library fit into their information ecology. Americanization is the avenue through which most of the current material in library history is explored, and is the lens through which most libraries at the turn of the twentieth century focused their service to immigrants. Scholarly literature on this topic is reviewed along with immigration studies, as well as the interrelated topics of assimilation and acculturation.

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks that scaffold this study were selected to address the lack of immigrants' perspectives in the existing literature. Chapter 2 focuses on three such frameworks: 1) Michel de Certeau's work on the consumption of space and texts presented in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), 2) the use of Subaltern Studies as a metatheoretical standpoint for the dissertation, and 3) the conceptualization of an information neighborhood that gives this work an information focus and acknowledges the perspective of an immigrants' culture of reading in a continuum of print and oral information resources available to them in their ethnic enclaves.² These novel frameworks were chosen to facilitate a focus on immigrants as users rather than an

² Marija Dalbello was instrumental in the development of this conceptualization of an "information neighborhood."

institutional perspective that guides many of the current projects that study immigrants and libraries.

In Chapter 3, the main research objective of this dissertation and four research questions developed to guide this investigation into immigrants' use of libraries are introduced. The research questions focus on aspects of immigrants' print culture, reading practices, and contact with the library, as well as institutional practices. This chapter also discusses the methods and primary source material for the study including Subaltern Studies methodology. This is used for reading the primary source material to access immigrant perspectives and introduced as a novel approach in library history. The documents used in this research include a variety of institutional records, contemporary local newspapers, photographs and postcards, material produced by Italian immigrants, and professional library literature, which are categorized and critiqued as to their evidentiary status.

Chapter 4 describes the setting, including the city of Newark and its inhabitants, focusing on one immigrant population—Italians—and the institution—the Newark Free Public Library—at the center of this historical study. Newark at the turn of the twentieth century was experiencing a Golden Age in manufacturing and construction, including the creation of new civic buildings and public utilities, thus creating jobs, which attracted many people to the city. At the turn of the twentieth century, many of these new inhabitants were immigrants, and Italians comprised a growing percentage of the newcomers. The chapter recounts conditions in Italy that contributed to Italian emigration, as well as trends in Italian immigration to America and to Newark, including the development of the Italian enclaves in Newark known as the First Ward, the

Ironbound District, and the 14th Avenue colony. A brief history of the Newark Free Public Library completes this background chapter and sets the stage for the next four chapters, each of which explores one of the research questions presented in the second chapter: Italian immigrants' information neighborhoods in Newark, the institutional discourse of the Newark Free Public Library and within the profession of librarianship, interactions between immigrants and librarians, and Italian media in the Newark Free Public Library. Together these chapters reconstruct Italian immigrants' information ecology in Newark at the turn of the twentieth century, while situating the library within immigrants' information neighborhoods.

Chapter 5 applies the model of the information neighborhood (introduced in Chapter 2) through descriptions of identity relevant information nodes in the Little Italies of Newark as well as an examination of methods for the transmission of information through print media (for example, books and newspapers) and oral media (rumors, conversations, gossip, and storytelling) as performed in Italian neighborhoods in Newark. Italian literacy rates in Italy and in Newark provide a context for the use of print media as a transmission mode within information neighborhoods, as do the character of Italian oral culture and its role in the transmission of information and practices of reading (such as reading aloud). Finally, the library is presented as an information node within that context of the information neighborhood. The multiple sites of its branches and deposit stations are plotted on a contemporary map of Newark's immigrant neighborhoods to show locational nodes, and to indicate the penetration of the library into the geographical Italian neighborhoods.

Chapter 6 focuses first on the library profession's participation in the Americanization movement during the Progressive Era, as represented by the debates in the official organ of the American Library Association, *Library Journal*. The discourse of Americanization represented in the professional literature concentrated on three ideas: helping immigrants learn English, helping them to become good citizens, and introducing them to American culture. These are subsequently connected to the practices of the Newark Free Public Library. This discussion is followed by an overview of the Newark Free Public Library's institutional response to immigrant users as demonstrated by the provision of foreign language books and the development of the Foreign Branch of the library, which became a focal point for immigrant services in the city in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 7 delves into the way that issues of gender, class, and culture influenced the interactions between working-class Italian immigrants and Newark Public Library's female librarians, who epitomized the white professional class that included teachers, social workers, and volunteers for charitable organizations. This chapter reveals the social and cultural constructions of Italian immigrants by this professional class, as well as immigrants' perceptions of Americans. These constructions on the part of both librarians and immigrants influenced their exchanges, and evidence of interactions is examined through a reading against the grain of institutional records of these encounters.

Chapter 8 focuses on Italian immigrants' print culture through a reconstruction of the quantity and circulation of Italian books and periodicals available in the Newark Free Public Library in as much detail as is possible from the limited evidence in the sources. While the exact nature of the Italian language books is not noted in the records, the

quality of the books is examined through the debate among librarians over fiction in the library, also known as the “fiction question,” and contrasts this discourse with that of “useful literature.” This chapter contributes not only to our understanding of what was actually available but also the loci of control that guided professional practice.

Finally, Chapter 9 presents a summary of the research and conclusions. A review of the major findings, strengths, and limitations of this research, contributions and implications, as well as discussion of areas for further research complete the chapter.

The role of the library in the life of the user, a perspective generally lacking in the scholarship on immigrants and libraries, is a guiding idea for this dissertation. This research attempts to develop new frameworks and methods for filling this gap through presenting empirical evidence in the context of Italian immigrants in Newark, New Jersey, at the turn of the twentieth century, and through use of metatheoretical perspectives and methods of Subaltern Studies to reveal the perspectives of subaltern groups in this historical situation. It is an attempt to acknowledge the importance of the history of libraries and library users as well as to go beyond the conception of library service to immigrants that was rooted in the program of Americanization during the Progressive Era at the turn of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of literature on the history of public libraries and immigrants in the period from 1880 to 1920, contextualized within a framework of American public library history. Other areas of research that are germane to this dissertation, including the studies of print culture, literacy, immigration, and Americanization are also presented in this chapter. Reviewed together this literature establishes the context for the development of the main research objective and introduces the relevant frameworks to address the research questions that guide the dissertation.

The review begins with a summary of multiple approaches to American public library history, touching on critical moments in the 1940s, 1970s, and 1990s. Next is a review of the literature that focuses on the history of immigrants and the American public library, within the framework of these changing approaches to library history. This is followed by a close examination of the material to reveal gaps and limitations in the literature concerning immigrants and American public libraries.

The field of print culture provides conceptual frameworks for examining the flow of information through particular communities, as well as for studying the print material used by immigrants. Varying levels of literacy, from illiterate to literate to alliterate, are an important consideration in this research on the use of libraries and information, particularly when considering patrons who may have limited familiarity with or fluency in the dominant language.

The final section presents seminal texts as well as two schools of thought in immigration and Americanization scholarship that are used as frameworks for this

research. This chapter's brief review of print culture, literacy, Americanization, and immigration introduces approaches and ideas that frame the research in this dissertation and suggest theoretical and methodological approaches that will be used for this project.

1.1. Library History Literature

The following presents a conceptual overview of American public library history and transformative moments in its discourse, providing a context for the subsequent literature review of the history of immigrants and libraries at the turn of the twentieth century. As noted by scholars of library history such as Wayne Wiegand (2000), Christine Pawley (2003), and Ed Goedeken (2005), there have been several notable moments in the past sixty-five years that marked changes or shifts in approaches to this historical research. The three shifts identified here delineate four different approaches to library history, which are categorized as celebratory, progressive, revisionist, and user-centered.

According to Sydney Ditzion, author of the 1947 book *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture: A Social History of the American Public Library Movement in New England and the Middle States from 1850 to 1900*, until the late 1930s “library histories were devoted almost in their entirety to the celebration of great book collections, important librarians, and library patrons, and to factual accounts of progress in library technics [*sic*], service, organization and administration” (1947, ix). These celebratory or technical histories did not make connections between libraries and society, as Ditzion does in his book. He notes that some writers had begun to make these connections in the decade before he wrote *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* although “no thoroughgoing scholarly analysis which relates the nineteenth-century library movement to its social milieu” (1947, ix) had yet

been produced. He commends, however, the quality of Jesse Shera's 1944 dissertation "Foundations of the Public Library: The Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629–1885," which examined the earlier, pre-public era of library history, calling Shera's work "detailed and well conceived" (1947, ix).

Shera's book, bearing the same title as his dissertation, was published in 1949. In his introduction, he is explicit about the need to connect the history of the library with its social milieu because, he observes, the library is "derived" (1949, v) from the social environment in which it appears. Shera describes the library as a social agency rather than a social institution, differentiating between the social institutions of family and government that affected social agencies such as schools, libraries, and museums. Library movements followed social developments, therefore when libraries moved from acting as conservators of books to a progressive role as an agency of education, this institutional refocusing was, according to Shera, a reflection of social trends in the institutions of family and government. Thus, to Shera, it was essential to explore the broader social context in which libraries operated.

As Christine Pawley observed in 2003, both Ditzion and Shera "made serious efforts not only to base their work on primary sources, but to draw on theories and concepts that allowed them to connect libraries and librarians with a wider context" (xix), a radical change from the previous scholarship which had focused solely on celebrating the accomplishments of libraries and librarians. Along with this new approach to library history that connected libraries to a broader social context, both Shera and Ditzion expressed a belief in the transformative nature of libraries. Shera notes that "the public library was created because it was essential to the fullest expression of human life" and

that the founders of libraries “wished to promote equality of educational opportunity, to advance scientific investigation, to save youth from the evils of an ill-spent leisure, and to promote the vocational advance of the workers” (1949, 247). Ditzion notes that the library was conceived “as a contribution toward the self-realization of the broad masses of the people” (193). Both Ditzion and Shera broadened the scope of library history by moving beyond a focus on the accomplishments of libraries and librarians, and they both adopted a so-called progressive perspective, constructing the library as a beneficent and egalitarian institution crucial to democracy and societal reform.

The next relevant transition in library history scholarship occurred in the 1970s, when two scholars, Michael Harris and Dee Garrison, published studies that engaged more critically with libraries and librarians than previous library history literature, an approach that became known as revisionist. In 1973, Michael Harris drew on revisionist scholarship on the American reform movement that he had encountered in the education field to write “The Role of the Public Library in American Life: A Speculative Essay.” This was followed in 1975 by “The Purpose of the American Public Library: A Revisionist Interpretation of History,” an article adapted from his 1973 paper and published in *Library Journal*. In these two publications, Harris critiqued the notion of the library as an egalitarian, humanitarian institution, as Ditzion and Shera claimed it to be, and argued instead that American public libraries had been “generally cold, rigidly inflexible, and elitist institutions from the beginning” (1975, 2509). In an effort to dispel the library profession’s “dependence on an idealized history” (1975, 2514), Harris examined the backgrounds and culture of the leaders of the library movement at the turn of the twentieth century, seeking to “discover their motives” (1975, 2509) for supporting

public libraries. Harris challenged established views of the benevolence of libraries and librarianship, and articulated a view of public libraries as elitist cultural institutions attempting to maintain a familiar social and cultural order.

Historian Dee Garrison also examined this critical period in the foundation of American public libraries during the Progressive Era in her 1979 book, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876–1920*. Like Harris, she scrutinized the cultural background of the founders and leaders of the library profession, including a critical examination of library pioneer Melvil Dewey. She explored the motivations of librarians (members of what she called the “genteel class”³) who wanted to disseminate middle-class values to the working class and poor in order to preserve societal and cultural behavioral norms. Garrison also incorporated feminist theory in her historical account of the mostly female staff of public libraries at the turn of the century. For American public library history of the turn of the last century, Garrison’s *Apostles of Culture*, originally published in 1979 and reissued in 2003, remains a definitive work in library history and strongly influences the understandings of the public library movement and the emerging library profession.

Also publishing in the late 1970s, Rosemary DuMont, a professor in library studies at Kent State, brought to her scholarship of library history a critical awareness of historical and social issues. DuMont joined Harris and Garrison in employing a revisionist approach to library history, in contrast to the progressive approach employed by Shera and Ditzion. She writes in *Reform and Reaction: The Big City Public Library in*

³ According to Garrison, the librarians who established the American Library Association were from “a new gentry class” or the “genteel class” who “were a new urban, middle-class group of professionals, literary gentlemen, and some businessmen.” The genteel class “placed great emphasis upon moral norms” and their middle-class values included “thrift, self-reliance, industriousness and social control” ([1979] 2003, 10).

American Life (1977) that some library historians “have concluded that the library was motivated not by a belief in democracy but by a concern for perpetuating the status quo,” and “[i]t was from this new perspective that [her] book examines the forces in America at the turn of the century which contributed to the public library’s concern with social control in the name of community reform” (xii). While Shera and Ditzion had placed the library within the tradition of a distribution of knowledge to engage democratic behavior, Harris, Garrison, and DuMont critiqued this understanding of public libraries, situating the library as an elitist institution concerned with social control.

The origins of another shift in the literature underway at the present time can be seen in the late 1990s. Historian Wayne Wiegand, in an article in *Library Quarterly* titled “Tunnel Visions and Blind Spots: What the Past Tells Us About the Present: Reflections on Twentieth-Century History of American Librarianship,” advocated using an approach toward library history that explores “the library in the life of the user, rather than the user in the life of the library” (1999, 21). He suggests that patrons’ perspectives on using libraries should be explored rather than continuing with a narrow institutional focus on how libraries served patrons. Wiegand claims the lack of focus on library users is “American library history’s greatest shortcoming” (1999, 21), and he encourages more research from a “user perspective” rather than from institutional viewpoint dominant in most public library history. Wiegand credits the ideas behind the shift away from “the user in the life of the library” to a 1973 dissertation by Douglas Zweizig that developed this approach although not in the context of library history (2011a). Wiegand emphasizes this focus on the user in the study of library history again in his article “American Library History Literature, 1947–1997: Theoretical Perspectives” which appeared in *Libraries*

and Cultures in 2000, and again in his 2011 book, *Main Street Public Library: Community Places and Reading Spaces in the Rural Heartland, 1876–1956*.

Studies of the history of reading and libraries by scholars such as Christine Pawley in her 2001 book, *Reading on the Middle Border: The Culture of Print in Late-Nineteenth-Century Osage, Iowa*, also use this approach, focusing on the lives of ordinary people rather than famous figures in library history. The advantage of the user-centered approach is that it positions library patrons as the subjects of their own histories, creating a more complex view of the relationship between users and libraries. This is the approach that will be utilized in this dissertation.

Several approaches to scholarship in the field of American public library history have been outlined in this very brief review. Some studies focused on the library perspective, celebrating the work of libraries and librarians, or recording historical accounts of libraries of interest to practitioners. Scholars in the progressive tradition made connections between libraries and their social milieus, seeing the library as an egalitarian institution that promoted democracy and reform through education.

Revisionist historians examined the purpose of libraries as envisioned by their founders and the librarians who worked in them more critically, pointing out elements of social control enacted through libraries. The user-centered approach, which privileges patrons' perspectives, is seldom employed in library history. While new approaches have been introduced, the older ones have not been displaced and are still used to examine American public library history. However, as will be seen in the following section, library history seldom examines the interactions between libraries and immigrants in depth; the treatment is usually superficial and from the perspective of the library only.

1.2. Literature on the History of Immigrants and Public Libraries

When examined in the context of these distinctions between celebratory, progressive, revisionist, and user-centered, library history literature reveals gaps that exist in the coverage of the history of immigrants and American public libraries. Immigrants are presented as the objects of library services in research written in the celebratory and progressive tradition and as the objects of attempts at social control in revisionist history. In user-centered scholarship are immigrants' perspectives explored. However, as will be shown, there is very little literature using any of these approaches that is focused on immigrants and public libraries at the turn of the twentieth century.

The bibliographies developed by the Library History Round Table (LHRT), available on the American Library Association (ALA) website,⁴ contain an interdisciplinary list of articles, books, and theses written about library history, print culture, reading, and related areas. From 1990 to 2011, these bibliographies listed only eight items on the subject of immigrants and libraries in the United States. Of the eight items, one is an entry in an encyclopedia that only mentions immigrants briefly; another is a master's thesis that focuses on immigration from 1920–1950, a later period than addressed by this dissertation; and another is about the collection of music produced by immigrants. This leaves five items over two decades that focus on immigrants and public libraries at the turn of the twentieth century. Three of these five were written by a single person and include both his dissertation and the book based on his dissertation. The small representation of this subject in these bibliographies points to the dearth of research on immigrants in American public library history.

⁴ Within the ALA, the professional organization for libraries and librarians, LHRT promotes the study of the history of libraries and provides venues for library history scholarship to be presented.

In addition to the LHRT bibliographies, searches of several library databases (*Library and Information Science Abstracts*, *Library Lit and Information Science Full Text*, *Library Literature and Information Science Retrospective*, *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts*, and *Dissertation and Theses*) uncovered only a few additional articles focused on the historical interaction of immigrants and libraries that were published prior to the development of the LHRT bibliographies. A more recent search of numerous databases for articles published in 2010 and 2011 pertaining to American and Canadian library history⁵ revealed nothing on immigrants and libraries. JSTOR, a multidisciplinary database, was similarly lacking in relevant research.

Some books and articles that focus primarily on modern library service for immigrants contain brief overviews of the history of public libraries' interactions with immigrants, invoking historical practices in order to situate today's library programs within a tradition of services to immigrants and Americanization and assimilation practices. For example, in the 2003 article "Library Services to Immigrants and Non-Native Speakers of English: From Our Past to Our Present," Renee Pokorny claims that "[f]rom the earliest days of professional librarianship in the U.S., librarians felt an obligation to assist incoming immigrants" (21). She notes the continuity of "issues and debates regarding immigrants and non-native speakers of English" in the professional literature from the early 1900s to more modern articles, with an emphasis on what she describes as the best library practices of early work with immigrants, including the provision of books in foreign languages, information in foreign languages about the U.S. and citizenship, as well as advocating within the library for more services for immigrants.

⁵ This search was performed to find articles to consider for the 2012 Donald G. Davis Award for best library history article for the Library History Round Table of the American Library Association.

Pokorny notes that discussions of acculturation and book selection continued to be part of the discourse of service to immigrants throughout the twentieth century. She concludes that despite the patronizing tones toward immigrants used by librarians at the turn of the last century, “their visions still resonate” today (21), providing exemplars for today’s librarians.

Other short articles, such as Deanna Marcum and Elizabeth Stone’s “Literacy: The Library Legacy” in *American Libraries* (1991) give a brief historical perspective of librarians’ literacy work with immigrants and celebrate the accomplishments of librarians at the turn of the last century, also establishing their work with immigrants as inspiring examples for today’s librarians working with immigrants to learn English. Articles and introductions such as these celebrate the work of libraries and librarians, are usually addressed to practicing librarians and are generally written from a practical viewpoint and feature applied best practices. The focus of this literature review is substantive research articles, book chapters, and book length material rather than applied research and opinion pieces that celebrate the accomplishments of libraries and librarians. This literature is examined within the framework of three of the categories outlined in the first part of the chapter—progressive, revisionist, and user-centered.

1.2.1. Progressive Literature

Writing in the progressive tradition, Haynes McMullen contributed the chapter “Service to Ethnic Minorities Other than Afro-Americans and American Indians” to the edited book *Century of Service: Librarianship in the United States and Canada* in 1976. McMullen presents an overview of library services to immigrants beginning early in the 1800s through the 1960s, describing transformations in services that occurred due to

changing trends in immigration, while presenting librarians' work with immigrants in an unquestioningly positive manner. For example, McMullen describes the establishment of the ALA Committee on Work with the Foreign Born in February 1918, intended as outreach by librarians to immigrants. He portrays the eagerness of librarians to work with newly arriving immigrants and constructs this enthusiasm and its resulting programs as unquestioningly beneficent. The same book contained a chapter by revisionist historian Dee Garrison on women and librarianship, however, McMullen's chapter falls within the progressive tradition.

In her chapter "Libraries for Immigrants and 'Minorities': A Study in Contrasts" from the 1989 book *Social Responsibility in Librarianship: Essays on Equality*, Donnarae MacCann compares public library services to immigrants to the almost complete lack of African American access to library services in the early twentieth century. MacCann is making an argument against a position taken by Nathan Glazer, who claimed that what he called "white ethnics" and African Americans both received little institutional aid, but immigrants were nonetheless able to overcome this lack of aid and prosper according to society's measures of education, jobs, and wealth. MacCann argues that library history demonstrates that library services to immigrants represented significant institutional aid. To make her point, she examined library policies that "encourage[d] basic educational opportunities for immigrants and discourage[d] the availability of such opportunities for Blacks" (97).

While the chapter is justifiably critical of the exclusionary nature of library service to African Americans, MacCann praises librarians for "the astonishingly vigorous forms of affirmative action on behalf of European immigrant groups" (97). Drawing on

an episode presented by McMullen (1976) as exemplary for librarian's work with immigrants, MacCann praises the "assertiveness and energy" of a librarian who "visited immigrant homes ostensibly to collect fines, but actually to create an opportunity to discuss the usefulness of the library" (1989, 102). She fails, however, to critically interrogate the application of this practice to "immigrant homes" as a distinct portion of the population who were targeted for these visits. Additionally, MacCann does not engage with the bigger question of why libraries and librarians made a distinction between service to immigrants, which centered on Americanization and assimilation, and service to African Americans, who already spoke English, and had cultural ties to America. This chapter is progressive in its assumptions about the egalitarian nature of the educative function of the library making a difference in the lives of immigrants.

Ten years later, Alston Plummer Jones, Jr. published *Libraries, Immigrants, and the American Experience* (1999). It is the only book-length work to date that focuses on the history of immigrants and American public libraries. Jones rightly notes the lack of "an in-depth history of how American public libraries and librarians have interacted with the immigrant community" and sets out to remedy this with his book. He covers two periods of immigration history, the early period of increasing immigration from 1876 to 1924, and the period from 1924 to 1948, when immigration was declining due to restrictive immigration laws and the economic hardships of the Great Depression and World War II.

While Jones's book seemed to fill a gap in the library literature, in her review, Ellen Gilbert notes that it "smack[ed] a little uncomfortably . . . of 'The White Man's Burden'" (1999, 602), and Donald Ring observes that Jones "pitches his tent firmly in the

progressive camp . . . [i]n the internecine warfare between progressive and revisionist historians” (2000, 468). Jones dismisses the problems that immigrants may have had in dealing with the library when he claims that librarians “as professionals . . . evinced a genuine commitment, notwithstanding varying degrees of condescension and paternalism, to serving the immigrants within their respective communities” (1999, 9). While it is easy for Jones to dismiss the librarians’ condescension and paternalism, it was no doubt much more difficult for the patrons subjected to this attitude to dismiss it. The cultural gap between librarians and immigrants could have been exacerbated by the show of condescension on the part of middle-class librarians who applied their values to homogenize immigrant conditions. The multiple patriarchies enacted through an attitude of paternalism on the part of the mostly female middle-class librarians toward immigrants of both sexes could have had an effect on how immigrants viewed libraries, but Jones accepts this paternalism as inevitable within the structure of library service to immigrants.

With this book, Jones addresses the gap in the literature on immigrants and early American public library history and contributes to the scarce scholarship available on the subject. He studies several pivotal figures who championed library service to immigrants; he presents, however, an uncritical view of the programs and efforts undertaken on behalf of immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century.

Jones also contributed a chapter in 2003 to the edited book *Libraries to the People: Histories of Outreach* titled “The ALA Committee Work with the Foreign Born and the Movement to Americanize the Immigrant.” His was the only chapter to focus on library service to immigrants. The editors note that “the common purpose of outreach

programs has been to uplift underserved populations by bringing them library services that the majority culture has taken for granted. Of course the goal has also been to enable the individual reader or listener to expand his or her own vision and to reach out in turn to family and community” (Freeman and Hovde 2003, 7). This focus on themes of uplift and self-improvement as well as the construction of the institution as beneficent, as presented in Jones’s chapter, places this work in the progressive camp also.

The scholarship of McMullen, MacCann, and Jones goes beyond the celebratory descriptions of library service to immigrants in articles addressed to practitioners such as those by Pokorny and Marcum and Stone. The authors make connections to the social and cultural context in which libraries exist. However, they lack the application of critical perspectives employed by the revisionist scholars discussed in the next section of this chapter.

1.2.2. Revisionist Literature

Michael Harris examined public libraries’ interactions with immigrants very briefly in his 1973 article “The Purpose of the American Public Library: A Revisionist Interpretation of History.” Harris notes that elites saw the role of the library not as democratic and benevolent but as “wise investments in order, stability and sound economic growth” (2512). He is quite explicit in detailing the alarm that the founders of the Boston Athenaeum felt when considering an increasing immigrant population and the role they felt the library should have in assimilating immigrants and bringing “them in willing subjection to our own institutions” (George Ticknor, quoted in Harris 1973, 2510). What Harris says of libraries’ and librarians’ work with immigrants is worth quoting at length:

That the library's services to the immigrant had definite positive values for those able to take advantage of them cannot be denied. But these positive values were the result of the immigrant's persistence and not the librarian's conscious attitude. Most librarians appear to have viewed this new thrust [Americanization] in a negative light and the individual programs were often repressive and autocratic. Librarians seemed to feel that they enjoyed a mandate from God to enlighten the immigrant and went about their various tasks in a spirit of authoritarianism that remind one of the "moral stewardship" of an earlier generation of librarians. (1973, 2512)

Harris brings a critical gaze to librarians' views of immigrants in the project of Americanization and assimilation, as part of an overall argument that the library focused on the imposition of cultural and social control on its patrons in order to maintain a homogenous American culture. Although he engages only briefly with the topic of immigrants and libraries, Harris illuminates a critical path for the exploration of the subject of immigrants and libraries at the turn of the twentieth century.

Harris emphasizes Americanization, and this is the aspect explored in many of the books and articles that discuss library service to immigrants. Elaine Fain examines immigrants and libraries through the lens of Americanization in her 1983 chapter, "Books for New Citizens: Public Libraries and Americanization Programs 1900–1925," in the edited book *The Quest for Social Justice*. She notes that those who were advocating the Americanization of immigrants saw libraries as a perfect institution to further their agenda of assimilation, and she provides examples of both the American Library Association and individual librarians embracing the Americanization program. Libraries, according to Fain, began with genteel agendas similar to other Progressive institutions such as settlement houses, but while other institutions went on to become more politically and socially activist in nature, libraries preferred gentle assimilation that concentrated on the civilizing influence of books. Librarians kept some radical books out of the library, as

well as books they judged inappropriate, including, according to Fain, those by Leo Tolstoi, Émile Zola, and George Bernard Shaw. Libraries, she notes, even those with branches situated in immigrant neighborhoods, did not usually have staff that spoke the languages or even understood the culture of immigrants in the area. Fain reveals a cultural imperialism on the part of middle-class librarians that was demonstrated not only in book choices, but also in the assumption of the superiority of their tastes, values, and culture.

Wiegand comes to a similar conclusion in his 1989 book, *An Active Instrument for Propaganda: The American Public Library during World War I*. In one chapter that focuses on immigrants, he surveyed the responses of libraries across the country to the increased Americanization efforts prompted by the national “campaign for 100 percent Americanism” (115). Wiegand details how, in 1917 and 1918, libraries across the country participated in Americanization efforts by conducting English classes, making citizenship manuals available, and working with Americanization committees. He notes that not all immigrants were receptive to Americanization and the push to naturalization, as some of them never intended to stay in America; they came to make money and return home. Those who did plan on becoming citizens found it “relatively easy to swear allegiance to the U.S., but the naturalization process also required the immigrant to renounce his allegiance to his native land” (131), a decision that some immigrants most likely struggled with more than others. Wiegand concludes that not many librarians were sympathetic to any issues this process might have caused for immigrants but “presumed to know what was best for the populations they served, even though their professional

expertise was more appropriate to acquiring, classifying, cataloging, and circulating printed materials” (131).

Eric Novotny’s 2003 article in *Reference and User Services Quarterly* titled “Library Services to Immigrants: The Debate in the Library Literature, 1900–1920, and a Chicago Case Study” examined official library literature, such as annual reports, and explored the Americanization movement within the library. Novotny compared the debate in the national library literature to practice as represented in local official records. He found that practice did not match advocated principles for supplying more books to immigrants, as demonstrated in an especially visible way by libraries’ insufficient foreign language book collections.

Novotny found evidence in this literature of “the more repressive elements of Americanization” and of librarians who “sought to instruct immigrants not only how to become American citizens, but how to think and act like ‘real’ Americans” (2003, 346). But he also discovers librarians advocating for compassion and tolerance and noting that librarians expressed “appreciation for the contributions immigrants made to American life” (2003, 347). Novotny concludes that although his study “has argued that librarian’s [*sic*] approached their task with empathy, a less-progressive interpretation may emerge” (2003, 351) if other perspectives are examined. However, Novotny did provide evidence in his article for this less-progressive interpretation when he uncovered authoritarian elements of Americanization endorsed by librarians and employed a critical interpretation of the evidence.

Novotny’s findings of some librarians’ empathy toward immigrant patrons were also noted to varying degrees by Harris, Fain, and Wiegand. All of them found that while

a general autocratic attitude toward immigrants in the project of Americanization existed among most librarians, there were exceptions. While librarians worked within the context of their times and provided library services that emphasized Americanization and assimilation, individual librarians developed different approaches and attitudes toward immigrants, and in noting this each of the revisionist authors discussed here provided a more nuanced view of librarianship at the turn of the last century. This is in contrast to McMullen, MacCann, and Jones who each took a progressive approach to writing the history of immigrants and libraries at the turn of the twentieth century, focusing on what they described as librarians' helpful attitudes while excusing patronizing and condescending attitudes toward immigrants.

1.2.3. User-Centered Literature

Nelson Beck, in his 1977 article, "The Use of Library and Educational Facilities by Russian-Jewish Immigrants in New York City, 1880–1914: The Impact of Culture," published in the *Journal of Library History*, critiques both revisionist and progressive historians although he acknowledges the contributions Ditzion and Harris have made through their "attempted interpretation and evaluation" of library history (1977, 129). Beck argues that while libraries displayed a degree of egalitarianism, with the public library espousing "certain democratic goals and ideals,"—Ditzion's progressive view—it was also true that "the rich and well-born looked with fear and disdain upon the lower classes and immigrants" (Beck 1977, 129) and sought to effect social control through public institutions—Harris's revisionist interpretation. Beck claims neither approach is sufficient and that his goal is "to examine the *library-use patterns* of Russian-Jewish immigrants in New York City" at the turn of the last century (1977, 129; emphasis added)

focusing on patrons rather than the library and librarians. This stress on studying immigrants' practices utilizes a user-centered approach to library history advocated by Zweizig in 1973 and by Wiegand two decades later.

Beck presents evidence of Russian-Jewish immigrants in the early twentieth century attending lectures and school in the evening for English, American history, and civics classes; using the reading rooms in the Aguilar Library; and attending programs offered by the Educational Alliance. He concludes that the "educational level of Russian Jews, their knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish, obviously resulted from their culture" (1977, 132–133) and led to frequent library use. Beck limits his conclusions to this particular group as it was not his "contention that Russian Jews were unique in their educational zeal: such an argument could be proved or disproved only through a comparison of Jewish immigrants with the educational and library-use patterns of other immigrant groups" (1977, 143). The studies did not exist for Beck to make comparisons, and as Wiegand noted later in 1999, user-centered studies such as Beck's were still not a common approach to library history in general, or to the study of immigrants and libraries in the next two decades.

Abigail Van Slyck employed a bottom-up, user-centered approach to examine immigrant children's encounters with public libraries. Her perspective is from outside the library field, and she used architecture as the critical lens to survey libraries in *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture 1890–1920* (1995). In a chapter titled "Reading: The Experience of Children as Library Users," Van Slyck describes the ways children, especially immigrant children, appropriated the library both as a place of escape from the environment of the tenements (1995, 211) and "an extension of the streets"

where they regularly played (1995, 213). According to Van Slyck, “immigrant children were enthusiastic library users” although this abundance of enthusiasm “threatened the orderly gentility” librarians wished to encourage (1995, 211). Van Slyck focused on the patrons, in this case the youngest patrons, and their use of the library.

Van Slyck’s chapter, while not focused solely on immigrants, is included in this literature review due to its user-centered approach, and its examination of immigrant children using the library. Other scholars who have studied children’s librarianship at the turn of the last century, such as Christine Jenkins (2001) and Kate McDowell (2011) also describe interactions between immigrant children and public librarians as part of their research. As Christine Jenkins notes, “children’s librarianship was . . . part of Progressive era efforts to assimilate and Americanize the burgeoning immigrant population” (2001, 116) of the late nineteenth century and is therefore an important element in the study of immigrants and libraries. However the primary focus of their research is children’s librarianship, not immigrants’ interactions with public libraries; therefore their studies are not included in this literature review.

As shown in this section, one-half of a book,⁶ a few book chapters, and several articles represent the bulk of the historical literature focused on immigrants and libraries at the turn of the twentieth century. Much of that research concentrates on Americanization to the exclusion of other aspects of library use that many patrons took for granted celebrates librarians who worked with immigrants (in practice directed literature such as Pokorny [2003] and Marcum and Stone [1991]), assumes that library services to immigrants were egalitarian and beneficent (McMullen [1976], MacCann [1989] and Jones [1999, 2003]). This research does not sufficiently problematize the

⁶ Jones’s book considers both the turn of the twentieth century and 1924 to 1948.

relationship and interactions between librarians and immigrants. Some writers are more critical of libraries and librarians (Harris [1973, 1975], Fain [1983], Wiegand [1989] and Novotny [2003]), while Beck (1977) provides an early user-centered study of immigrants and Van Slyck (1995) a more recent example.

The current library history focus on immigrants in the world of libraries has limited the understanding of how the library fit into immigrants' overall system of acquiring and accessing information, a web of information nodes that included both informal sources and more formal, institutional sources such as libraries. Within the current scholarship, which is largely untheorized, and primarily institutionally focused, room exists for additional critical examination of immigrants and American public libraries, as well the position of libraries in the broader web of immigrants' information sources.

This section has presented scholarship on American public libraries and immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century in the context of library history paradigms. Little substantive literature exists within the field, and even a search in interdisciplinary sources such as the LHRT bibliographies and the JSTOR database revealed few additions from other disciplines. In addition to the shortage of material, other limitations, which are identified and explored in the next section, exist. The limitations identified in the next section suggest the frameworks and methodologies used in this dissertation.

1.3. Limitations in the Literature

Most of the literature on immigrants and public libraries discussed in the previous section focuses on institutions' responses to immigrants through programs, book

collections, and descriptions of services that libraries and librarians offered to immigrant library users. The sources for this research are usually institutional records, interpreted without consideration for the user perspective of the function of the library in patrons' lives or the broader context of the information resources regularly available to them. This combination of institutional focus and uncritical resource use exposes limitations in three areas. First, immigrants are placed in the position of objects of research rather than subjects of their own history; secondly, the social and cultural conditions of immigrant library users remain unexamined; finally, institutional sources such as annual reports and professional journals are not read against the grain, and therefore researchers fail to uncover immigrants' perspectives. These limitations will be examined in turn in this section; in addition, frameworks and methodologies used to address these constraints are suggested.

1.3.1. Immigrants as Objects of History

Immigrants have remained the object of research in library history, and some researchers have noted this absence of immigrants' perspectives of the library experience in the history of the American public library. Van Slyck describes the "almost complete silence on the immigrant library experience" (1995, 202) and in 2003 Novotny called for "more voices of the immigrants . . . to be added to the historical record" (351). Novotny is suggesting that instead of discussing immigrants in library history, the history of immigrants' use of libraries incorporate immigrants' own stories, articulating their perspective. However, Novotny, while representing a closer examination of immigrants' library use than most in his article, fails to incorporate evidence of their perspectives.

In the introduction to his book on immigrants and libraries, Jones promises his “history will focus on the immigrants themselves—their dreams and their potentialities” (1999, 2) but does not fulfill this promise. Instead he structures his book around three librarians who worked with immigrants and one publisher who produced bibliographies of immigrant resources for librarians. Jones tells their stories rather than those of “immigrants themselves” (1999, 2); therefore immigrants remain the object rather than the subject of his book, and their perspectives are ignored.

Beck and Van Slyck both make immigrants the subjects of their own histories through the study of library use by particular groups of immigrants, notably Russian-Jewish immigrants in Beck’s work and children in Van Slyck’s. They draw on primary sources, both institutional and personal, and read these sources to uncover the perspective of the user. Their approach is rare in offering an understanding of the relationship between immigrants and libraries from the user’s perspective.

Employing a user-centered approach, as both Beck and Van Slyck have done, provides a framework in this dissertation for accessing immigrants’ perspectives and addressing the problem of immigrants as object. This approach of library in the life of the user also suggests the need for an exploration of the users’ information ecology and discovery of the network of information sources consisting of both formal sources such as the library and informal sources such as family and friends. The library was one node in a complex network of information resources, so to understand the user’s perspective of the library it must be situated among these other resources to frame the examination of the libraries use in immigrants’ lives. This network of formal and informal sources is

explored in this dissertation through the conceptualization of an Information Neighborhood, which is presented in Chapter 2.

The exploration of immigrants' information ecologies includes the recognition and examination of their social and cultural backgrounds, as revealed in the study of their enclaves and information neighborhoods, which influenced the construction of that ecology, and the place of the library within it. However, as seen in the next section, the institutional focus in library history literature left immigrants' culture and its influence on library use unexplored.

1.3.2. Lack of Social and Cultural Context

Between 1880 and 1920, immigrants from numerous countries with a multitude of cultures and traditions settled in the U.S., which had its own unique culture and traditions. The consequences of this multiplicity of cultures on the interactions between immigrants and libraries are best understood when the social and cultural backgrounds of both immigrants using the libraries and the individuals connected with the institution of the library (librarians, trustees, clerks, managers, and directors) are studied. In library history literature, most researchers acknowledge immigrants' various cultures only in terms of efforts to Americanize immigrants and or make an occasional mention of librarians who encouraged immigrants to celebrate some aspects of their own culture. Researchers have seldom investigated the effect of varied and unique cultural backgrounds on immigrants' library use although revisionist scholars such as Harris (1975) and Garrison ([1979] 2003) explored the social and cultural background of founders and librarians.

Beck (1977) is the only scholar who examines immigrants' social and cultural milieus, exploring the culture of education among Russian-Jews and how it influenced their use of a library in New York. He notes that "to understand the impact of Jewish culture and education upon the immigrants' life in New York City it is necessary to have a picture of the numbers of refugees and the conditions in the ghetto" (131). Beck describes these conditions and notes that "in spite of their numbers, poverty, and horrible working conditions, Russian Jews generally had a reading knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish, while many knew the rabbinical literature and read Russian" (1977,132). Russian Jewish immigrants to New York City, Beck posits, had thought patterns constructed by a religion and society that required literacy and this uniquely influenced and fashioned their library use. He credits their initiative in taking advantage of the programs offered by the Aguilar Library in New York City to this life-long disposition. Therefore, Beck rejects library historians' tendency to "lump all immigrants together without differentiating between immigrant groups with a strong educational background and those without" (1977, 129) and complains that neither the revisionist Harris nor the progressive Ditzion "examine the social and cultural conditions of the library patrons" (1977, 129), and in particular those of immigrant patrons.

Harris investigated the social and cultural environment of the library founders in *The Role of The Public Library in American Life*, as part of his argument that this background determined the founders' views of the "library's potential as one means of restraining the 'dangerous classes'" (1975, 6). Beck argues against Harris's view of libraries and librarians as "authoritarian and elitist in their attitudes toward immigrant users" and offers the Aguilar's policies, programs, and attitudes as contrary evidence.

However, the Aguilar Library was founded by and for the Jewish community, a situation markedly different from many public libraries, which were established for a more homogenous population, and which, as Fain (1983) notes, seldom employed librarians familiar with either the culture or language of their patrons.

Beck studies immigrants' context, Harris the institutional actors' context, but neither include an examination of the circumstances of both parties. Beck accuses Harris of ignoring the agency of immigrants' library use, while Beck ignores the effect the founders' and librarians' own cultural context had in shaping their attitudes toward their patrons. Investigating the cultural and social context of both immigrants and librarians complicates the perception of interactions between immigrants and libraries. The choice of a user-centered approach for this dissertation was due in part to the conspicuous lack of scholarship that investigates the social and cultural contexts of immigrants' lives, but it is employed without ignoring librarians' social and cultural environments.

One final limitation is addressed in the next section. In the existing library history, institutional records, uncritically read, particularly in the absence of primary source documents created by immigrants, reveal only one view of immigrants' interactions with libraries.

1.3.3. Reading the Archives

Jonathan Rose used autobiographies as source material when writing *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (2001) to provide readers' perspectives rather than institutional viewpoints, and Barbara Sicherman employed autobiographies, letters, and diaries as sources for *Well-Read Lives: How Books Inspired a Generation of American Women* (2010). While letters, memoirs, and diaries which record reading

experiences are the best sources for this research in terms of evidence, Harvey Graff, while urging scholars to use this type of evidence, also recognizes that “the far greatest number of personal accounts make absolutely no mention of reading or library usage” (Graff 1991, 26). When evidence of reading or library use in the form of personal records such as diaries, letters, and memoirs—an archive of reading experiences—is not available, institutional records, through which most library experiences are mediated, are, if examined critically, another alternative for uncovering users’ perspectives. However, scholars of immigrant and library history have rarely used these methods.

Christine Pawley notes that ordinary readers “rarely left individual records of their lives; while they may have kept diaries, and perhaps wrote letters, because of a class, gender, race, and even regional bias in archival collecting opportunities and policies, these have rarely survived” (Pawley 2002, 145). Ordinary readers and library users who immigrated to the U.S. left few sources in which such responses were recorded, most likely due to a combination of the factors of production and collection noted by Graff and Pawley. Beck discovered some such sources in his study of Russian-Jewish immigrants (1977) including memoirs, letters to the editor in Jewish newspapers, contemporaneous newspapers, journals, and magazine articles, as well as novels about Jewish immigrants in America, much of them produced as a result of the very culture of literacy that Beck explicates in his article. Van Slyck studied librarians’ reports and immigrants’ memoirs together to uncover children’s library use at the turn of the century. Beck and Van Slyck were the only two scholars of those examined in the literature review to use sources produced by immigrants.

Others use institutional sources. Fain (1983) makes a particular point of explaining her use of library records, newspaper stories, and magazine articles, as well as the papers and the correspondence of John Foster Carr (a major figure who facilitated the provision of foreign literature to libraries) as the basis for her research. Novotny (2003) examines the contemporary professional literature of librarianship such as *Public Libraries*, *Library Journal*, and *Bulletin of the American Library Association* but relies on secondary sources—the histories of the library—rather than first-hand accounts from Chicago Public Library such as Annual Reports, when making his comparison. The types of primary sources used in these works are rich and varied although not always read with a critical awareness of the contexts of their creation or recognition of biases inherent in the archive.

For example, Jones uses annual reports of several libraries as his source material but reads them uncritically, taking statements made in the reports at face value without consideration of structures of power that provided venues for elite voices to be heard and preserved as part of the institutional record. When reading institutional publications, professional literature, and other official records, it is important to consider how they may “privilege powerful voices; resistance, deviance and subversion go unrecognized, unrecorded—and sometimes actively suppressed” and relying on them can even be “harmful, to the extent that it supports a view of non-elite people as an undifferentiated and manipulated mass” (Pawley 2002, 146).

Jones also ignores the role these reports play during the Progressive Era in what Oz Frankel calls print statism or the “communication between the state and its constituencies” (2006, 2), in which the public library plays a specific role as an

instrument of Americanization and assimilation. The library's annual reports conveyed information on the operation of a taxpayer-supported institution and sought, using both description and statistics, to construct a narrative of success for the institution. Reading these reports uncritically gives one-sided and positive views of the institution and contributes to celebratory and progressive views of interactions between libraries and immigrants. As Marlene Manoff notes in "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines" (2004), "Government documents may prove useful, but not necessarily because of their accuracy or objectivity" (15). Taking these reports at face value also prevents Jones from fulfilling his stated goal of focusing on "the immigrants themselves" (1999, 2) because he relies on the mediated voice of immigrants that appears in these reports without considering important contextual factors that influenced the writing of the institutional documents.

Official records, read critically, while taking into account the cultural background and social perspective of the writer, and focusing on the "absences and the distortions of the archive" (Manoff 2004, 15), can be a source for recovering the voice of historical users of the library. One such approach used in historical writing, but not in library history, originates from Subaltern Studies methodology as a model for critically reading the official archives in order to uncover the "voice of the voiceless." Originally conceived to study the peasant classes of India during the British colonial era, it has been adapted to other subaltern situations, including studies in the U.S. (Cherniavsky, 1996; Rifkin, 2005). The early originators of this framework for reading the archives to reveal the perspective of "peasants, labourers, women and other minorities" (Diallo 2007, 161-162) include Ranjit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, and Partha Chatterjee. The metatheoretical and

methodological uses of this framework, which provide an approach for reading the archives critically, is explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

The first section of this chapter reviewed the existing literature on immigrants and library use at the turn of the twentieth century through the lens of changing approaches in library history, revealing both the scarcity of substantive research and the lack of immigrants' perspectives in the progressive and revisionist approaches. Although they connected library history to broader social perspectives and examined founders' and librarians' motives more critically than celebratory literature, these two approaches did not provide immigrant users' perspectives. The user-centered approach, employed in only a few studies, provides a structure for investigating non-institutional points of view and is the chosen approach for this research.

A further review of the literature revealed other limitations, examined in the second section. These include the positioning of immigrants as objects rather than subjects of their own history, lack of exploration of the social and cultural contexts of immigrant library users, and non-critical reading of archives. These limitations are addressed in this dissertation through the use of several methods and frameworks. Again the user-centered approach to the study, examining the library in the life of the user, facilitates the examination of immigrants' perspectives, which places immigrants as subjects of their own history. Including the social and cultural contexts of both users and institutional representatives constructs a more nuanced view of the interactions between immigrants and librarians. In addition, the conceptualization of immigrants' information neighborhoods, which examines their information ecology, including the library, necessitates studying users' social and cultural contexts. Finally, the paucity of available

source material created by immigrants, and the use of institutional records without consideration of the contexts of their creation, obscures immigrants' perspectives. Subaltern Studies' methodologies will be used in this dissertation to address this gap. Both the absence and the presence of immigrants in institutional records provide evidence for the role of the library in immigrants' information ecologies.

The review of the literature has revealed gaps in focus, methodology, and examination of social and cultural environments that suggest areas for further research. These frameworks and methodologies are examined in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. In the following sections of this chapter the literature of the fields of print culture, literacy, immigration, and Americanization—four areas essential to understanding the social and cultural aspects of immigrants' information ecologies in America—are reviewed. Print culture and literacy, examined next, deepen the understanding of immigrants' reading and literacy, two essential aspects of research into the role of libraries in the lives of immigrants. The last section of the chapter will survey the literature that examines the basic underlying situation of immigrants' lives—that of immigration itself, with its consequent focus on the Americanization of immigrants.

1.4. Print Culture and Literacy

In addition to the conceptual frameworks and methodologies such as the information neighborhood and Subaltern Studies that are examined in detail in the next chapter, contexts provided by other fields are utilized in this dissertation. The scholarships of print culture and of literacy are both integral to understanding immigrants' information ecology, their reading practices, and their use of the library. A print culture approach can be fruitfully employed in a user-centered study of library

history as libraries and library patrons are intimately involved with texts, reading, and communication of information. The study of literacy is a related and relevant field that is also employed within print culture research.

Print culture history, a term sometimes used interchangeably with history of the book, book history, and book culture, encompasses research into the history of the book, reading, communications circuits, the history of publishers, authors, bibliography, and other print-related scholarship. Robert Darnton answers the question in the title of his essay “What is the History of Books?” by noting it could be “called the social and cultural history of communication by print,” and he declares “its purpose is to understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behavior of mankind,” (1989, 27). This description of print culture provides an entrée into the study of immigrants’ social and cultural contexts that has been missing in the literature about immigrants and libraries. The conceptualization of the information neighborhood presented in Chapter 2 is informed by Darnton’s approach to the communication and transmission of news and ideas in a French community and is adapted to the flow of information in Italian immigrant communities. Notably, the concept of information used in developing the information neighborhood is grounded in print culture studies and communication.

In 1984, Janice Radway reported on how women appropriated reading in her book *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*. This approach is used in the print culture field; for example, in *An Introduction to Book History*, David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery note “book historians try to understand what place books and reading had in the lives of people and society in the past, in the present, and

even in the future” (2005, 4). Wiegand also notes that in the study of reading, print culture history “attempts to look at the act of reading from the reader’s viewpoint, then to determine how readers appropriated what they read for their own needs ” (2000, 20). Michel de Certeau’s work on reading and consumption in his 1984 book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, expands this approach to the reader as an active consumer and appropriator of text. His concepts influence the research in this dissertation on the uses of reading, and is one of the frameworks described in the next chapter.

Ezra Greenspan and Jonathan Rose, in the introduction to the first volume of *Book History*, defined the subject of the journal as including “the entire history of written communication.” They claim it will, “explore the social, cultural, and economic history of authorship, publishing, printing, the book arts, copyright, censorship, bookselling and distribution, libraries, literacy, literary criticism, reading habits, and reader responses” (1998, ix). These characterizations indicate the breadth and interdisciplinarity of print culture scholarship, and the possibilities for its use in library history, as well as its use in this research to develop the information neighborhood and to examine how immigrants appropriated library texts for their own use.

Wiegand (2000) notes that the field of print culture holds promise for the exploration of library history due to the connection between reading and libraries. Pawley (2003) also sees opportunities for the recognition of the importance of libraries in the field of print culture history. She combines the approaches of library history and print culture in her 2001 book, *Reading on the Middle Border: The Culture of Print in Osage, Iowa, 1860-1900*, in which she uses library circulation and accession records to explore

reading in this community. Pawley recognizes the role of the library in the print culture of Osage, Iowa, and demonstrates the intertwined nature of reading and libraries.

Incorporating a print culture approach leads to the consideration of other forms of text available in immigrants' information ecology. One of Beck's critiques of Harris's work is that Harris "fails to mention immigrant newspapers and private libraries operated by various national groups" (1977, 129). Beck realizes both the importance of immigrant and ethnic press in studying library use and the usefulness of the material as a primary source. As noted earlier, he examines ethnic media and print culture in the form of Jewish newspapers, memoirs, and other material produced by immigrants to understand the community and the role of the library within this community.

Wiegand and Danky's 1998 edited essay collection, *Print Culture in a Diverse America*, contains an essay by Rudolph Vecoli, "The Italian Immigrant Press and the Construction of Social Reality, 1850–1920," which examines the importance of the Italian immigrant press. Other research on immigrant institutions including the immigrant and ethnic press and other ethnic organizations are included in the essays in *Immigrant Institutions: The Organization of Immigrant Life*, edited by George Pozzetta in 1991. Charles Jaret also studies the role of the ethnic press in assimilating and Americanizing immigrants in his 1991 chapter "The Greek, Italian, and Jewish American Ethnic Press: A Comparative Analysis" that appeared in *Immigrant Institutions: The Organization of Immigrant Life*.

The importance of studying the ethnic and immigrant press is explicated by Robert Harney, who notes that print produced by immigrants is "one of those rare sources through which we can reach some understanding of the mentalities and psychic maps of

immigrants, people, articulate in their own time and culture, rendered silent by historians with inadequate methods for hearing them” (quoted in Vecoli 1998, 18). Lubomyr Wynar stresses that “ethnic organizations and the ethnic press are the primary indicators of the actual state of life and activities of the individual ethnic groups. . . . it is imperative for any serious researcher involved in ethnic studies to become familiar with ethnic associations” (1975, ix). While he was compiling his reference works such as the *Encyclopedic Directory of Ethnic Organizations in the United States* (1975) and *Guide to the American Ethnic Press: Slavic and East European Newspapers and Periodicals* (1986) to facilitate research and as a documentary effort featuring the ethnic media for the late twentieth century, the necessity of studying ethnic and immigrant organizations that he articulates is valid for the turn of the twentieth century as well.

The print culture of immigrant communities, created by the production of newspapers, magazines, almanacs, pamphlets, and other material printed in their native language, was an important part of the information networks among immigrants. In her 1999 dissertation, *Croatian Diaspora Almanacs: A Historical and Cultural Analysis*, Marija Dalbello examines print culture through the lens of almanacs produced by the Croatian Diaspora (1893–1991) as a hybrid social oral culture and carrier of social memory and political culture and as sites for shaping identity and social knowledge of multiple generations in immigrant communities through ethnic communication networks. While not focusing on the role of the library in this network, Dalbello studies the interrelated nature of information networks and print culture that existed in immigrant communities as a communication circuit of genre, production, distribution, and use, which underpins the concept of the Information Neighborhood developed in this

dissertation. Dalbello and Vecoli both see the print culture of immigrant communities as a place where immigrants could explore issues of identity and cultural memory.

The American public library was at the center of the interaction between this social construction of identity through media created by immigrants and the forces of assimilation and Americanization. These scholars, however, also point to the need to consider culture through more than just the lens of reading and print literacy. Social and cultural memory was also constructed through orality, and this is also examined in this dissertation.

The intertwined nature of print and orality informs the conception of the print culture of Italians in Newark in this dissertation. Dalbello writes that within Croatian print culture, almanacs were “tied to a specific culture of literacy in which orality is strongly residual” (1999, 131). Carl Kaestle also describes this interaction in *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading Since 1880* (1991). He notes, “individuals who were unable to read participated in literate culture by listening to those who could read; the worlds of literacy and oral communication are interpenetrating” (3). Those who cannot read access printed texts through illustrations, reading aloud, and transmission of print material through retellings, weaving orality into print culture communities.

D. F. McKenzie’s “sociology of texts” also recognizes the interrelated nature of orality and literacy in print culture. He sees these as nodes of the “human conditions whose shaping force on the form and efficacy of ‘texts’ we cannot ignore” (2006, 205). McKenzie is expanding the definition of print culture with this term, one that reflects the role that oral cultural plays in shaping printed texts. Walter Ong explores the differences between oral cultures and print cultures in *Orality and Literacy* ([1982], 2000), noting

distinct differences in the patterns of thinking and memory that exist in purely oral cultures and purely print cultures. These patterns influence textual configurations and provide continuity within hybrid cultures between oral stories and texts. As shown in later chapters, the Italian culture at the turn of the twentieth century had the characteristics of a hybrid culture influenced by a strong residual orality. Ong also notes that “many of the contrasts often made between ‘western’ and other views seem reducible to contrasts between deeply interiorized literacy and more or less residually oral states of consciousness” (29). Consequently, illiteracy and aliteracy are conflated with ignorance, rather than with different patterns of intellect influenced by the structures of oral culture.

Considering the interrelated roles of orality and literacy in the lives of Italian immigrants, who were at varying levels of literacy in two languages, provides insight into the use of a continuum of information from oral sources to print texts within their neighborhoods. However, as Cathy Davidson notes, “questions of literacy are always charged and political” and “literacy is never simply a ‘rate’ that can be quantitatively measured, but is an exceptionally complicated social process as well as the embodiment of significant social ideals” (1989, 12). The political discourse of literacy is further complicated when immigration and foreign languages are also a consideration.

Although measuring literacy in terms of rates provides only one dimension of the social aspects of reading, the rates are indicative of trends. Carlo Cipolla (1969) compiled statistics on literacy and illiteracy in his book, *Literacy and Development in the West*, which explores and attempts to measure a range of literacies from oral to semi-illiterate to literate. He traces the rise of literacy in Italy, as well as differences among illiteracy rates in select northern and southern Italian regions. Statistics collected in the U.S. also reveal

trends, and the political implications of how and why these figures were collected. These measures situate Italian literacy, illiteracy, and aliteracy within the discourse of immigration and literacy at the turn of the twentieth century.

In *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integrations and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century* ([1979] 1991), Harvey Graff promotes the study of “literacy-in-context” stating that literacy “can only be understood in the specific context of social structural processes” (52). In this dissertation, this social context is provided through situating Italian print culture within the structures of ethnic enclaves in Newark and within immigrants’ information neighborhoods. The range of literacies that existed among the immigrants on the continuum from orality to functional literacy to literacy in multiple languages provides a context for examining immigrants’ information resources and sources within their communities.

Print culture and literacy studies provide frameworks for examining immigrants’ information ecologies and library use within communication circuits in their information neighborhoods. These approaches situate the study of immigrants and their appropriation of print material from the library within a broader context of information sources. Literacy and print culture are contextualized within the circumstances of immigration that brought Italians to the U.S. and the pressures that they faced in the form of Americanization once they arrived. The following section presents the literature on immigration and Americanization to provide a backdrop for understanding Italian immigrants’ social and cultural contexts within their communities in the U.S.

1.5. Immigration and Americanization

This section highlights two schools of immigration research with differing philosophies and approaches. The literature from these two schools provides a context for the study of the lives of immigrants within ethnic enclaves and for exploring the policies and practices of institutions such as public libraries. The scholars from the Chicago School of Sociology study immigrants and ethnic populations through the lens of Americanization, particularly the facets of assimilation and acculturation, an approach used by many of the scholars on immigrants and libraries reviewed earlier in this chapter. In contrast, the historical research from the University of Minnesota School of Immigration and Refugee Studies focuses on immigrants' perspectives—a user-centered approach missing in most of the library history literature. In addition to examining these two schools of thought, a few seminal immigration and Americanization texts that provide context for this study are highlighted due to their continued influence on the discourse in immigration studies.

Early Chicago School scholars Robert Park and Ernest Burgess's research focused on assimilation, which they defined as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life.” (quoted in Alba and Nee 1997, 828). Herbert Gans defines assimilation (based he says, on early Chicago school usage of the term) as occurring when immigrants move from participation in ethnic institutions, both formal and informal, into the equivalent nonethnic associations (1997, 877).

In a special 1997 issue of the *International Migration Review* that contained articles critiquing early immigration theories, Richard Alba and Victor Nee note that some of the aspects of the assimilationist stance fell out of favor because some of the later researchers from the Chicago School used it as a framework that characterized the progress of immigrants in the process of Americanization as going from “backwards” to civilized. According to Alba and Nee, Chicago School scholars William Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole (in their 1945 book), “describe ethnic groups as ‘unlearning’ their ‘inferior’ cultural traits . . . in order to ‘successfully learn the new way of life necessary for full acceptance’” (1997, 827). Alba and Nee point out that in contrast to Warner and Srole’s position, Park and Burgess’s definition of assimilation did not require “the erasure of all signs of ethnic origins” that some critics saw in their work (1997, 828). The view of the process of Americanization as a move from “backwards” to civilized eventually fell out of favor in immigrant studies. Alba and Nee themselves, however, view assimilation as a social process that “occurs spontaneously and often unintendedly in the course of interaction between majority and minority groups over time” (1997, 827).

Acculturation is part of the assimilation process, and Herbert Gans describes it as “becoming American culturally but not necessarily socially” (1997, 876). He believes it happens more quickly than assimilation. Similarly, according to scholar Milton Gordon (quoted in Alba and Nee) “[a]cculturation, the minority group’s adoption of the ‘cultural patterns’ of the host society, typically comes first” (1997, 829). However, Herbert Gans critiques acculturationist theory from the Chicago School for not considering personal choice in the process of understanding how much culture was retained by immigrants. He also notes an assumption on the part of early researchers who, according to Gans, were

“consciously or unconsciously in favor of ‘Americanization’ (which sometimes included both acculturation and assimilation)” and “probably assumed that immigrants and their descendants wanted to become Americans as quickly and completely as possible” (1997, 879). This was a reasonable assumption, Gans concludes, if early researchers, who were not “insiders,” and spoke only English, had contact primarily with those immigrants who spoke English and wanted to stay in America. This, he argues, caused researchers to draw conclusions based on incomplete information. Similarly, in library history scholarship, where the primary focus is on Americanization programs, the immigrants who spoke only Italian, did not plan to settle in America, and/or were not interested in assimilation have been ignored.

According to Alba and Nee, in his *Assimilation in American Life* (1964) Gordon “provided a systematic dissection of the concept of assimilation” that viewed acculturation as a one-way process, one that left the dominant culture unchanged, except in minor and superficial ways (1997, 829–830). DeWind and Kassinitz note that, “[t]he process [of assimilation and acculturation] is one of give and take that ultimately results in a remaking of the immigrants and of America. . . . In various ways and to different degrees, immigrants will adapt to American society, but at the same time they are having an impact on the lives of native-born Americans (1997, 1098). Jeffrey Mirel in his 2010 book, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants*, highlights the two-way nature of acculturation. He notes that, “In the process of becoming Americans, the immigrants changed how America came to understand itself” (12). This understanding is not reflected in the library literature with its focus on Americanizing immigrants. As noted in the literature review, most of the scholarship on

immigrants and libraries concerns the role of the library in Americanization programs, but the two-way nature of this process, as explored by more recent scholars such as Mirel, is relatively unexplored.

The work of the Chicago School has been critiqued and expanded by immigration scholars such as John Higham. His *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, originally published in 1955, with a new edition published in 2008, remains an important text for understanding both immigration and Americanization at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as the politics of anti-immigration policies. In John Bodnar’s *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (1985) the author examines the relationship between immigration and capitalism, finding that “instead of linear progression, immigrants faced a continual dynamic between economy and society, between class and culture” (xx). He examines the migration patterns that arose from these interactions, both within and across national boundaries, providing context for migration from Italy to Newark. Bodnar occupies a middle ground between the two schools of thought examined here—his focus is not on Americanization like other scholars in the Chicago School, but he does not interrogate immigrants’ perspectives as closely as those influenced by the scholars who follow the traditions of the Minnesota School, discussed in the following section.

This dissertation follows the efforts of the scholars of the Minnesota School of Immigration and Research Studies to present Italian immigrants’ perspectives. In Donna Gabaccia’s description of the history of the school, which was founded by Theodore Blegen with the help of his colleague at the University of Minnesota, George Stephenson, she notes that the school’s scholars “emphasized documentation, privileged immigrants’

viewpoints over theorizing . . . [w]ithout ignoring the broader themes and analytical frames” (n.d., n.p.). This historical approach, in contrast to the sociological focus at the Chicago School, foregrounded “the everyday lives, experiences, and subjectivities of immigrants and refugees at the heart of their studies” (Gabaccia n.d., n.p.). According to Gabaccia, this approach “has often led its practitioners to examine cleavages and to hear minority voices within communities that might otherwise remain silent, whether for reasons of religion, gender, class, or race” (n.d., n.p.).

The focus on immigrant perspectives is evident in Rudolph Vecoli’s “The Italian Immigrant Press and the Construction of Social Reality, 1850–1920” and Donna Gabaccia’s *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change among Italian Immigrants, 1880–1930* (1984). This attention to immigrant perspectives was operationalized through the collection of memoirs, oral histories, immigrant and ethnic media, and other material produced by immigrants. These archives, housed in the Immigrant History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, provided material for this dissertation. The approach taken by University of Minnesota scholars to immigrants’ perspectives complements the user-centered approach to library history as well as creating a synergy with the methods of book history, focusing on readers’ perspectives through an examination of the material they produced.

In addition to the two schools discussed above, several books provided insights into Italian-American enclaves, including Herbert Gans’s *The Urban Villagers* (1982) and William Foote Whyte’s *Street Corner Society*. These authors provided detailed descriptions of individual communities of Italian immigrants and the development of these neighborhoods that provided context for the conceptualization of the information

neighborhood. Books describing Italian enclaves in Newark such as Michael Immerso's *Newark's Little Italy: The Vanished First Ward* (1997); William Bolen's unpublished dissertation, "The Changing Geography of Italian Immigrants in the United States: A Case Study of the Ironbound Colony, Newark, NJ" (1986); and Charles Churchill's 1975 book, *The Italians of Newark: A Community Study* provided invaluable information about the Little Italies of Newark.

1.6. Conclusion

Examining library history literature on immigrants and libraries within the context of library history trends reveals that the subject is under-researched and that most of the existing scholarship is focused on institutional viewpoints and ignores the perspective of immigrant users of libraries. Most focus on the services that the library provided to immigrants, within the context of their needs as immigrants, while ignoring their lives as readers and everyday library patrons. The user-centered approach advocated by Wayne Wiegand—examining the library in the life of the user—provides the best course for addressing the lack of immigrants' perspectives and for situating the library within immigrants' information ecologies. Evidence for immigrants' perspectives is difficult to find so in order to use this approach methodologies such as that used by Subaltern Studies scholars must be employed to reveal additional information in institutional archives.

Failing to include immigrants' perspectives situates immigrants as objects rather than subjects of their own histories and limits exploration of their social and cultural environments to their circumstances as immigrants. These studies are also limited by their uncritical use of institutional records. The historical study of immigrants and public

libraries requires new approaches that address these limitations and provide more robust theoretical and conceptual frameworks that place immigrants as the subjects of their own histories, rather than the objects of library histories. These new approaches should facilitate the exploration of the contexts within which immigrants used the library by situating public libraries within immigrants' information ecologies, and should employ methodologies that read institutional sources for evidence of non-dominant groups.

Literature from other fields contributes to addressing the gaps and limitations in existing library history. Print culture offers context for examining the library within immigrants' information ecologies, as one node in a communication circuit through which immigrants accessed information in various modes. The focus on reading, books and other texts within print culture studies scaffolds the examination of Italians' information use within a hybrid culture of orality and literacy. Understanding how immigrants appropriated multiple media sources for their own use provides a context for studying their use of public libraries. Americanization and immigration studies provide social and cultural contexts beyond the scope of previous institutional histories of immigrants and libraries, where Americanization has been the focal point of the study of interactions between libraries and immigrants.

The next chapter expands and details the frameworks and conceptualizations suggested by limitations revealed in the literature review. This includes Michel de Certeau's concepts of strategies, tactics, and appropriation of texts and spaces. In addition, the conceptualization of the information neighborhood will be presented, as well as Subaltern Studies as a metatheoretical framework for this research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This chapter introduces three frameworks used in this study. The first to be considered is Michel de Certeau's concepts of strategies and tactics, as well as his approach to the consumption of print and spaces, which are employed for understanding Italian immigrants as active participants in their own print culture and information neighborhoods. Secondly, the Information Neighborhood, a conceptual framework developed for this dissertation to model the communications circuit and information ecology of immigrants within the everyday routines of the inhabitants of ethnic enclaves is introduced. Finally, Subaltern Studies is presented as a metatheoretical framework for the study of immigrants as subjects of their own history told from their perspective. These frameworks, which provide a foundation for positioning immigrant perspectives at the center of this dissertation, are examined in turn in this chapter.

2.1. Strategies and Tactics

Michel de Certeau's conceptual approaches to everyday practices provide a framework for understanding immigrants' interactions with public libraries, as well as how immigrants consumed texts and other spaces. He investigates practices from the perspective of users, and this focus aligns with a user-centered approach to library history. He investigates how neighborhoods are appropriated by those who inhabit them, and books by those who use them, rather than examining how the space or text was designed to be used. His conceptions about "ways of using" space in neighborhoods influenced the development of the Information Neighborhood framework (introduced in

the next section) through his study of how people create private space within public places.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), de Certeau discusses the strategies of power employed by institutions. The library was one such hegemonic institution, promulgating middle-class American values by imposing standards of culture and morality through their collections, expected modes of behavior within the library (Garrison [{1979} 2003] and Harris [1973,1975]), and the program of Americanization. De Certeau's focus was not on the institutions' strategies, but on the tactics of the dominated classes in relating to and subverting regimes imposed by those institutions.

In de Certeau's formulation, dominated does not mean "passive or docile" (xii), rather he credits the dominated classes with creative tactics that are used for "making do" (29) within an imposed system (29–42), indicating an active consumption of the system on their own terms. Tactics, according to de Certeau, include "clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, 'hunter's cunning,' maneuvers, polymorphic simulations, [and] joyful discoveries" which are all "ways of operating" that he describes as "victories of the 'weak' over the 'strong'" (1984, xix). These tactics, used to subvert the strategies practiced by institutions such as libraries, when examined, provide insight into users' perspectives in library history.

De Certeau explores these ways of operating through various everyday practices, including reading. When addressing reading and information in his chapter "Reading as Poaching" in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau opposes the image of consumers as sheep (1984, 166). He positions this image of passive consumption within an "ideology of 'informing' through books" where the definition of "informing" is "to 'give

form' to social practices" (1984, 166). Producers of culture, de Certeau notes, "always assume that the public is molded by the products imposed on it" (166). De Certeau negates these assumptions when he proposes a reader-response-like interpretation of the experience of the consumer—one that includes "advances and retreats, tactics and games played with the text" (1984, 175) that creates an experience that is different than what was intended by the writer. Consumers are informed through texts, but the information received is interpreted in unique ways by the reader. De Certeau is interested in these tactics employed by the reader, who works within the system of the text to create his or her own meaning.

This study seeks to examine the attempts by the library at "giving form" to social practices through the material it offered to Americanize immigrants, the assumptions made by librarians (and others) about the possibilities of molding immigrants through such material, with a focus on the responses of the readers to this material. Evidence of these tactics, though difficult to uncover, is sought in this study through the use of Subaltern Studies, and discussed later in this chapter.

The complex relationship between producers and consumers of texts has been overlooked in previous accounts of libraries that provided material to immigrants for citizenship and acculturation, epitomizing the system that implies passive consumption. This study of the interaction between libraries and immigrants is informed by de Certeau's theories on readers as tactical consumers. By implication, such approaches situate immigrants as active consumers of information in both the library and in their broader information ecology.

In addition to informing the study of immigrants' reading and print culture practices and their use of the space of the library de Certeau's ideas are also foundational to the next framework presented in this chapter, the Information Neighborhood. Pierre Mayol, working with de Certeau and using his ideas, explores ways of operating in a neighborhood in Volume 2 of *The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and Cooking* (1998) through a study of a modern neighborhood in Lyon. The approaches underlying de Certeau and Mayol's understanding of the physical and symbolic appropriation of neighborhood spaces are important to the conceptualization of the Information Neighborhood developed in the next section.

2.2. Information Neighborhood

The concept of an information neighborhood was developed as a framework for understanding immigrants' print and oral cultures as well as the transmission of information in the immigrants' neighborhoods and the role of the library in that culture. The information neighborhood exists within an ethnic enclave and encompasses a geographic space of everyday routines where the sources of information used by immigrants are accessed. The places where such information is exchanged include libraries, but also bookstores, news agents, religious institutions, saloons, stores, and the systems through which information can be acquired, such as friends and family networks, the ethnic/immigrant press, and padrones (labor agents). The transmission of information in these nodes occurs in print and orally, as well as through hybrid forms.

In this section, the development of ethnic enclaves in cities at the turn of the twentieth century is explored using de Certeau's conception of the consumption of space in neighborhoods. Next the information sources, which include places such as streets and

libraries and spaces such as family networks, as well as the methods of transmission within these information sources, will be examined with reference to Robert Darnton's communication circuit of an early information society (2000). A communication circuit of an Italian information neighborhood is presented, which provides the framework which is applied to Italian information neighborhoods in Newark in Chapter 5. The notion of trusted sources within the neighborhoods is then introduced.

2.2.1. Neighborhood

Mayol defines a neighborhood in *The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and Cooking* (1998) as "the middle term in an existential dialectic (on a personal level) and a social one (on the level of a group of users), between inside and outside" (Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998, 11). The neighborhood is an "appropriation of space" created by the "dweller's body's engagement in public space" which creates the "progressive privatization of public space" that is the neighborhood (Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998, 11). Mayol's concept of neighborhood (based on Certeau's ideas) is a space created by everyday use of public parts of the city in travels from home base (literally home, or the private space) through the public place in many directions creating a space that begins as public, but becomes more private, blurring boundaries between inside (private) and outside (public) in this space.

Similarly, immigrants created private spaces within their neighborhoods, or ethnic enclaves. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau describes immigrants to France using tactics to adapt their neighborhoods to their needs. "Thus a North African living in Paris or Roubaix (France)," de Certeau notes, "insinuates *into* the system imposed on him by the construction of a low-income housing development or of the

French language the ways of “dwelling” (in a house or a language) peculiar to his native Kabylia. He . . . creates for himself a space in which he can find *ways of using* the constraining order of the place or of the language” (1984, 30; emphasis in original). According to George Pozzetta, in Italian enclaves, “[s]treets were the meeting places providing a setting for an intricate network of social relationships” (1981, 24) and so the public streets became a private space that extended limited living spaces. This demonstrates one way “as a result of the practical everyday use of this space” according to de Certeau and Mayol, the public space of the neighborhood becomes a “*private, particularized space*” (1998, 9; emphasis in original). Forced into poor living conditions in cities, Italian immigrants adapted to the constraints placed on them in America. Within their neighborhoods, they recreated the familiar elements of the villages and towns of their home country. They established bakeries, macaroni shops, stores that sold Italian wine and oil; they recreated rituals, such as religious festivals and processions that honored patron saints (Gans, 1982; Immerso 1997). In this way they found ways of dwelling within the city and used tactics for appropriating spaces and creating neighborhoods.

The inhabitants of Italian neighborhoods were very aware of the boundaries of their enclaves. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Enrico Sartorio overheard Italian women who had ventured a few blocks outside of their own enclaves declare, “I have been down to America today” (1918, 19), asserting that symbolic boundary. Lillian Betts studied Italian immigrants in the Mulberry area of New York City in the early 1900s and noted that “[w]ithin this limit of territory . . . all worked, all their social affiliations were established and it was all of America they knew” (quoted in Pozzetta

1981, 25). Sartorio saw this isolation as a form of self-preservation; “as soon as they step outside of the Italian colony they are almost as helpless as babies, owing to their lack of knowledge of the language, custom and laws of this country” (1918, 18). De Certeau would likely interpret this as a tactic for living within the order imposed by the city and as an appropriation of the space that created a public, private place for Italian immigrants. Residents of the neighborhoods were not the only ones to recognize the boundaries of the colonies; a story from the *Newark Evening News* on November 25, 1887 relates the experiences of a woman who taught a Sunday School class of bootblacks at Bethel Chapel in Newark, which was described as “on the border of Italy.” This description was a response to the tangible and intangible signs of immigrants’ appropriation of this space.

Within the neighborhoods, further divisions and boundaries existed. In Boston’s Italian enclaves, “one can find in the Italian colony a Sicilian, a Calabrian, a Neapolitan, an Abruzzian village, all within a few blocks, and each with its peculiar traditions, manner of living, and dialect” (Sartorio 1918, 18); where inhabitants from the same villages lived in proximity, behavior patterns were transplanted to the new world. Observed one inhabitant of the Mulberry District in New York, “People do exactly as they did in Cinisi . . . if someone varies, he or she will be criticized” (Pozzetta 1981, 19). Mayol calls this “propriety,” conformism located through neighborhood norms, a necessity in the neighborhood created through the random intermingling of multiple personal trajectories. “Codes of language and of behavior” are imposed by the “collective convention” and become norms that actions within the neighborhood are measured against (Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998, 11). The norms of the villages in Cinisi have been adopted in the new neighborhood in the Mulberry district, creating the propriety that

informs the everyday practices of the neighborhood. Newark's Italian neighborhoods also demonstrated this pattern of villages within the neighborhoods. In Newark, immigrants from Naples and Campania, Calabria and Sicily lived in proximity in sections of the various enclaves (Bolen 1986, Immerso 1997, Lee 2008); this is detailed in Chapters 4 and 5. Within these neighborhoods and villages, social ties were created that facilitated communication and transmission of information throughout the ethnic enclaves.

2.2.2. Communications Circuit

The everyday use of these private, particularized places created another space co-existent with the geographical enclave, a structure that will be called the Information Neighborhood. A multi-nodal structural concept, the Information Neighborhood encompasses the information nodes or resources available in an individual's or a group's circuit of everyday living. These information nodes or sources of information include geographic places, such as libraries, bookstores, churches, stores, and saloons, as well as shared social spaces where information was accessed, such as networks of friends and family, immigrant and ethnic press, and padrones. In these nodes, information is transmitted through various media and modes, including print, orality, or even a hybrid of the two—reading aloud or through a type of mediated literacy described by Martyn Lyons in *A History of Reading and Writing* (2010) in which scribes were employed to write or read letters or other printed communications.

The conceptualization of the information neighborhood was influenced by Darnton's (2000) "model of a communication circuit" (Figure 2.1) which demonstrates patterns of the distribution of news (information) concerning royal events, which he conceptualizes as circulating through Sites and Milieux (on the left of the model) via

transmission through various types of Media (shown on the right). Darnton highlights transmission of news through the lines that join the various boxes, creating what he says looks “more like a diagram for wiring a radio than the flow of information through a social system” (2000, par. 15).

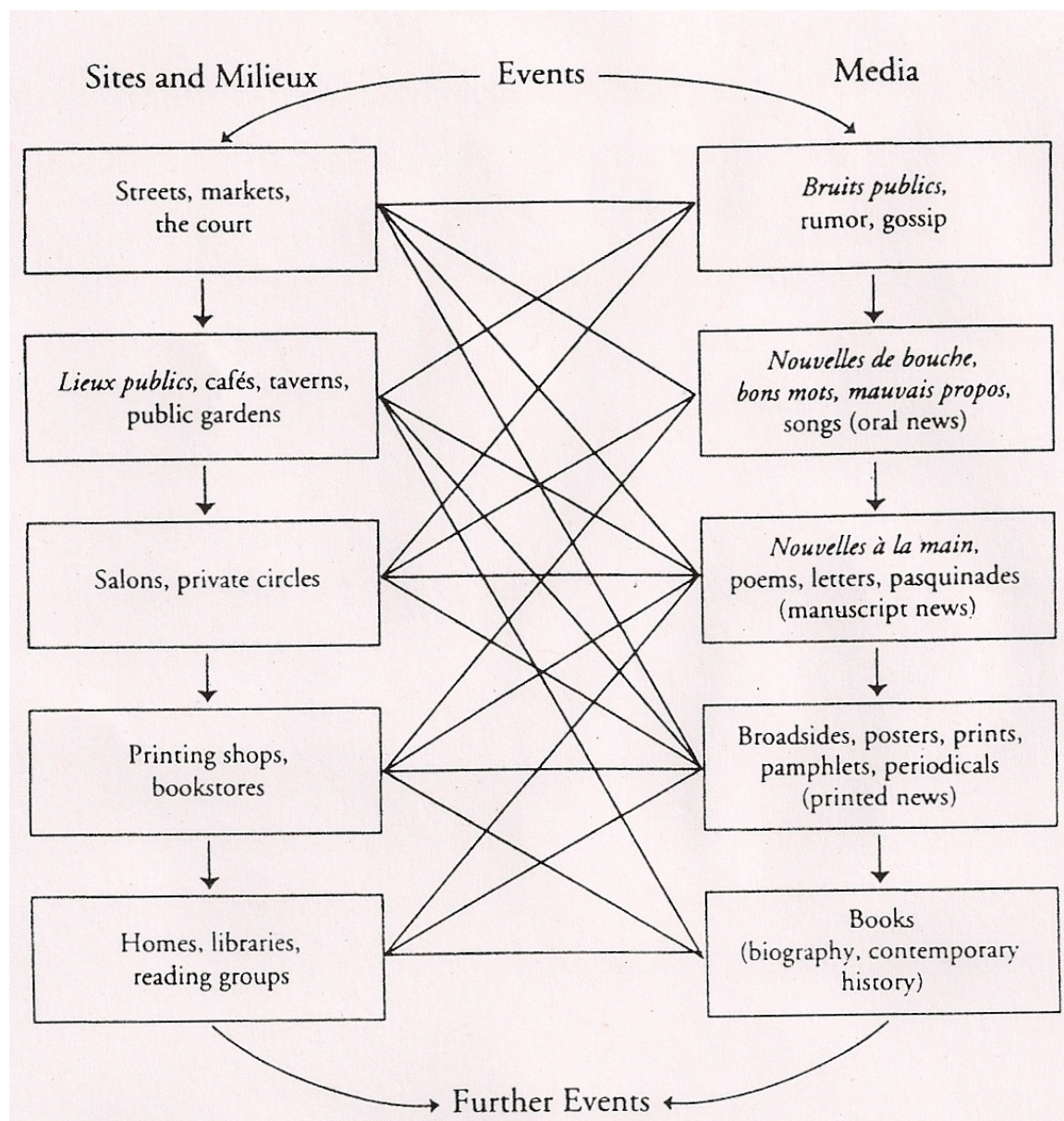


Figure 2.1: Robert Darnton's Schematic Model of a Communication Circuit.
 From *An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (2000, Figure 3).

Within the society Darnton is describing in this model, encounters occurred at sites such as salons, libraries, streets, markets, public gardens, and bookstores, and the news was transmitted through gossip, rumor, and songs. Some of the news was written in books, broadsides, and periodicals, and sold to customers, who learned about events through those media. Letters and other manuscript forms provided yet another media through which news of the events were circulated. Darnton's model is instructive for understanding that the sources of information were multiple, formal, and informal; were transmitted through manuscript, print, and oral mediums; and relied on a social system to be dispersed.

Darnton developed the model in Figure 2.1 to illustrate a specific example of “a communication system at work in a particular time and place”—Paris in the mid 1700s (2000, par. 4). Inspired by his model, the communications circuit in Figure 2.2 was developed for a different place and time—that of an Italian immigrant community at the turn of the twentieth century. This circuit reflects Darnton's concepts of multiple places for information acquisition and multiple methods of information transmission. As Darnton notes, “every society develops its own ways of hunting and gathering information; its means of communicating what it gathers” (2000, par. 3). Therefore Figure 2.2 represents both the places and spaces where information was gathered as well as the means of communicating the information in a society of Italian immigrants within the ethnic enclaves formed in cities in the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century.

The information nodes within this communication circuit were developed from accounts in primary sources such as the unpublished memoirs, autobiographies, and oral

histories at the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota and secondary sources about Italian enclaves such as Herbert Gans's *The Urban Villagers* (1982) and Donna Gabaccia's *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change among Italian Immigrants, 1880–1930* (1984) as well as those volumes about Italians in Newark mentioned in Chapter 1. This evidence and examples of the presence of these nodes within the enclaves in Newark will be presented in Chapter 5. This model is not exhaustive but represents those nodes mentioned in descriptions of Italian neighborhoods in primary and secondary sources. The level of activity or influence of different nodes will vary from neighborhood to neighborhood and even vary over time as the neighborhood grows, shrinks, and as new generations develop new information nodes.

The Information Neighborhood, like Darnton's circuit, includes what he called Sites and Milieux but will be called here information nodes or sources of information including both formal and informal sources. According to Alistair Black, "focusing on the information infrastructure in its *formal* sense . . . as in the case of the information superhighway, Otlet's universal bibliographic index, or a system of libraries—tends to obscure the naturally occurring *informal* communication networks and means of information exchange that have always existed" (2006, 459) as shown in Darnton's model. Harvey Graff cautions against "too rigid a distinction between public and private, and print and interpersonal, oral sources of learning" (1991, 31). The existence of these informal information systems is reflected in the development of the concept of the Information Neighborhood. The current library history focus on immigrants in the world of libraries has obscured the informal networks as well as the overlap between formal and

informal information systems. It has limited the understanding of how the library fit into the overall system of acquiring and accessing information, a web of information nodes that included both informal and more formal, institutional sources. In this conceptualization of the information neighborhood, three overlapping categories of nodes are considered: formal institutions, information grounds, and information systems. Information nodes and the transmission media for that information are the major components of the communications map for Italian information neighborhoods shown in Figure 2.2.

Formal institutions include Libraries and Bookstores/News Agents, where, within the context of information, acquisition and distribution is institutionalized, and the focus revolves around the communication of information through texts, including books, periodicals, newspapers, and pamphlets, and in Italian and in English.

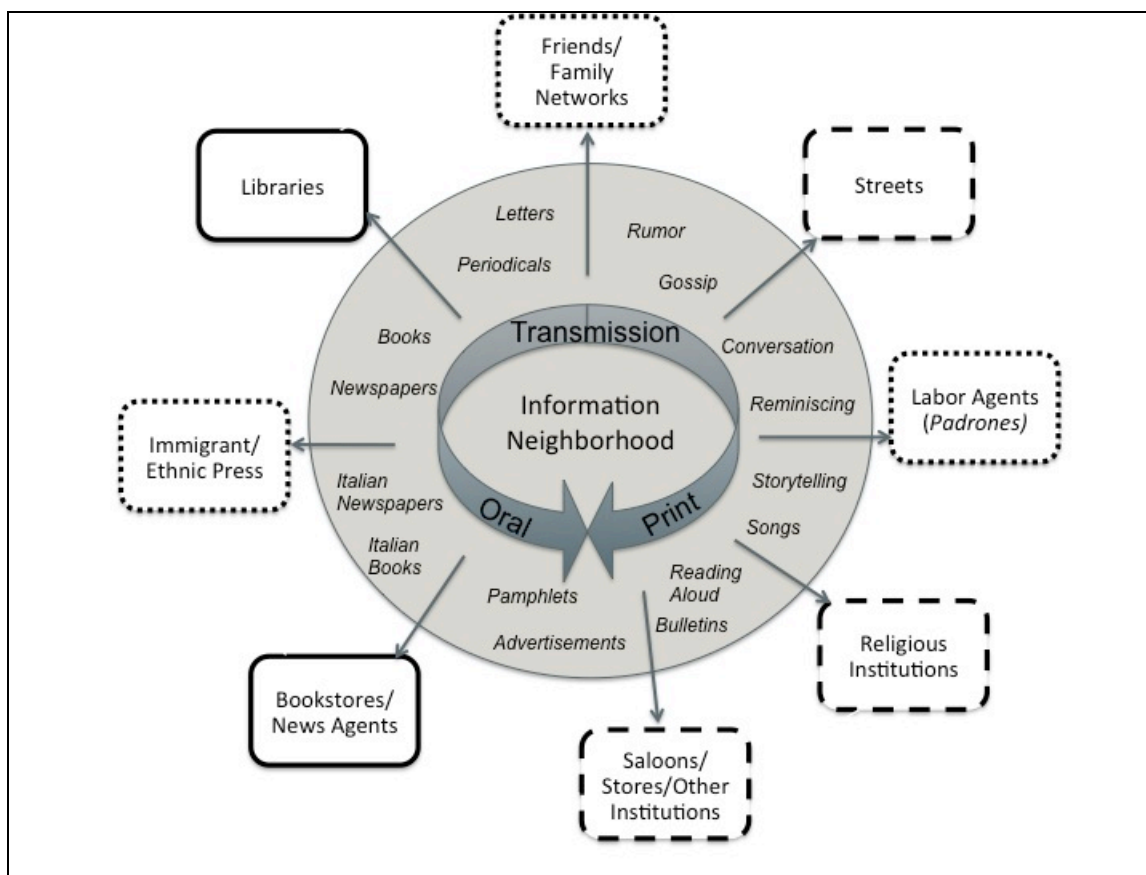


Figure 2.2: Proposed Communication Map of Italian immigrants' Information Neighborhood.

Informal nodes are sites that Karen Fisher (2005) labels “information grounds.”

According to Fisher, the primary purpose of an information ground is not to exchange information, rather the exchange occurs during the use of a place for its primary purpose.

The “most common information grounds are places of worship and the workplace” but also include, according to Fisher, “hair salons, barber shops, quilting bees, playgrounds, tattoo parlors, metro buses, restaurants and coffee shops, midwifery scenes, food banks, bike shops, Indonesian master huts, sports fields, coping and literacy skill classes for immigrants, story time hours at public libraries, waiting rooms in auto repair shops and medical offices, grocery store lineups, communal laundry rooms, ferries and luggage carousels at airports” (2005, 188).

Nodes in Figure 2.2 that can be considered information grounds, and that provide a place for information exchange in addition to their primary purpose, include Streets, Religious Institutions, and Saloons/Stores/Other Institutions. Mirel in *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* labels these types of institutions in immigrant neighborhood educational nodes, and he adds to the list “churches, synagogues, theaters, fraternal organizations, political clubs, athletic societies, and musical groups, to name just a few” (2010, 101). As immigrants appropriated spaces within their neighborhoods for their own use for these organizations, they also expanded their information neighborhood in these multiple information grounds. Within these information nodes, news, narratives, and ideas were shared through rumor, gossip, conversations, reminiscing, storytelling, songs, and reading aloud. These nodes constituted the framework for information exchange in everyday routines in an Italian colony in America, and it may be assumed, for many other groups as well.

Both primary nodes and information grounds occupy physical places. The third type of node, not present in Darnton’s model, where information can be obtained through a relationship, network, or system is a socially constructed space that provides opportunities to exchange information. These nodes include Friends/Family Networks, Padrones (Labor Agents), and the Ethnic Press. As in information grounds, communication with family and friends, and interactions with padrones could involve multiple types of oral modes as well as letters, which were important vehicles for transmitting information within networks that extended back to Italy.

The ethnic press acted both as a constructed space for exchanging information and as method of transmission. Pozzetta reflects the transmission aspect of the press when he

notes, “Many immigrant journals aided readers by serving as reliable outlets for all sorts of needed information” (1991, 32). Benedict Anderson describes the space print creates when he describes “fellow-readers . . . connected through print” who formed an “imagined community” (1991, 44) within the enclaves. Further, Anderson says of a Caracas newspaper that it “created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers,” those who felt ownership of the events and places and people reported on in the paper. Pozzetta notes that Italian papers featured news of the “old country” and some smaller papers even featured news from particular villages (1973, 37). In 1903 and 1904, *La Frusta*, an Italian language paper produced in Newark, featured news of local events such as picnics or balls and stories about local politics, events, and laws. Newspapers created in and for particular immigrant enclaves reported on events, people, and places that readers within the enclaves were invested in, creating a space for the exchange of information within the information neighborhood.

Although these three types of information nodes will be considered separately, in practice the boundaries between them would have been permeable. Unlike Darnton’s communication circuit, transmission of information in the Information Neighborhood is not triggered solely by events. There is a flow of information throughout the neighborhood that addresses the needs of everyday life such as employment, habitation, adjusting to life in a new country, opportunities to socialize, and other quotidian needs.

The communication circuit of the information neighborhood can be mapped onto an ethnic enclave to provide a framework for examining the information ecology of Italian immigrants within that enclave. It takes into account spatial and social factors, including one factor that is implicit in Figure 2.2 and explored further in the next

section—the personal relationships that determined preferred and trusted sources of information within the information neighborhood.

2.2.3. Trusted Information Sources

One property of the information neighborhood that distinguishes it from Darnton's information society is the distinction between insiders and outsiders within the communications circuit. Robert Merton defines the difference simply: "Insiders are the members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of specified social statuses; Outsiders are the nonmembers" (1972, 21). Insiders operated within the "private, particularized space" that was created within ethnic enclaves. Common language, custom, and regional affiliation created a social group, and members of that group were more likely to trust other insiders than trust outsiders. Sartorio, an Italian immigrant writing a book about his fellow Italian immigrants, made the observation that "[t]he statement of an Italian carries more weight with his fellow-countrymen than that of ten Americans put together" (1918, 43).

As Patrick Wilson noted in *Second-Hand Knowledge: An Inquiry into Cognitive Authority*, knowledge is constructed from first-hand or second-hand experience, and most of our knowledge comes from second-hand sources. The sources must be granted cognitive authority to be accepted as trusted sources of information (1983). This trust is granted more easily to those within the familiar social environments constructed by immigrants within their neighborhoods. Elfreda Chatman notes that "... in everyday discourse, for people to benefit from information received from outsiders, there needs to be some aspect of trust associated with the source" (1996, 196). Librarians, unless they came from inside the community, which was seldom the case at the turn of the twentieth

century, would have been outsiders who needed to earn this trust that was more quickly bestowed on fellow Italians who provided information within the information neighborhood, in information grounds, or through information systems, networks and communities.

The model of an information neighborhood presented here creates a framework for positioning the public library within an information ecology that was constructed within ethnic enclaves at the turn of the century, and Italian immigrants' information neighborhoods in Newark are explored in detail in Chapter 5 within the context of the model developed in this chapter. In the following section, one final framework, Subaltern Studies, is introduced. This framework provides an overarching approach for interpreting evidence and provides a theoretical stance for examining underserved populations.

2.3. Subaltern Studies

To understand the viability of Subaltern Studies as a metatheoretical framework and methodological guide for locating the agency of immigrants in the interaction between public libraries and immigrants, the roots and goals of the Subaltern Studies Group are examined in this section, and its application to this research is articulated. Led by Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, Partha Chatterjee, and six other Indian and English scholars, the group began publishing the journal *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* in the early 1980s. "The objective," Mahamadou Diallo says of Subaltern Studies scholars, is "to write a new kind of history which will be conceived and written not from the elite's perspective . . . but from that of the subaltern layers of society, more precisely peasants, labourers, women and other minorities; in a word, . . . the people" (2007, 161–162). The original scholars pursued this objective in their

historical studies of Indian peasant insurgency under British colonial rule, but “the people” are any non-elite group whose perspective has been overlooked in historical scholarship, including immigrants in public library history, whose viewpoint has been almost wholly ignored. This metatheoretical stance aligns with the user-centered approach toward library history, moving the focus from elite cultural institutions such as the library to the viewpoint of library users.

The conception of the word “subaltern” as employed by the Subaltern Studies Group is derived from Antonio Gramsci’s discussion of dominated groups (peasants) in Italian history in his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971).⁷ Gramsci called these dominated groups subaltern classes or subaltern social groups. Ranajit Guha further refines the definition of subaltern as “the name for the general attribute of subordination in . . . society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way” (1982, vii).

Italian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century were generally viewed as a group to be acted upon—to be Americanized. Many of the employment opportunities for Italians were in manual labor, and Matthew Frye Jacobson describes the power inequities that followed from the perception of Italian immigrants (among others) as non-white in *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants the Alchemy of Race* (1999). At the turn of the twentieth century, Italian immigrants were seen as subordinate in terms of class and racial differences.

It is notable that the history and conditions of Italian peasants that Gramsci examines in his *Prison Notebooks* were also motivating factors in the decision of some of these same peasants to leave Italy and go elsewhere to escape harsh economic and

⁷ This edition is a translation of Gramsci’s prison notebooks written between 1929 and 1935.

political conditions. Gramsci explains “the poverty of the Mezzogiorno” (southern Italy) as partially a result of the unification of Italy that “had not taken place on the basis of equality” and the fact that the North “enriched itself at the expense of the South” (1971, 70–71). Ironically, some of these same peasants Gramsci is writing about will be the subject of this research, thus bringing Subaltern Studies full circle from its founding in Gramsci’s work to the study of Gramsci’s subjects of interest.

The intermediate steps of this journey were taken when the definition of subaltern articulated by Guha (1982, vii) and the study of power dynamics between elite and subaltern classes through the archives proved to be applicable to other situations geographically distant from India. Scholars began to extend the use of this type of analysis to other regions, bringing Subaltern Studies from its origins with Gramsci in Italy, to India, and as described next, on to Latin America, to North America, and finally to its use for this study of Italian immigrants. These studies focused on groups that had been objects of histories of elite groups but not the subject of their own histories, as Italian immigrants had not been subjects of their own history with American public libraries.

The use of Subaltern Studies in Latin America was pursued beginning in 1993 when the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group published their founding statement in the journal *boundary 2*. This group of scholars of Latin America explicitly traced their project to the earlier Subaltern Studies group and drew on their ideas and methods to examine Latin American subaltern classes and Latin Americans in the United States. Scholars subsequently employed Subaltern Studies methods to study groups in the U.S. Eva Cherniavsky in her 1996 article “Subaltern Studies in a U.S. Frame” argues for using

this approach, and Mark Rifkin, in his 2005 article “Representing the Cherokee Nation: Subaltern Studies and Native American Sovereignty” uses a Subaltern Studies framework to study this group, noting multiple levels of subalternity outside and inside the Cherokee Nation. Just such multiple levels of power, in both a patriarchal and a subaltern sense, were enacted within the library, as Jones notes in his comment about librarians displaying “varying degrees of condescension and paternalism” towards immigrant patrons (1999, 9). This dissertation brings the Subaltern Studies focus on the actions of “the people” to another population in America, employing its approaches to examine Italian immigrants in Newark at the turn of the twentieth century, a time when most Italians were new to the U.S. and were subject to its hegemonic Anglo-Saxon culture.

Subaltern Studies adds the critical element of uncovering the voice of the dominated in the power structure, such as that of Italian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century, and creates a way to tell the story from their point of view. Subaltern Studies also provides a framework and a standpoint for approaching this study from immigrants’ perspectives. It complements the user-centered approach to this study, and it keeps the focus on the user although the study must be researched primarily through the records of the library, a state institution representing elite culture.

Subaltern Studies scholars try to find the tactics that de Certeau examines in his work. Douglas Northrop, employing a Subaltern Studies framework in *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, says resistance to, and acquisition of, power is found in “the unremarked and almost invisible behaviors of everyday life” (2004, 28). De Certeau and Mayol studied a living neighborhood to find the almost invisible behaviors (1998) that Northrop describes. Uncovering these historic tactics is more

difficult, particularly because evidence left by subaltern groups is often sparse. Subaltern Studies, however, also provides a methodology for interpreting sources, one that employs reading official sources to find evidence of subaltern activity. It coheres with de Certeau's approach in that both share a focus on dominated or marginalized groups in society, and both find these groups to be active in their resistance to hegemonic infrastructure. Subaltern Studies methodology is used to try to uncover fragmentary evidence of Italian immigrants' actions within their information neighborhood and their interactions with the library and library staff in Newark. Subaltern Studies as a metatheory creates the conditions for its use as a method for reading against the grain in the official archives, as is discussed in the next chapter.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the frameworks and conceptualizations that guide this dissertation, which were chosen based on the examination of the gaps and limitations in library history literature identified in the literature review in Chapter 1. These frameworks situate immigrants as subjects rather than objects of their own history, as well as introducing a novel approach that situates the library within immigrants' grassroots information ecologies as part of that history. The approaches of de Certeau, Subaltern Studies, and the conceptualization of the information neighborhood constitute a conceptual and theoretical platform for examining Italian immigrants' library use from their perspective within the particular place of Italian enclaves in Newark at the turn of the twentieth century.

The literature review and theoretical frameworks and conceptions introduced in the first two chapters provide a background for the development of the dissertation's

objective and research questions. In addition to presenting these questions, the next chapter contains an overview of the methods, which includes the corollary methodology to the metatheoretical approach of Subaltern Studies, as well as introducing and critiquing the various sources consulted in the research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, QUESTIONS, METHODS, AND SOURCES

This chapter sets out the main research objective and four research questions. These were formulated based on the gaps identified in the literature review, the limitations in library history literature on immigrants and public libraries, and the frameworks and conceptualizations presented in Chapter 2. Subaltern Studies methodology, which provides an approach for reading archives against the grain, is presented, followed by an overview of the primary sources consulted for this dissertation, which are critiqued and evaluated for their historiographical value.

3.1. Main Research Objective and Research Questions

The main research objective of this study is a thick description of the information ecology of Italian immigrants in Newark, New Jersey, between 1889 and 1919, employing the framework of the Information Neighborhood to situate the Newark Free Public Library within the context of immigrants' information ecologies, thereby making immigrants the subject rather than the object of the history of their interactions with public libraries with the goal of developing a textured understanding of Italian immigrant print culture and revealing immigrants' perspectives of the library among multiple information sources. This study is contextualized within broader immigration trends, the Americanization movement, and the discourse of the emerging library profession.

The term "thick description" is best known through its use by Clifford Geertz to denote the significance of actions as part of a cultural analysis. He seeks to analyze the meanings and understanding of an action or gesture rather than just its surface appearance

(“thin description”). This type of analysis leads to a more textured understanding of the “webs of significance” that compose culture (Geertz 1973). Although associated with contemporary anthropology studies, Robert Darnton found this technique useful for the history of print culture and describes his work as “history in the ethnographic grain” (1984, 4).

Bonnie Nardi and Vicki O’Day define information ecology as “a system of people, practices, values and technologies in a particular local environment” (1999, para.1), and this captures the way information ecology is used in this dissertation to indicate the overall physical and social information environment for Italians in Newark, New Jersey, at the turn of the twentieth century. Nardi and O’Day’s definition is valid for this research in that it presents this ecology as a complex, socially constructed information environment. Within Italian’s information ecology, the communication model of the Information Neighborhood provides a way to examine the flow of information from sources and through media and methods.

The purpose of this research is to begin to answer some of the questions about immigrants and public libraries that have been left unanswered in the history of public libraries. This dissertation investigates an understudied aspect of public library history to provide a richer depiction of the function of the library within a holistic system of information sources available to a particular group of people in a particular time. The following questions will frame the dissertation through an exploration of four areas of inquiry: the Information Neighborhood, practices of Americanization within the institution of the public library, interactions between librarians and immigrants, and Italian immigrants’ print culture vis-à-vis the library.

3.1.1. Research Question 1: Information Neighborhoods

How were Italian immigrants' information neighborhoods in Newark, New Jersey, constructed at the turn of the twentieth century, and what was the role of the Newark Free Public Library within those neighborhoods?

The information neighborhood, as presented in Chapter 2, is a conceptual structure that integrates social, spatial, and institutional spheres within which immigrants' literacies and information use are situated. Information resources, which will also be referred to as information nodes comprise both formal and informal locations as well as networks, communities, and systems where immigrants could access information within the information neighborhood. This model of a communications circuit in an information neighborhood will be applied to the specific case of Italian neighborhoods in Newark at the turn of the twentieth century in Chapter 5.

3.1.2. Research Question 2: The Institution of the Public Library

What was the national professional library discourse concerning providing services and material to immigrants as reflected in the professional literature at the turn of the twentieth century, and what was the role of the Americanization movement in this discourse? What were the library practices of providing services and material for Italian immigrants in Newark?

Although *Library Journal* was not the only professional journal in which librarians expressed their views about the various aspects of Americanization, it was the organ of U.S. librarians' professional association, the ALA. Published continuously from the establishment of the organization in 1876 to the present, and national in scope, it was the site of important discourse in the library field relevant to this chapter. This discourse

and the practices and policies of the Newark Free Public Library as it pertains to service to Italian immigrants is discussed in Chapter 6.

3.1.3. Research Question 3: Interactions

How did issues of race, gender, class, and culture, in the context of the national discourse about immigrants and immigration, affect the interactions between working-class Italian immigrants and Newark Free Public Library's white middle-class librarians, a majority of whom were female?

Interactions occurred at the point of contact between immigrants and librarians, usually at the library, shaped by the attitudes each group had developed based on their own images and perceptions of the other. Librarians developed images of immigrants based on the national discourse of immigration and Americanization, as well as personal experience. Other influences on their attitudes toward immigrants included the professional library discourse and the vision of the mission and purposes of the public library. All of these influences shaped the librarians' behaviors when interacting with immigrants in the library, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

3.1.4. Research Question 4: Italian Print Material

What print material was available in the Newark Free Public Library for Italian immigrants? How was Italian language material selected? What was the discourse of the "fiction question" as it pertained to Italian language material in the Newark Free Public Library?

The "fiction question" reflected a larger debate in society about reading novels and the morality of fiction. On one side of the debate were those librarians who wanted to severely limit novels in the library, while others were willing to allow a broader range of

fiction. The “fiction question” was concerned with the control librarians expected to have over the type of reading that library patrons had access to in English or in foreign languages. This question, along with an overview of the foreign language material in the library, is the subject of Chapter 8.

Together the investigation of these four questions will provide a thick description and historical narrative of the print and oral cultures and information neighborhoods of Italian immigrants in Newark at the turn of the last century with the goal of accessing immigrants’ perspectives of the Newark Free Public Library. The objective is to complicate the discussion of immigrant information ecologies and the role of the library in Italian immigrants’ information neighborhoods.

3.2. Methods and Sources

3.2.1. Methods

Antonio Gramsci notes that the history of dominated groups is “necessarily fragmented and episodic . . . [so] every trace of independent initiative on the part of subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value” (1971, 54–55). It can be difficult, however, to find traces when little material produced by subaltern groups has survived. Thus scholars studying these groups have turned to elite archives, which are more plentiful. The use of these archives to uncover the subaltern mentality is possible, according to subaltern scholar Ranajit Guha, because both the insurgents and the elites were part of a dialogue that was recorded in the elite archives, and Guha believed both the elite mentality and the subaltern mentality could be teased out of the language of the official archives (1999, 16). Uncovering everyday actions is an essential part of Subaltern Studies and includes, Mark Rifkin notes, “reading for the effaced presence of subaltern

social formations and collective agency within official representations of the nation” (Rifkin, 2005, 52). Nonetheless, these actions have been invisible in current library history studies due to the uncritical use of institutional records such as annual reports.

Guha (1999) notes two ways that subaltern are present in official archives. One is a direct reporting of the words of insurgents in reports about their activities. Libraries and other institutions report conversations or comments as anecdotal evidence. Kate McDowell has written about the collection of anecdotal evidence used in reports written by children’s librarians and presented at an ALA conference in 1890, and this was also a method used in annual reports (2009). A second presence is indicated by the response of authors of official documents to actions taken by subalterns. In the case of Indian insurgents, Guha sees “two mutually contradictory perceptions,” elite and insurgent, and an antagonism so deeply embedded that “from the terms stated for one it should be possible, by reversing their values, to derive the implicit terms of the other” (1999, 16).

Harvey Graff notes that “the level of library usage [is] unworthy of comment” (1991, 33) in the diaries he is using as source material, and the lack of direct sources complicates the study of historical library usage. Pawley notes that finding records of the lives of “ordinary” readers presents a challenge. Even if they kept diaries or wrote letters “because of a class, gender, race, and even regional bias in archival collecting opportunities and policies, these have rarely survived” (2002, 145). Reading the archives of libraries for traces of subaltern activity is one way to locate immigrants and try to uncover the role of the library in their lives.

This approach of critically reading the official archives in order to uncover the “voice of the voiceless” can be used productively to understand and uncover the

experiences of immigrants with libraries, evidence which is mediated through the official sources such as the library's annual reports or in the professional library literature. The literature review revealed a need for a more critical use of the sources for researching the history of immigrants and public libraries. This methodology provides a guide for reading the sources critically and puts immigrants back into their own history of library use.

A focus on using the official records of institutions is not meant to forgo the other sources used to uncover the "history from below" such as those sources produced by immigrants. Reading archives against the grain should be integrated with the use evidence of those traces of immigrants that exist outside of the official archive. For this reason, the methodology and sources for this research went beyond a critical reading of the annual reports of the library to include material produced by immigrants, such as local newspapers, unpublished autobiographies, as well as oral histories. All of these provided evidence of immigrants' use of libraries and other information sources in the communications circuit. Many different types of sources were examined for fragments of evidence and for the traces of immigrants' initiatives and actions. The next section provides an overview and critique of these sources.

3.2.2. Sources

The primary sources for this project, listed in Table 3.1, include records produced by the Newark Free Public Library, material produced by Italian immigrants, as well as newspaper articles, photos, city directories, professional library journals, and books published at the turn of the century, which were read as primary source material.

3.2.2.1. Institutional records

The Newark Free Public Library is the source of most of the institutional records examined for this dissertation. The corpus of institutional documents includes the library's annual reports, newsletters, library publications, and internally distributed documents, as well as census records. Annual reports from other institutions such as Newark's Bureau of Associated Charities and the Crazy Jane Society were also examined.

Table 3.1: Typology of Primary Sources

Types of Primary Sources	Source and Archive
Institutional Records	Newark Public Library Annual Reports, 1889–1919 (NPL) <i>Newark Library News</i> , 1893–1902 (NPL) <i>The Newarker</i> , 1911–1915 (NPL) Staff Notebooks, 1903–1912 (NPL) <i>Library Notes</i> , 1915–1918 (NPL) United States Census, 1880–1920
Italian Immigrant Records	Family Papers (IHRC) Oral Histories of Italian-Americans (IHRC, DA) Unpublished Autobiographies (IHRC) Fictionalized Autobiographies (published)
Photos & Postcards	Photo Collections (NPL) Photos and Postcards of Newark (published)
City Directories	Newark City Directories, 1891, 1895, 1900, 1903, 1906, 1922 (NPL)
Italian and Local Newspapers	NPL Scrapbook of Clippings, 1888–1919 (NPL) <i>La Frusta</i> , 1903–1904 (NJHS) Chicago foreign Language Press Survey (translated foreign press articles) (IHRC)
Professional Literature	<i>American Library Association Bulletin</i> (RUL) <i>Library Journal</i> (RUL) American Library Association Conference Proceedings (DA)

Note. Key for location of sources: NPL=Newark Public Library, NJHS=New Jersey Historical Society, IHRC=Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, DA=Digital archives online (e.g., Hathi Trust, Google Books, Internet Archive), RUL=Rutgers University Libraries

The annual reports of the Newark Free Public Library from its inception in 1889 until 1919 were one of the key institutional sources. Printed and bound in two volumes, they cover almost a 30-year period and contain the annual reports submitted by Frank Hill from 1889 to 1900, John Cotton Dana from 1902 to 1919 (he served as director until 1929), and one report by Beatrice Winsor for the year 1901, submitted when she was acting director of the library between the tenures of Hill and Dana. The annual reports contain statistics detailing the operation of the library each year, budget reports, and reports of the various departments within the library.

The style of the reports changes over time and with directors. Frank Hill, writing his director's reports in the early years of the library, 1889–1900, offered an expansive narrative along with basic statistics representing library activities. John Cotton Dana, producing the annual reports from 1902 on, offers shorter narratives as the years progressed but more plentiful and detailed statistics reporting library functions. In this dissertation, all of the annual reports were read with the understanding that these reports were a “communication between the state and its constituencies,” or what Oz Frankel calls print statism (2006, 3). These public reports were written to present the library in a positive manner to the government bodies responsible for providing much of the funding necessary to run the institution. For example, in the annual report of 1896 Frank Hill admits that statistics can tell any story, then directly engages the reader, within the format of the annual report, in a debate over the fiction statistics, rebuffing the criticism of those who complain about the high percentage of fiction circulated by the library because they are concerned over the moral consequences of this ready access to novels. These comments were meant for readers who had an influence on the budget of the library, such

as members of the city council, the mayor, and major donors to the library, in an attempt to persuade them to support the library.

Annual reports and other official library publications were used as primary sources for several of the studies mentioned in the literature review, and Alston Plummer Jones in particular used Annual Reports from many libraries as primary sources in his examination of immigrants and libraries. However, his was a non-critical reading of these sources; he did not interrogate the sources to uncover the biases of the writers. Reading Newark Free Public Library's institutional documents critically provides a more nuanced view of the interaction between immigrants and the library that takes into account the power dynamics inherent in the relationship between middle-class librarians and working-class immigrants. This reading of the annual reports reveals few mentions of service to immigrants at a time when they made up the majority of the population of the city, a finding that is in itself significant.

By noting what is missing from the reports, or asking questions about why certain items are in the reports, or what other purpose those items serve reveals more about the library. For example, while immigrants constituted a significant portion of the population of Newark, and many did not speak English, statistics for the circulation of foreign books were not regularly reported in the annual reports. In the 1912 Annual Report, a separate Art Department reported the lending of 53,875 pictures and 2,541 lithographs. In contrast, the fiction and foreign language room is mentioned under the Lending Department, and statistics for fiction books only are listed in the annual report. This is an indication that Dana privileged the Art Department and circulation of pictures as more valuable to the library than the circulation of foreign books and, by implication, such a

reading reveals that immigrants who used the library would have seen that it invested less in texts in their languages than in the circulation of a collection of images meant to introduce highbrow culture.

Another important institutional record is *The Newarker: A Journal Published to Introduce a City to Itself and to Its Public Library*. This monthly publication was established by John Cotton Dana and issued from November 1911 to October 1915. It contained statistics about the library, book lists, recommended reading, as well as articles written by Dana and other Newark librarians. Dana also published here opinions about reading, about the state of the city, and the importance of the library to Newark. This was one of many avenues Dana used to publicize the library.⁸ City businessmen were the primary audience for this publication, and Dana used *The Newarker* to promote the worth of the library to this influential group of citizens. The articles on services to immigrants celebrated the role that the library played in educating and assimilating foreign-born workers to American culture and work habits. Reading against the grain in this publication, however, reveals ambiguities, elite attitudes about what immigrants should access in the library, and the responses, or lack thereof, to immigrants' demands for material. These articles were also useful for unpacking the attitudes of librarians toward immigrants for the second research question, which examines the practices of library service to immigrants.

The library published finding lists and newsletters that provided patrons access to the titles of books held by the library. *The Finding List of the Free Public Library of Newark, N.J.* was published in 1889 with a list of the books in the library when it first

⁸ An award given out by the American Library Association today honors Dana's promotion of the library—the John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award.

opened. This list was supplemented by a monthly newsletter, *The Library News*, that listed all new books acquired by the library. Volumes 5–13 (1893–1902) of this newsletter are still in the archives of the Newark Public Library. As no other acquisition records survive, these publications are a record of the actual volumes placed into the library collection, and they serve as evidence primarily for the absence of Italian texts in the library for that period of time in lieu of acquisitions and circulation records.

Two types of documents used for internal communication among the library staff provided glimpses of the everyday routines of Newark Free Public Library's librarians. The staff notebooks from 1903 to 1912 create a "diary of the library" and contain memos signed or initialed by either Dana, the assistant director Winsor, or both, pasted into the scrapbook and placed in the lunchroom for the staff to consult. These notebooks included schedules of events at the library, memos of changes in policies, transfers of employees, and mundane requests for the staff to keep the lunchroom in order. From 1915 to 1918, typed reports called the *Newark Library Notes* were circulated to the staff in all departments and branches. They contained reports from branches and departments as well as changes in policies and updates on library matters and provided perspectives on the operations of the library, as well as descriptions of foreign language material that were not included in the annual reports. This includes day-to-day operational notes about moving foreign language books from one branch to another, notes about Italian books added to the collection, and reports about book use in the Foreign Branch.

These institutional documents constitute an excellent archive for the study of the library's routines and practices and are part of the institutional archive read against the grain for evidence of Italian immigrants' interactions with the library. The annual reports

are the most comprehensive of the sources in terms of time span, extending from the first opening of the library to 1919, which provide a beginning and end date for the dissertation. *The Newarker*, staff notebooks, and *Library News* provide additional in-depth views of the library for shorter time intervals within the overall scope of the research. This corpus provides insights into the library's service to immigrants and contributes evidence for every research question.

3.2.2.2. Italian immigrant records

An analysis of primary source material created by Italian immigrants provides a complementary perspective to the official records of the library. It is difficult to find evidence, especially records of reading and library use, for most historical groups, and subaltern groups leave fewer personal records than elite groups. As Christine Pawley notes, "biases in collecting opportunities and policies" (2002, 145) also contribute to the uneven preservation of personal records, including those of immigrant readers.

Due to the scattered and limited nature of personal records and the use of a method of critical reading of the official records, a selective limit was set on the search for records left by immigrants. Two local Newark archives, the Newark Public Library and the New Jersey Historical Society, were consulted. Although the Newark Public Library is a rich source of institutional records, its archives do not contain personal records from immigrants. The New Jersey Historical Society has copies of a locally produced Italian newspaper: two years (1903–1904) of *La Frusta*. The Special Collections Division of Rutgers University Library contains an excellent New Jersey collection, including a typewritten copy of *The Recollections of Peter Mattia*, the son of one of the first settlers of the First Ward in Newark. These memories and notes collected

over his lifetime contribute a unique perspective of one of the first Italian immigrant families to establish a colony in Newark.

The Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota (IHRC) contains the personal papers, unpublished autobiographies, and oral histories of Italians who were born in the last part of the nineteenth century or the very early part of the twentieth century. Most of these were collected from immigrants who settled in the Midwest and are not direct evidence of events in Newark, however, they provided useful information for the development of the concept of the information neighborhood. In telling stories of their lives, they revealed some of the structure of their information ecologies and enabled the identification of information nodes such as churches and family/friend networks, as well as transmission media such as storytelling and a strong oral culture. Material consulted at the IHRC included six autobiographies, 14 oral histories, and the papers of Marie Hall Ets, which contained transcripts of Italian stories told to her by Rosa Cassettari and used in Ets's book, *Rosa, The Life of an Italian Immigrant* (1970). Cassettari's stories contribute to the understanding of Italian immigrants' rich oral culture and the importance of storytelling within this culture.

Personal records and resources have to be read as critically as the institutional records described above. Oral histories, autobiographies, and memoirs are recollections of events that took place many years before, which may be only selectively remembered when they are finally recorded. Oral history interviewees may not be completely open to a stranger interviewing them, and may recount only those events that will portray them in a positive light, or may avoid painful memories. Autobiographies and memoirs, both published and unpublished, contain events remembered at a temporal distance from their

occurrence. Memory is malleable, shaped by family myths constructed through repetition and solidifying into a story about an event that reflects the truth for the person telling the story.

Fictionalized autobiographies have similar issues. Three fictional autobiographies of Italian immigrants in the Northeast at the turn of the century were based on the personal experiences of the authors. Jerre Mangione originally wrote *Mount Allegro: A Memoir of Italian American Life* as a memoir, but it was published as fiction, with the names of the main characters changed. Pietro DiDonato wrote two fictionalized autobiographical accounts of his life in West Hoboken, New Jersey. *Christ in Concrete* was published in 1937 and is a dark portrayal of the life of Italian immigrant workers. *Three Circles of Light* was published in 1960 and is a much more optimistic depiction of the struggles of Italian immigrants. The first book is centered on his father's death and the struggles of the family to survive afterwards. The later book is less grim in its depiction of tenement life. These two books illustrate the effect of time on memories and the personal construction of the author's history.

However, oral histories from the IHRC, autobiographies by Mangione and DiDonato, fictionalized or not, and memoirs such as those by Peter Mattia, provided information about Italian's information neighborhoods, particularly when an information node, or the medium or mode of transmission, is similar in several sources. Multiple descriptions of the use of streets as a social space, or family networks from these sources, strengthened the viability of the evidence.

3.2.2.3. *Photos and postcards*

Both photos and postcards from turn-of-the-century Newark were used as resources for developing an understanding of the city and the information neighborhoods of Italian immigrants. There have been several projects that collected photos of the Italians of Newark and at least two books published that contain numerous photos and postcards of Newark. Photos collected by Michael Immerso for his book *Newark's Little Italy: The Vanished First Ward* are archived at the Newark Public Library along with accounts of the people and places in the photos, supplied by the owners of the images. The descriptions of the photographs are often from family members whose memory, like that of memoirists, autobiographers, and oral history interviewees, are separated from the event by time. But they do provide evidence of the activities, shops, people, and events in the Italian neighborhoods of Newark.

Peter Burke notes in *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (2001) that photos must be put in context to be used as evidence because “the testimony of images, like that of texts, raises problems of context, function, rhetoric, recollection (whether soon or long after the event), second-hand witnessing and so on” therefore “some images offer more reliable evidence than others” (15). Realistic photos are biased by the photographers’ choice of subject matter. According to Burke, “what portraits [in all mediums] record is not social reality so much as social illusions, not ordinary life but special performances” (28), although the illusion can reveal, among other things, cultural aspirations and assumptions. Postcards by design deliver messages about their objects but also provide images of buildings and neighborhoods, and, as Burke notes, “images allow

us to ‘imagine’ the past more vividly” (13), as well as corroborate evidence in other documents.

3.2.2.4. City directories

The business sections of Newark’s city directories for the years 1891, 1895, 1900, 1903, 1906, 1916, and 1922 were examined for evidence of bookstores, stationers, news agents, publishers, and newspapers situated in ethnic enclaves. Some of the weekly Italian newspapers appear in the directories at locations within the enclaves. More businesses with Italian names or proprietors with Italian surnames appeared as the Italian population in Newark grew. The directories also provided corroboration for names of prominent Italians such as the Italian consul, who was also a physician in Newark, locations or names of businesses, such as Italian publishers, or businessmen mentioned in other resources.

3.2.2.5. Local newspapers

Local newspapers provided information about the library and about Italian immigrants. The Newark Public Library has preserved scrapbooks of clippings from local newspapers pertaining to the library dating from the year before the library was established as a tax-funded institution⁹ through 1920 (and beyond). The scrapbooks prepared by the library contain articles about the library clipped from both the local English press and the local foreign-language papers and include both complimentary and critical articles. The scrapbooks reveal controversies not apparent in the annual reports such as an attempt by some trustees and the assistant librarian to get rid of Frank Hill

⁹ Prior to the establishment of the Newark Public Library, there was a private subscription library—the Newark Library Association. Books could be borrowed by members who held shares in the library, or individuals without shares could pay to borrow books (Urquhart 1916, 117).

(*Newark Call* March 13, 1892). Some clippings have marginal notes in ink, presumably by staff members, responding to comments in the editorial pages. On the side of the comment in the December 9, 1894, article in *Sunday Call*, “Does the management [of the library] aim to discourage novel reading?” is the note “No: but we don’t encourage!!!”

Of the many Italian newspapers published in Newark between 1894 and 1920, only a year and a half of one paper has been preserved in archives in the state of New Jersey. While the library, according to its annual reports at the turn of the last century, received some Italian papers when they were published, none remain at the library now. The New Jersey Historical Society has the copies of the Italian paper *La Frusta* for 1903 and 1904. The name E.V.A. Belfatto appears in pencil on some of the issues so presumably this is the person who had a subscription to the papers. His name also appears in the advertisements in the paper. He advertised under the name Ernesto V. A. Belfatto, Avvocato Italiano. The advertisements in this paper also include advertisements for the sale of books and journals, and for stores, run by Italian proprietors that sold wine, olive oil, and pasta.

Local newspapers in both languages provide information about day-to-day events in the library, as well as in the neighborhoods, that are not available in sources that appear less frequently, such as annual reports or *The Newarker*. Letters to the editor reveal interesting patron perspectives on the library, and advertisements, as well as fiction serials in Italian newspapers, reveal interests and perspectives of Italian immigrants.

3.2.2.6. Professional library literature

In addition to official records of local institutions, the records of the American Library Association provided a source for examining the discussion within the library

profession that situated the local dialogue on topics such as immigration and Americanization. The main source for national library discourse was *Library Journal*, which was first issued in 1876 in conjunction with the founding of the American Library Association. The discourse of the emerging library profession occurred within the pages of this journal. All of the issues of *Library Journal* have been digitized and are online from 1876 through 1919 with the exception of volume 40 for the year 1919. A search was conducted in each volume for the following terms: Americanization, Americanize(ing), Americanism, acculturation, assimilation, citizenship, foreign, immigrant(s), Italian, and Newark.

The ALA Conference Proceedings are another source for uncovering the critical debates within the profession of librarianship. The proceedings contained addresses by ALA presidents and the text of papers given at the conferences, reflecting the concerns of librarians at the time. Conference proceedings from 1876 to 1906 were either published in *Library Journal* (1876–1877, 1879, and 1880) or published separately by the ALA. From 1907 to 1948, the proceedings were incorporated into the *American Library Association Bulletin*. The *Bulletin* also included handbooks, general library news, and reports of business conducted by ALA divisions, sections, and round tables. The *Bulletin* is archived in JSTOR, and keyword searches were performed to find relevant material. The material in these sources does not reflect the views of all librarians during the time period but constitute a good source for a survey of attitudes and opinions of the most influential librarians.

3.3. Conclusion

The main research objective of developing a thick description of the print culture and information ecology of Italian immigrants in Newark guides this study of immigrants and the public library during the period of increased immigration between the 1880s and 1920s. The objective is realized through the development of four research questions. The first research question addresses the role of the library in Italian immigrants' information ecology through the use of the concept of an Information Neighborhood, designed to situate the library within multiple information modes available in immigrants' everyday lives. The second question looks at the practices and policies of the Newark Free Public Library in relation to services to immigrants. The focus of the third research question concerns the interaction between the library and immigrants within the space of the public library. The final research question examines the reading material available in the library for Italian immigrants. The goal of these questions when considered together is to attempt to access immigrants' perspectives of the library as one information resource in their neighborhood through an examination of library policies and services for immigrants, librarians' attitudes toward them, and Italian language material in the library.

Among the primary sources for this chapter are institutional records that are first read to develop an image of the library, then read against the grain to provide access to immigrants' actions and perspectives. Official records, including those of the library, the city, and the library profession are read both ways and combined with sources such as immigrant autobiographies and other primary evidence to construct a complex image of the relationships between Italian immigrants and libraries at the turn of the twentieth century in Newark, New Jersey, and to situate the library within immigrants'; information

ecologies. Before proceeding to the four chapters that will address the research questions, the next chapter describes in more detail each of the elements of the case study—the city of Newark between 1880 and 1920, Italian immigrants to Newark during the same time period, and the Newark Free Public Library from 1889 to 1919.

CHAPTER 4: BACKGROUND: THE CITY, THE PEOPLE, AND THE LIBRARY

In 1916, Newark held a grand celebration of its 250th anniversary. A Committee of One Hundred had been established to plan the festivities, which lasted from May to October of 1916, and included pageants, parades, concerts, operas, sporting events, and an industrial exposition (Urquhart 1916). In 250 years, Newark had grown from an isolated town to a bustling manufacturing city at the center of major transportation networks (Urquhart 1916; Cunningham 1966; Tuttle 2009). The organizers of these celebrations saw them as avenues for developing new business opportunities but also an occasion to teach lessons in civic pride to its residents, particularly immigrants. They envisioned the pageant presented as part of the celebration to “impress upon the minds of our people, many of whom come from foreign lands, the history of the city, and the events and forces that have affected its material and spiritual growth” (*The Newarker* 1915, 69).

The first section of the chapter traces the development of the city, followed by a description of the population of the city and the development of three Italian neighborhoods: the First Ward, the Ironbound, and the 14th Avenue enclave that form the focus for this study. The final section of the chapter will be a short introduction to the Newark Free Public Library. The city, the Italian immigrants who lived there, and its public library exemplify the discourses around libraries, immigrants, and Americanization between 1880 and 1920, providing a rich and understudied setting for this dissertation.

4.1. Newark, NJ: A Golden Age and a City Beautiful

At the time of its 250th anniversary celebration, Newark was in the midst of an era of growth. The authors of *Newark: The Golden Age* identify this apex as occurring from 1900 to 1930 (Turner, Koles, and Cummings 2003), but an argument can be made for considering this successful era to have begun much earlier. As early as 1872, Newark “ranked third [in the country] in terms of overall industrial output” (Tuttle 2009, 63–67). By the 1890s the city, showed more signs of modernization and success; transportation improved as electric trolleys replaced the horse-drawn models in the 1890s, and the city offered shopping¹⁰ and entertainment that drew people from around the region. New Jersey historian John Cunningham notes the progress of the city:

Newarkers of 1892 stood in the midst of a transformed city. Within the two decades, from 1870 to 1890, new elements of metropolitan success emerged—and in this period Newark welcomed not only such things as telephones, but also its first major newspapers, a satisfactory (if often confusing) system of street railways and its first major department stores. (1966, 188)

By the time that the Newark Free Public Library was established in 1889, Newark was already a thriving manufacturing city with modern amenities. Thus, between 1880 and 1920 the city of Newark was representative of rapidly industrializing cities with growing immigrant populations. Newark’s population reflected national trends, with increasingly large numbers of immigrants from countries located in what contemporary literature designated as southern and eastern Europe,¹¹ with the greatest portion coming from Italy.

¹⁰ Three department stores—Hahne & Company, L. S. Plaut & Company, and Bamberger & Company—were thriving before 1895 (Cunningham 1966, 195), and Newark, closer than New York, attracted shoppers from surrounding towns.

¹¹ “Southern and eastern Europeans” is a phrase used by contemporaries to designate the less homogenous group of immigrants who constituted a larger portion of the number of immigrants coming into the United

4.1.1. Business and Industry in Newark

The city continued to grow for the next two decades, in population as well as business and industry. The *Board of Trade Year Book* for 1911¹² provides a snapshot of the city. It describes a thriving manufacturing city with 254 freight trains daily going to 14 freight yards with 4,718, 227 tons of freight passing through the ports by way of the Passaic River. Newark had a large variety of industries and ranked ahead of “thirty states in the aggregate value of its manufactured products” (among the 46 states at the time although individual states’ positions were not indicated) with “252 distinct lines of industry” and was the “largest fine jewelry manufacturing centre in the United States” (*Board of Trade Year Book* reprinted in *The Newarker*, 111). The Board of Trade was positioning Newark as a highly competitive manufacturing city, with access to transportation to move the goods to other parts of the country, both showcasing its appeal to businesses and displaying pride in the city.

The map in Figure 4.1, published in *The Newarker* in 1911, shows the number of factories in Newark and marks their approximate locations. There are more than 2000 factories indicated on the map, ranging from those employing only a few workers and sharing buildings with other small manufacturers to large businesses with many employees. The map indicates the clustering of the factories around Broad and Market Streets, whose intersection was said to be the busiest in the world (Tuttle 2009, 3; Turner and Koles 1997, 45) and around the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Lackawanna Railroad,

States beginning in the 1880s. This racially charged phrase reflects a construction of immigrants common in the discourse during this period.

¹² The entire 1911 *Board of Trade Year Book*, published and distributed by the Board of Trade, was reprinted in *The Newarker* (a Newark Free Public Library publication) in the May 1912 issue.

and the Passaic River, all major transportation routes for moving raw materials and manufactured goods.

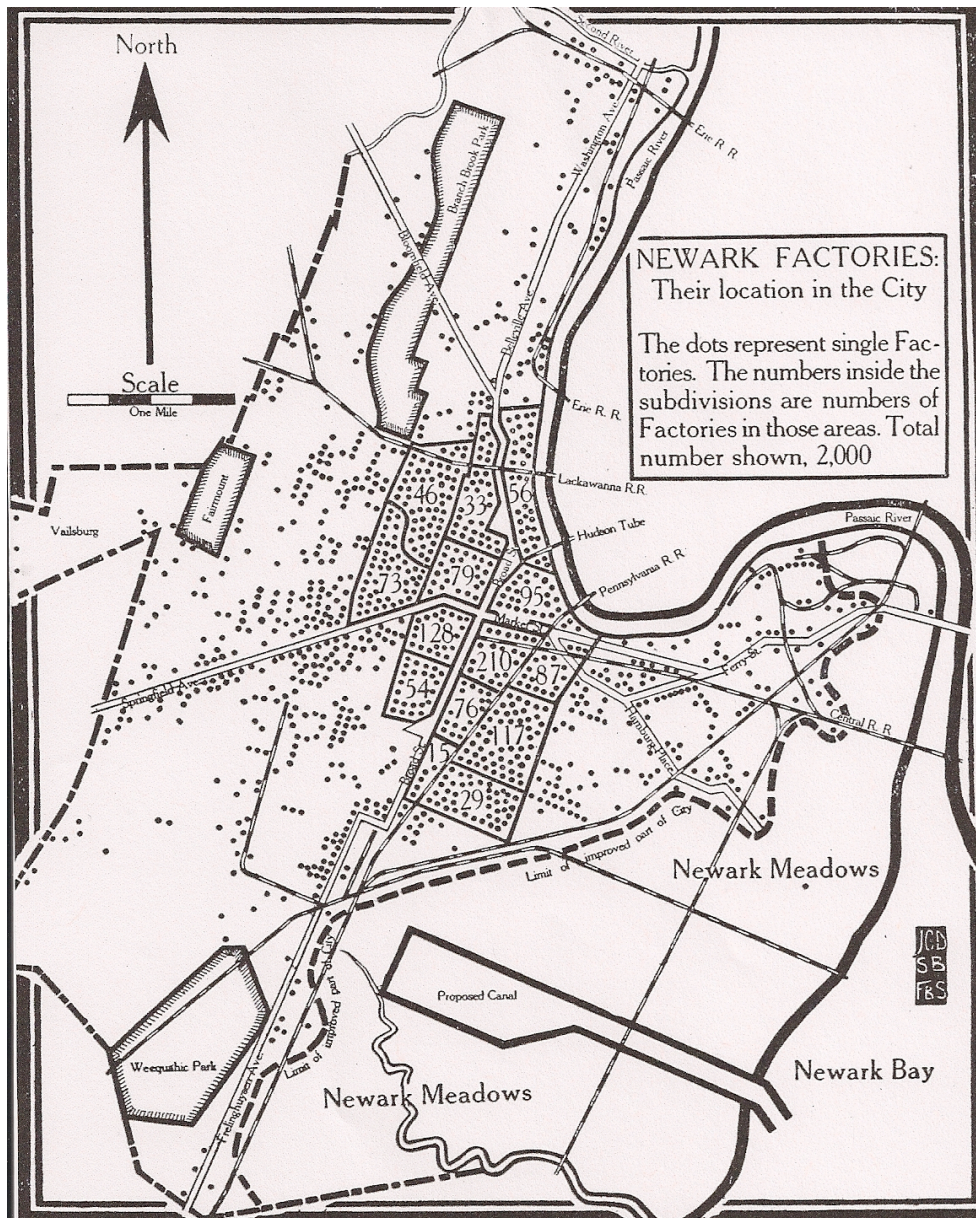


Figure 4.1: Map of Newark Factories.

This map appeared in *The Newarker* on Dec. 1911 (25). No provenance given but the map has the initials JCD, SB, and FRB in a small box on the lower left. JCD stands for John Cotton Dana, and Ezra Shales (2010) identifies SB as Sarah Ball, who was a librarian at the Business Branch.

These businesses included breweries, patent leather manufacturing, fertilizer production, iron foundries, hat making factories, and jewelry making (Urquhart, 1916). Jewelry making ranked among top three industries in Newark between 1880 and 1910. Tiffany's had a large plant in the city producing their silver jewelry. Balbach's, a factory that supported the jewelry business with its ability to separate gold and silver from base metals, was also in the city (Tuttle, 71). According to Tuttle, "It was factories such as Balbach's that provided work for the tens of thousands of newcomers, primarily from southern and eastern Europe, who arrived during turn-of-the-century immigration waves." Once here, Tuttle notes, they "charmed and muscled their way into whatever job they could get, digging ditches for trolleys and sewers, selling vegetables from pushcarts, rolling cigars in factories, or sewing corsets in mills" (2009, 71). Tuttle should also have noted that this was a two-way street—factories and other employers needed immigrants' labor to manufacture their goods and expand their businesses.

In addition to the factories and construction industries, Newark was home to financial businesses such as Prudential Insurance Company, which was founded in Newark in 1875 and sold insurance to workers. The major retail stores, prospering by the last decade of the nineteenth century, attracted customers from around the region, creating more jobs. Immigrants opened businesses that catered to their fellow immigrants' taste for foods, beverages, and other items that reminded them of their home countries (for examples of such business, see Immerso 1997 and Lee 2008). The growth in manufacturing and businesses helped create what was termed the Golden Age of Newark, from about the beginning of the 1880s until the end of the 1920s.

Without a sufficient public utilities infrastructure, the consequences of this growth were that by 1890 Newark was “statistically America’s most unhealthy big city” with high rates of typhoid, malaria, and tuberculosis, and it ranked highest in deaths of children under that age of five (Tuttle 2009, 72). “When the workday ended in Newark,” Tuttle notes, “immigrants could expect to walk through foul-smelling, garbage-strewn streets to overcrowded, poorly ventilated tenements without running water.” Tuttle says these slums were similar to or in some cases worse than those in nearby New York (2009, 72). In *The Recollections of Peter Mattia*, the narrator recalls several Italian settlers coming to Newark in the 1870s who “did not see the poverty they had seen in New York” (Mattia 1985, 38). However, as immigration increased, conditions worsened.

Improvements were finally made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A new source for water was completed in 1893, reducing incidents of diseases, and new sewer systems were constructed, tripling the number of miles of pipes by 1910 (Tuttle 2009), allowing Newark to relinquish its title as unhealthiest city in America. These projects, along with the construction of new public buildings and new transportation systems, provided more work for immigrants and more demand for labor.

4.1.2. City Beautiful

The improvements in the water, sewer, and transportation systems in the early 1900s were paralleled by the construction of several new municipal buildings. The Newark Free Public Library dedicated its new main building in 1901, the new Beaux Arts style City Hall opened in 1906, and the Essex County Courthouse debuted in 1907 (Tuttle, 2009; Cunningham, 1966). With the opening of the new City Hall building, *The Newark Evening News* declared, “Newark, queen city of New Jersey, came into her own”

and “[Newark] had evolved from its role as a mere industrial workshop and fully arrived as a cultured, cosmopolitan metropolis” (quoted in Tuttle 2009, 84).

In his history of Newark, Frank Urquhart praised the public library as “one of the most potent and far-reaching” of the “refining influences” in Newark, contributing to making Newark a “city beautiful” (1916, 148). Urquhart is explicitly placing Newark within the “City Beautiful Movement,” which according to Paul Boyer, was “a surge of interest in the betterment and beautification that began in the mid-1890s and crested in the first two or three years of the twentieth century” (1978, 262). More than just an attempt to create an impressive cityscape, progressive reformers initiated the City Beautiful Movement with the “conviction that an intimate link existed between a city’s physical appearance and its moral state,” a link that “was central to the ‘city beautiful’ movement” (Boyer 1978, 262). Reformers would have considered the library a moral force in the city due to its outside physical beauty, and the positive moral suasion of the books inside the library.

In keeping with this movement, Newark’s new civic architecture was built to beautify the city. City Hall was a granite and marble building with curving marble staircases, Doric pillars, and a seventy-foot rotunda (Turner, Koles, and Cummings 2003, 50). The Essex County Courthouse had eight Corinthian columns in the front and eleven marble figures decorating the façade (Turner, Koles, and Cummings, 2003, 48). The September 3, 1905 *Newark Sunday Call* described the library as an “example of the Italian palazzo, or palace style” and compares it to the Strozzi Palace in Florence, Italy (Newark Scrapbooks). An illustration of the design for the library is in Appendix A.

Parks and statuary were common features of the city beautiful, and Newark had seven county parks in the city that were designed by Frederick Law Olmsted's firm¹³ as well as three city parks. Branch Brook Park was the first county park in the nation, and the parks in the city contained "flower gardens, large lawn areas, shade and flowering trees, winding roads and paths, and a variety of bridges" (Turner, Koles, and Cummings 2003, 111) as well as statues donated by the city's elites. The statue placed in front of the Essex County Courthouse of Abraham Lincoln by Gutzon Borglum¹⁴ was described in *The Newarker* as part of the process of the "acquisition of a civic personality and a civic consciousness" (October 1912, 192). According to Boyer, proponents of the City Beautiful movement believed "that a more livable and attractive urban environment would call forth an answering surge of civic loyalty from the urban populace and this in turn would retard or even reverse the decay of social or moral cohesiveness which seemed so inevitable a concomitant of the rise of cities" (1978, 264). From the celebration of the city's 250th anniversary, to the construction of impressive civic buildings, to creating parks and statues, city leaders appeared to pursue strategies to encourage this civic pride and loyalty in Newark's population.

4.1.3. A Changing Population

With its large industrial and business base and its impressive manufacturing output at the turn of the century, the size of Newark's population between 1880 and 1920 placed it variously between the eleventh and twentieth largest city in the country. Based on census data that lists the population figures for the eleventh through twentieth largest cities, in 1880 Newark had a population of 136,508 people. According to the 1920

¹³ Olmstead designed Central Park.

¹⁴ Borglum designed and directed the sculpting of Mt. Rushmore.

census figures, Newark's population had more than tripled in forty years, to 414,524 (U.S. Census Reports 1998), adding an average of about 7,000 inhabitants each year. Immigrants constituted part of this increase.

Newark's population growth was concurrent with the increase in the number of immigrants arriving in the country. According to the *Historical Statistics of United States: 1789–1945*, in 1880 a total of 457, 257 immigrants arrived in the United States. Immigration rates remained high in the following years, and in six different years during the period between 1905 and 1914 the total number of immigrants arriving in a single year reached more than one million. The impact of World War I can be seen in a sharp drop off in the numbers between 1915 and 1919, with as few as 110, 618 people entering in 1918. By 1920, the total number of immigrants for the year had increased to 430,001.

Italian immigration followed a similar pattern. The number of Italians entering the U.S. reached 100,000 for the first time in 1900 and varied from 100,000 to almost 300,000 for the next fourteen years. The effects of World War I are seen in 1915, when there is an 80 percent drop in Italian immigration, and it continues to drop the next few years, reaching 1,884 in 1919, the lowest immigration rate since 1869. The next year Italian immigration rebounded, accounting for almost one quarter of the total immigration that year.

During this time period, Newark's foreign population as a percentage of total population held steady, in contrast to a decreasing percentage of immigrants in other cities with similar size populations (U.S. Census Reports 1998). In 1880, the average foreign-born population of the second group of ten largest cities was 29.4 percent of the total population—the same percentage of foreign born living in Newark the same year.

By 1920, the average percentage of foreign-born residents in the second tier of cities had dropped to 18.78 percent, while Newark had only dropped 1 percent to 28.4 percent. This figure was larger than the 24.65 percent average of foreign-born residents in the top ten largest cities settled by 1920. Only six of the largest twenty cities in the country had a larger percentage of residents who were not born in the United States than Newark in 1920—including San Francisco, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, and New York.¹⁵ The large manufacturing base in Newark, along with the many building projects in the city, and its proximity to New York City, a major immigration arrival point, may have been responsible for maintaining such a large number of foreign-born residents.

As Figure 4.2 illustrates, the percentage of residents born in foreign countries who resided in Newark fluctuated only 3.5 percent in the five census periods between 1880 and 1920, from a low of 28.4 percent in 1920 to a high of 31.9 percent ten years earlier. The decrease reflects the negative affect that World War I had on immigration, as well as the impact of increasingly restrictive immigration legislation. While the percentages of foreign-born residents stayed within a few points each year, the total foreign-born population of Newark grew steadily from 40,330 people in 1880 to 117,549 people in 1920. Also, as can be seen in Figure 4.2, Newark's foreign-born population from 1880 to 1920 was consistently a larger percentage of its population than the immigrant populations of either the U.S. as a whole or of the state of New Jersey. Newark was not one of the largest cities in the country, but the size of its immigrant population was comparable to some of the largest cities in the country. Newark's relatively large number of foreign-born inhabitants could have been due to its proximity to New York, the entry

¹⁵ Percentages in the last two paragraphs were calculated based on figures from Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850–1990, Table 19 accessed at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab19.html>.

point for a significant number of immigrants between 1880 and 1920. The two were so geographically close that in 1873 one of the founding residents of the First Ward is said to have accidentally wound up in Newark while looking for a job on the docks in New York (Mattia 1985).

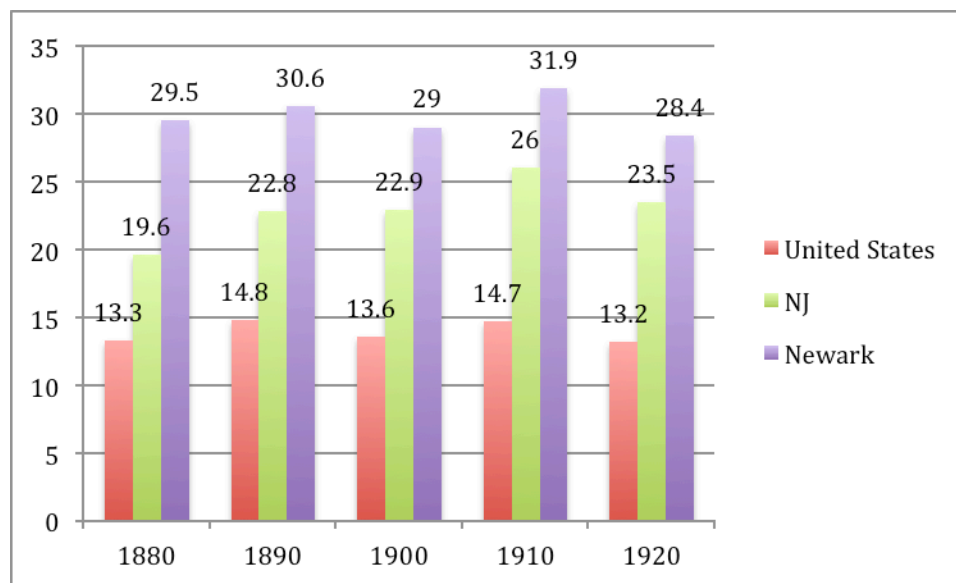


Figure 4.2: Foreign-Born Population in the U.S., New Jersey and Newark, 1880–1920.

Percentage of foreign-born population in the city of Newark, in the state of New Jersey and in the United States, 1880–1920. Based on data from *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-1990*, Tables 13 and 19, accessed at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/twps0029.html>.

When American-born children of immigrants are included in the calculations for Newark, the figures are surprising. Brad Tuttle reports that in 1910, when the city ranked 14th in the country in population, “nearly two-thirds of the city’s 350,000 population were either foreign-born or the children of immigrants” (2009, 79). Proportionally, Newark was in the top tier of cities with foreign-born populations and had more foreign-born residents than either New Jersey or the U.S. as a whole. The presence of such a large percentage of immigrants in Newark makes it a particularly rich site for a study of public libraries and immigrants.

As immigration to the U.S. increased at the turn of the twentieth century, the distribution of home countries of the newcomers in both the country and Newark changed. Contemporary public discourse constructed an artificial divide between immigrants from northern/western Europe and southern/eastern Europe. The report that following statistics were drawn from listed the following countries as part of northern/western Europe: Belgium, Denmark, France (including Corsica), German Empire, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales). The southern/eastern countries were identified as: Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Servia [*sic*], Montenegro, Greece, Italy (including Sicily and Sardinia), Poland, Portugal (including Cape Verde and Azores Islands), Roumania [*sic*], Russian Empire (including Finland), Spain (including Canary and Balearic Island), Turkey in Europe, and Turkey in Asia.

While the percentage of immigrants coming to America and identified as immigrating from northern and western European countries was as high as 95.9 percent in the decade from 1841–1850, and still at 70 percent in the period from 1881–1890, by the following decade the percentage of immigrants from northern and western Europe had dropped to 44.8 percent. The percentage dropped even further from 1901–1910 to 21.8 percent of the population from countries in northern and western Europe. There was a corresponding increase in individuals admitted from the countries categorized as southern and eastern, with only 8.3 percent of the total of 457, 257 immigrants in 1880 coming from this part of Europe, to 70.9 percent of 1,041,570 immigrants in 1910. Not only were the percentages growing, but the absolute number of immigrants arriving also increased (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Number & Percentage of Immigrants from Northern/Western and Southern/Eastern Europe by Decade.

Years	Immigrants from Northern & Western Europe	Immigrants from Southern & Eastern Europe	Northern & Western Europe (%)	Southern & Eastern Europe (%)
1871–1880	2,071,374	200,955	73.7	7.1
1881–1890	3,779,315	959,951	72.0	18.3
1891–1900	1,643,613	1,942,164	44.8	52.8
1901–1910	1,910,700	6,302,709	21.8	71.9

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 percent because data for “other countries” are not included in this chart. From *Statistical Review of Immigration, 1820–1910* by Frederick Croxton (1911).

Of the three largest groups of immigrants in Newark between 1870 and 1920, German and Irish immigrants were categorized as northern and western Europeans, while Italians appeared in the southern and eastern category. The chart in Figure 4.3 shows the national population trends for German, Irish, and Italian immigrants during this time. The German population in the U.S. reached a high of almost 2.8 million in 1890 and then began to decrease. There were only 17,000 Italians in the United States in 1870, but the population continued to rise throughout the period, reaching 1.6 million, and almost matching the total German immigrant population of almost 1.7 million. The total Irish population in the U.S. was slightly larger than the German population in 1870, but declined steadily over this time. The increasing Italian population at the turn of the century, concurrent with the emergence of the library profession, along with the national discourse of Americanization of immigrants perceived as different due

to their construction as southern Europeans, contributed to the decision to study their interactions with public libraries in this dissertation.

The chart in Figure 4.4 shows the population trends in Newark for the same three groups of immigrants shown in Figure 4.3. The size of the German population began to decline as the Italian immigrant population began to increase sharply in the 1890s. The Irish immigrant population never reached the level of German immigration in Newark, and declined slowly over this time period. The shapes of the curves for the German and Irish population in Newark are similar to those for the country shown in Figure 4.3, but the Italian population in Newark increased at a much sharper rate than the national trends, and ended at a level above that of the Germans in Newark, almost 27,500 Italians to a little over 14,000 Germans. The two charts reveal the changing demographics of the immigrants residing in Newark at the turn of the century.

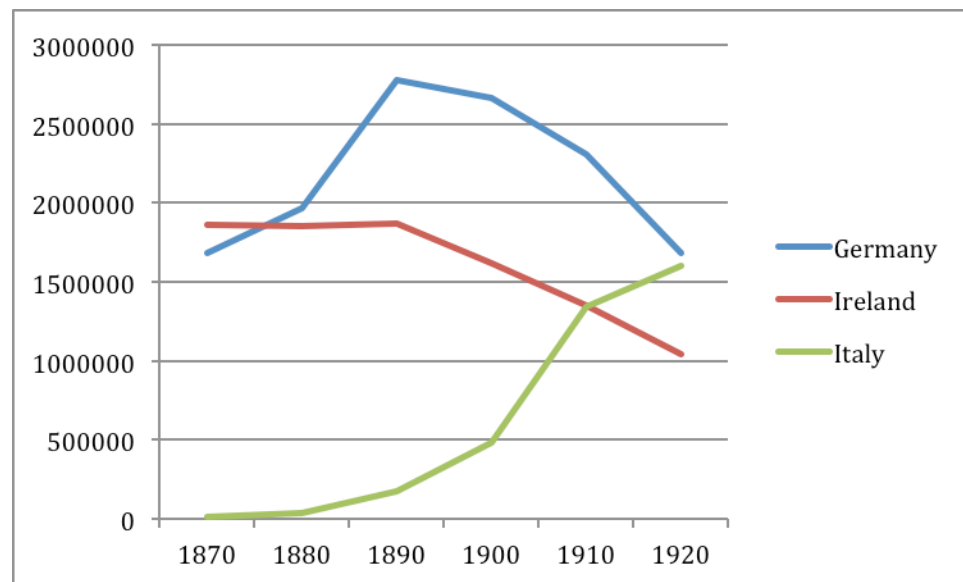


Figure 4.3: Foreign-Born Population of the United States, 1870–1920.

Source of data: U.S. Census Bureau accessed at

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab04.html>.

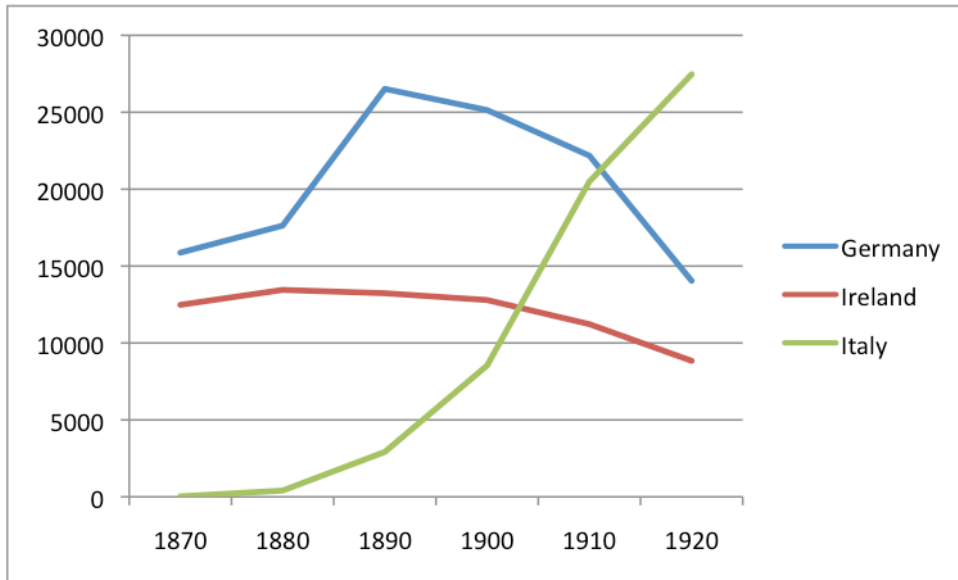


Figure 4.4: Graph of Population of German, Irish, and Italian Immigrants in Newark, 1880–1920.

From figures in Bolen (1986, 83) which were based on U.S. Census Data.

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 indicate that Newark generally reflected national trends in the changing composition of immigration. Newark also matched more closely the demographic make-up of larger cities such as Boston, St. Louis, and Chicago when the percentage of foreign populations is considered. Finally Newark's population reflected the increasing number of Italians who were immigrating to the U.S. between 1880 and 1920. In the next section, Newark's Italian population and the enclaves or "Little Italies" that developed in Newark will be discussed.

4.2. Italian Emigration

Conditions in southern Italy after the 1870 unification of the Italian peninsula were not ideal for agricultural laborers and peasants. Charles Churchill describes high taxes, absentee landlords, and low pay that made emigration attractive (1975). Bolen (1986) notes that in the late nineteenth century the French wine trade overtook the Italian wine market and that fruit production in the warmer climates of California and Florida

pushed Italian products out when imports dropped and tariffs were imposed to protect American crops and industries.

It was most likely a combination of many larger economic trends that shaped Italian immigration and caused the number of Italians immigrating to the U.S. to grow significantly between 1870 and 1920. In 1880, there were a total of 55,759 Italian immigrants,¹⁶ or 12 percent of the total incoming population; in 1914 there were 296,414 Italians or 24 percent of the incoming foreign-born population.¹⁷ Howard Grose, in 1906, noted that “[i]n the past five years nearly a million Italians—or one half of the entire Italian immigration—have entered the country” (128). The graph in Figure 4.5 shows the rapid increase in Italian immigration to the U.S. beginning in the late 1880s.

John Bodnar’s investigation of migrant patterns reveals that immigrants tended to come from particular regions of a country, while other regions, even in the same country, had fewer migrants (1985, 4). Increasing industrialization, agricultural modernization, and changes in land ownership were all factors that drove migrations, and changes tended to be regional rather than national in nature. He notes that during the 1880s the emigration rate for the whole country was about four times higher for areas such as Lucca and Palermo than it was for the country as a whole.

¹⁶ Italians were listed under three categories in the 1881 report—Italy, Sicily and Sardinia.

¹⁷ In the 1921 report, there were two categories, Italian (north) and Italian (south). The number of Italians from the south was far greater in each year in the report (1911–1920).

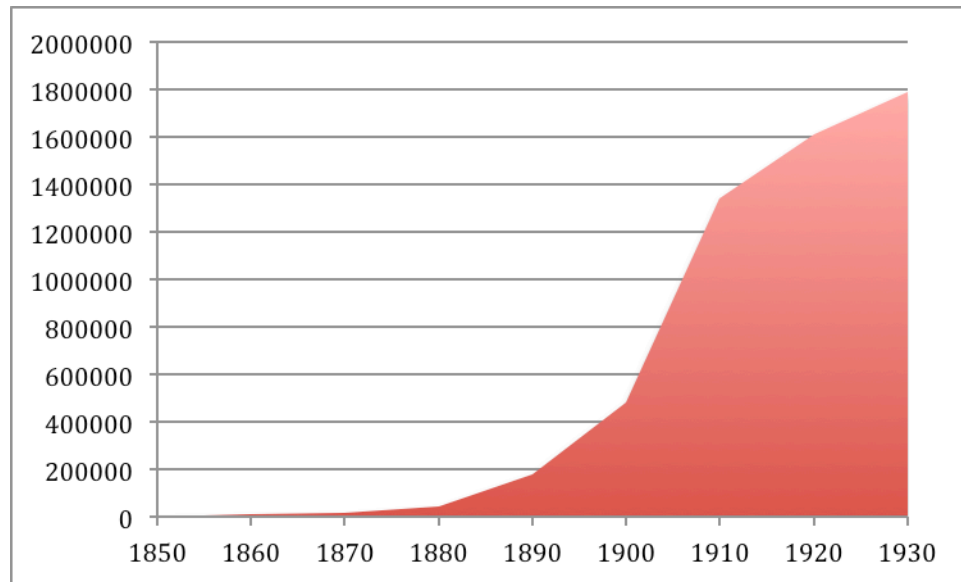


Figure 4.5: Italian Immigration to the United States 1850–1930.

Data from U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Services of 1962.

Enrico Moretti argues against using the “standard neoclassical framework” (1999, 641) to understand Italian migration rates. That framework predicts an increase in migration rates when wage ratios between two countries change and migration to higher wage areas increases. According to Moretti, these frameworks explain patterns of migration from Ireland and Norway but not Italian migration prior to World War I. Moretti suggests that the effects of social networks should be factored into classical migration models to better predict Italian immigration patterns. Chain migration, “dominated by chance elements” of contacts made through family and friend networks, rather than just the “systemic forces” (1999, 641) of wage differentials was a factor in Italian migration rates. These social networks are integral in the formation of an information neighborhood and provided structures for obtaining information on opportunities in America, and which continued to be a resource once immigrants arrived.

Americans' attitudes toward immigrants during the great migration period of 1880–1920 were mixed. In their role as laborers, immigrants were in demand, but culturally they were regarded as outsiders. According to John Higham in *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, both businessmen and the general public originally tended to “evaluate the newcomers in tangibly economic terms” ([1955] 2008, 17) and when the calculations were in favor of the presence of immigrants, as a labor force and in terms of consumption, their arrival was encouraged. In the post–Civil War period, immigrants were particularly encouraged to settle in the U.S., especially in the West and South, where, Higham notes, almost every state set up agencies whose purpose was to attract immigrants. Higham traces the ebbs and flows of support for immigration from employers, and not surprisingly when the economy was more robust, industrialists and associations such as the National Board of Trade opposed restricting immigration. When the economy did not do well, according to Higham, anti-immigrant sentiment came to the fore, and the voices defending their presence were drowned out. The eventual result of this sentiment was the passing of legislation in 1917 that imposed a literacy requirement on immigrants, and more restrictive legislation was eventually passed in 1924 (Higham [1955] 2008).

At the turn of the twentieth century, many Italians were temporary immigrants, the so-called “birds of passage”¹⁸ who did not intend to stay in the U.S. permanently. It has been estimated that as few as two out of five or as many as 73 out of 100¹⁹ among

¹⁸ Dino Cinel identifies this as “a common phrase describing Italians in the United States” (1982, 43), and it is used both in contemporary references and scholarly works to describe the circular pattern of emigration and repatriation that was a feature of Italian immigration.

¹⁹ Digital History—retrieved from http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=420 on August 29, 2009, reports the higher number; Bolen reports Robert Foerster’s lower figure. Accurate records were not kept in either country.

Italian immigrants returned home in the period between 1880 and 1920. One quarter of the Italian population “emigrated at least once in the thirty-year period between 1881 and 1911” (Francesco Cordasco, quoted in Bolen, 1986, 27). Cordasco qualifies his statement with “at least once” emphasizing the circular nature of migration between Italy and the United States. The flow of people between the old and new countries was based on the needs of particular families and the opportunities present in either place at different times (Tilly, 1990) and also depended on information that flowed through the networks established by immigrants.

The flow of people and information between Italy and America occasioned by chain migration and repatriation helped to shape urban neighborhoods in the U.S. In *Street Corner Society*, William Whyte (1993) relates how Italians from the section of city he was studying in the late 1930s “brought over with them not only their language and customs but also a large proportion of their fellow-townsmen” (1993, xvii). These *paesani* (group of people from the same village or area) “made up a little community within a community” (1993, xvii); these little communities formed the basis of ethnic enclaves and the trusted sources within information neighborhoods.

In *Christ in Concrete*, Pietro DiDonato’s fictionalized autobiographical work, published in 1939, about Italian masons in the early 1900s, most of his *paesani* are from Abruzzi, they lived near each other, some in the same building, and they developed a network and community among themselves. In DiDonato’s later autobiographical book set in the same time period, *Three Circles of Light* (1960), the neighborhood of West Hoboken is described in terms of those who come from the same town in Italy. They are the important characters in the story, with others only playing bit parts. There is a close

connection between the town in Italy and the neighborhood in New York. Even the social standings are the same although there is a chance that in America those standings can be disrupted, but not without consequences. DiDonato includes a story of hod carriers²⁰ trying to become bricklayers, a move up the social ladder that would be impossible in their hometown of Vasto. Their effort to change the social order in the U.S. leads to conflict among the transplanted groups.

The constraints of the old social order are maintained through the network that extends across the ocean to hometowns in Italy, as are friendships that were formed in Vasto and continued in America. As Donald Tricarico (1983) explains in his article “The Restructuring of Ethnic Community: The Italian Neighborhood in Greenwich Village,” this “territoriality was another principle of community organization (immigrant community ultimately referred back to the *paese* [village]). The neighborhood delimited a space identified by the residents themselves as bound up with their group life and operationalized a moral community informed by shared ethnicity and culture. Localism and provincial mechanisms of social control carved out a safe turf within the city” (66). As he succinctly observes, “ethnicity and locality furnished the framework for Italian-American group life” (1983, 66). In Newark, Italians followed similar patterns and established immigrant neighborhoods that were separate territories within the city but also contained smaller enclaves, or urban villages, within the communities, which were formed by individuals from the same villages or towns living near each other. The brief descriptions of the neighborhoods that follow will also highlight some of the regions and towns from which Italians within the enclaves migrated and settled in Newark.

²⁰ Laborers who bring supplies to bricklayers.

4.3. Italian Neighborhoods in Newark

The neighborhoods developed organically as Italians settled in Newark. The first Italians may have settled in Newark as late as 1864 when Angelo Cattaneo's name first appeared in the city directory (Bolen 1986, 83), or as early as the 1850s, as Richard Mattia claimed in the *Italian Tribune* in 1936 when he placed two or three northern Italians living in the city at that time (Bolen 1986, 85). By 1880, the census reports 407 Italians living in Newark, fourteen times as many as in 1870. The Italian population in Newark was at 2,921 in 1890; the growth between the two census reports was sufficient to support the establishment of St. Philip Neri, the first Italian Catholic Church in the city in 1887 (Lee 2008, 95). By 1920, there were 27,465 Italians in Newark, comprising 23.5 percent of the foreign-born population in Newark and 7 percent of the population of the city (Bolen, 1986, 80-81).²¹ As illustrated in Figure 4.5, the Italian population in Newark grew steadily from 1870 on. From 1870 to 1920, Newark also had the largest Italian population of any city in New Jersey (Bolen, 1986, 83). In 1920, it had the fifth largest Italian immigrant population in the U.S. and was surpassed only by New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston (Bolen 1986, 76).

When they came to Newark, Italian immigrants settled in several neighborhoods in the city, including the First Ward, River Street, the Ironbound Section, Silver Lake, and around 14th Avenue. In his recollections, Peter Mattia (1985) lists five different enclaves, while others give varying numbers.²² The first section to be settled was the First Ward (Bolen 1986). The next section was first called the River Street colony, which

²¹ Bolen's statistics were taken from the Ninth to Fourteenth US censuses.

²² This number depends on how the settlements were counted and if Silver Lake is counted. Lee (2008) and Immerso (1997) count Silver Lake, while Churchill (1942) lists River Colony as a separate enclave although the colony expanded into and became part of the Ironbound section.

flowed into, and became the Ironbound section, and finally the 14th Avenue enclave, the smallest of the three. The map in Figure 4.6 shows the size and location of these enclaves in 1911.²³ The settlements grew to this size as Italian immigration increased in Newark, and the physical space of the neighborhood expanded accordingly.²⁴ Another settlement, seen in the upper right-hand corner of the map in Figure 4.6, called the Silver Lake area was settled beginning in 1895. Although shown on this map, the colony was part of the town of Belleville (Bolen 1986; Lee 2008). Not every Italian immigrant settled in one of these areas, but there were sufficient concentrations of immigrants in these areas to form distinctive neighborhoods.

In his recollections about his family's experiences in Newark, which were collected together in 1985 and consolidated from written memories from his lifetime, Peter Mattia mentions that a family named Catallani lived in Newark before his father, Angelo Mattia, settled in Newark. Peter Mattia was anxious to make a claim for his father Angelo as the founder of the first Italian colony in Newark, noting that this father, in contrast to the other family, established the colony because he actively recruited friends and family from New York and from Italy, telling them about the opportunities in Newark for work and helping them find spaces to set up businesses, as well as opening his own business.

As shown on the map in Figure 4.6, the Main Library building of the Newark Free Public Library was located between the First Ward and the Ironbound district, several blocks from the boundary of the First Ward as drawn in the 1911 map. It is a little difficult to see, but there is a small section of the enclave that forms a triangle on the

²³ The legend states that the map is "the only one of its kind, commissioned by the leaders of the Presbyterian Church in Newark in 1910 as part of its health needs."

²⁴ Bolen (1986), Lee (2008), and Tuttle (2009) describe the establishment of these colonies.

lower left side of the First Ward, and the library is several blocks from that border, while the Ironbound district is farther away. The Foreign Branch is several blocks from the 14th Avenue enclave.

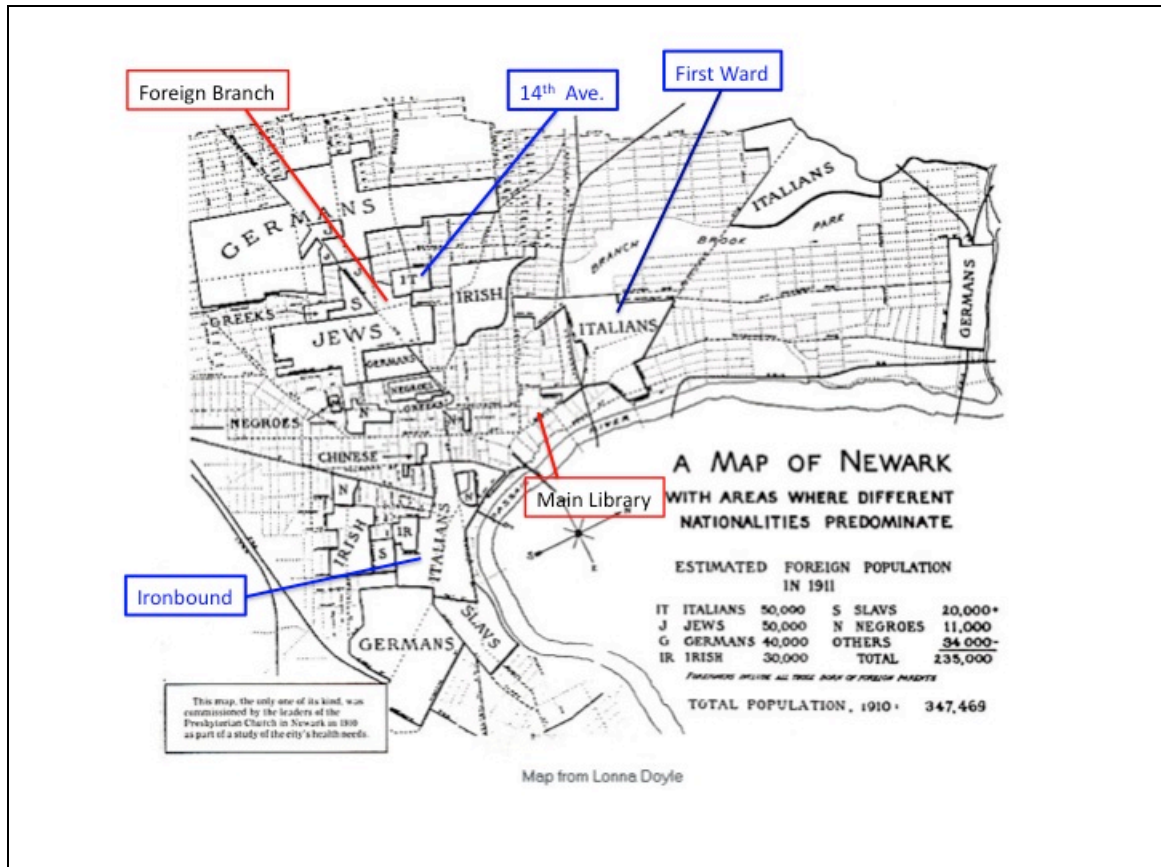


Figure 4.6: Map of Newark from 1911 Showing the Location of the Three Major Italian Enclaves, the Main Library, and the Foreign Branch of the Library.

(Source: <http://www.oldnewark.com/imagepages/images/maps/nationalities1910.jpg>)

Figure 4.7 is an overlay of the neighborhoods shown in the 1911 map in Figure 4.6 onto the map of factories presented earlier (Figure 4.1). This overlay was produced by approximating the locations of the enclaves based on the major cross streets. The Ironbound section encompasses more of the factories than either of the other enclaves, and the First Ward was adjacent to a concentration of factories, and most likely provided easy access to work in the factories. Immerso reports that settlement in the First Ward

moved into less crowded areas west and north of the original settlements on Boyden and Drift and therefore avoided fights with Irish immigrants living closer to the factories (1997, 6).

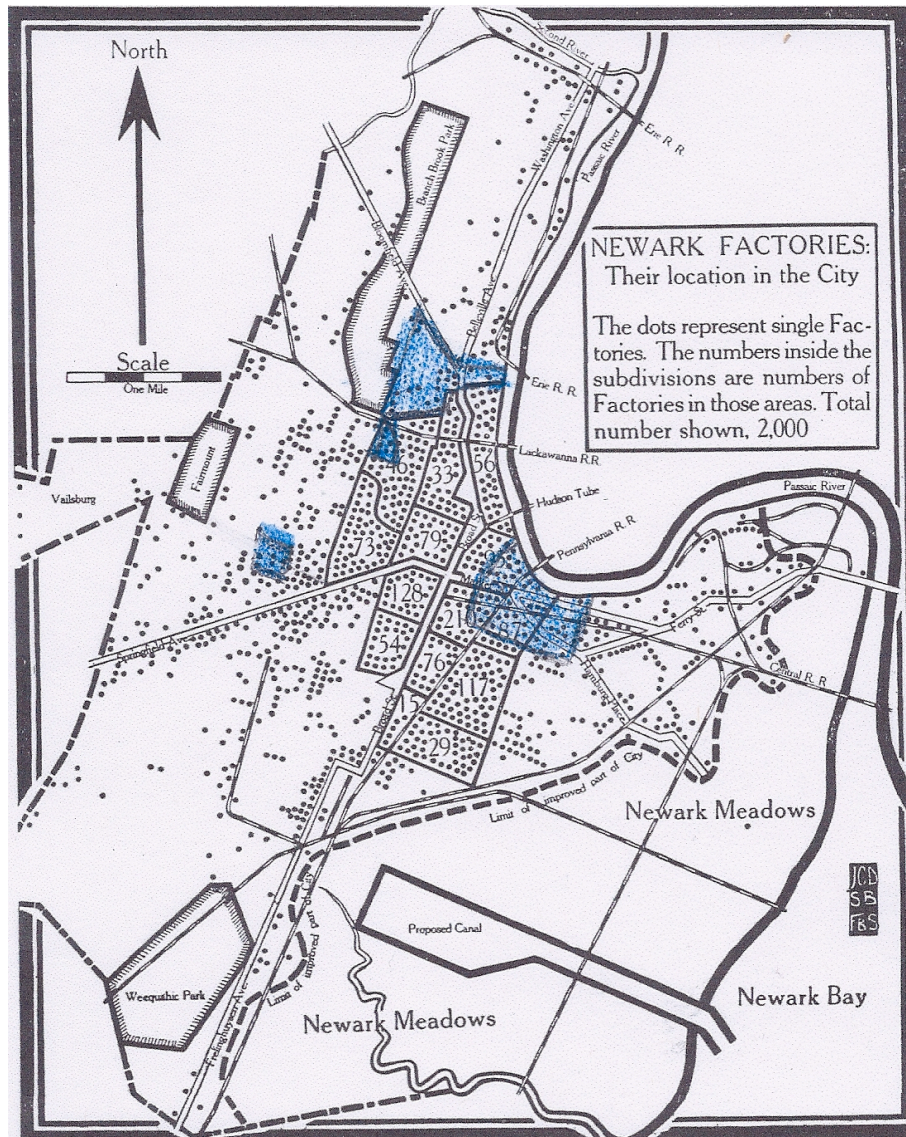


Figure 4.7: Overlay of Italian Enclaves Depicted in the Map in Figure 4.1 on Location of Factories.

Proximity to factories may not have been as important of a factor for choosing where to live for Italian immigrants who worked on public works projects like sewers and streets, as well as the construction of buildings. Also, this enclave backed up to Branch

Brook Park, which had been a quarry when the First Ward was originally settled but was turned into the first county park in Essex and employed many Italians to enable its transformation (Immerso 1997, 6).

4.3.1. First Ward

According to Bolen (1986), the first neighborhood settled by Italians in Newark was in the First Ward, beginning on Boyden and Drift Streets as early as 1871. Angelo Maria Mattia was reputed to have been its founder (as reported by his son Peter in his *Recollections* [1985]), arriving in Newark on August 29, 1873. His son also reports that his arrival was accidental; supposedly his father was looking for work on the docks of New York and wound up taking the ferry across to Newark by mistake, but he found a job and decided to stay. New York's proximity allowed serendipitous discovery of its smaller sister city which in this case, according to the Mattia family, led to the establishment of the First Ward in Newark.

Bolen notes that the Italians who settled in the First Ward were "generally from such towns and cities as Madaloni, Caserta and Salerno in the Naples area" (1986, 108) or Avellino (Lee 2008, 8). St. Lucy's Church was opened in 1891 by the Italians in the Ward, followed by a parochial school in 1904. In 1911, this school had 340 students (McDougall, 1912).

Eventually the physical space of the First Ward neighborhood was erased in the 1960s when the tenements were torn down to make way for low-income housing. But the networks that had been built were not completely shattered. De Certeau notes that "the neighborhood is also the space of a relationship to the other as social being" (1998, 12), and these social relationships must have continued after physical destruction of the

neighborhood. In the 1990s, when Michael Immerso sought information on the neighborhood as it had been before the First Ward buildings were demolished, there were still memories of the neighborhood, and pictures and stories came from previous inhabitants or their descendants. These photos show images of Italian bakeries, macaroni factories, barbershops, and saloons in this neighborhood (Immerso 1997). The photos also recorded Feast Days in the First Ward. In 1918, a procession on Garside Street for St. Nicholas, the patron saint of the town of Teora was captured in a photo (Immerso 1997, 87). The procession for the feast of St. Sabino, patron saint of Atripalda, is shown making its way down an unpaved Sheffield Street around 1890 (Immerso 1997, 84). The feast of St. Gerard, patron saint of Caposele, was well celebrated, as many of the early settlers came from this town (Immerso 1997, 83), which along with Teora and Atripalda were in the province of Avellino in Campania in southern Italy. Italians who settled in the First Ward appropriated the streets for their celebrations, space for their stores and businesses, and reconstructed their villages within this neighborhood.

4.3.2. The Ironbound District

There are several stories given in different sources for the origin of the name of this colony, which is also referred to as the Down Neck area. The latter nickname refers to the situation of the district in the bend or neck of the river and a look at the maps in Figure 4.6 and 4.7 makes this clear. There are several explanations for the Ironbound name. Willard Price, writing in 1912, claims the nickname is based on the fact that the district is surrounded by iron foundries. On the other hand, Bolen, writing in 1986, credits its name to the railroad lines that surround it. Figure 4.7 shows industry located in and around the colony as well as the railroad lines.

This colony began in the 1870s near River and Mulberry Streets. Bolen describes this Little Italy as eventually “overflowing” (1986, 110) into the section of the city known as the Down Neck or Ironbound. Peter Mattia identifies Giuseppe Capauana and Arsenio Costa from Sala Consiliani, Salerno—who investigated Newark after Peter’s father told them about it and established a junkyard—as the founders of the River Street colony (1985, 38). Mattia identifies early settlers in the Ironbound area separately from the River Street area, once again making a distinction between living in the colony and founding it. Luigi Panzulli, according to Mattia, was the first to settle in the Ironbound section, “but played no part in colonizing,” which was done by the brothers Pio and Pascascio Serratelli (1984, 44). Later residents of the second colony came from Nocera and San Gregorio in the Calabria. Lee notes that “[b]y 1900, Italians from Calabria lived on Ferry St and filled in the many side streets” (2008, 11). In 1890, Italians in this area established Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Church. Fewer photos of the enclave during the turn of the century are available in the archives and other sources, but the neighborhood still exists although now it is known as a Portuguese enclave.

4.3.3. Fourteenth Avenue

A third colony was located in the South Orange Avenue and 14th Avenue section of the city. While it was a fairly small colony—only a six block square area (Bolen 1986, 112)—by 1899 there were sufficient numbers of inhabitants to establish their own Catholic church, St. Rocco’s, as the other two colonies had done in the early 1890s. This Little Italy can be found near the largest concentration of German immigrants on the map in Figure 4.7. According to Lee, the population was mainly Sicilian, and some 14th Avenue Italian residents had originally lived in the First Ward (2008, 7,11). Much less

information about this enclave has been recorded; while the other two have had dissertations or books written about them, this colony has not been studied, perhaps because it was smaller and the inhabitants came from other colonies where they settled first.

The Italian immigrants who settled in Newark lived primarily in the three ethnic enclaves described above. Through chain migration they built communities within these enclaves that included their fellow *paesanos* from familiar villages and regions back home. These immigrants adapted the streets of Newark to their familiar ritual celebrations of saints and shopped in stores that offered familiar products from Italy. These are the enclaves at the center of the information neighborhoods explored in the next chapter and the Newark Free Public Library, examined in the next section, was one of the information nodes available to immigrants.

4.4. Newark Free Public Library

4.4.1. History of the Library: Main Branch

The final component of the background context introduced in this chapter is the Newark Free Public Library. The opening of the library in 1889 marks the starting point of this study. The immediate precursor for the library was the Newark Library Association, which was incorporated in 1846 as a circulating library. While this was framed as a public library, there were fees to either join or use the library, which was not supported by taxpayer dollars. Shareholders could use the library, and non-shareholders paid an annual fee to access the material (Cunningham, 1966). Frank Hill, the first director of the Newark Free Public Library, describes the mechanics of the transition to a taxpayer-supported library in the library's annual report of 1899. The new library

acquired some of the existing book stock from its predecessor, the Newark Library Association, and the use of its former building on West Park Avenue.

As early as 1892, the annual reports reveal that the library quickly outgrew this location, and efforts began to find a suitable property and raise funds for a new building. The cornerstone for the new building at 5 Washington Street was laid in January of 1899, and the building opened to the public with great ceremony, described in the annual reports and local newspapers (Newark Library Scrapbooks) on March 14, 1901. Ezra Shales describes the architecture of the building as “emblematic of the City Beautiful movement, while its basement generators and self-reliant illumination . . . were characteristic of the City Practical” (2010, 2). The outside of the library, when seen as part of the city beautiful movement, aligned with the “function of the library as social stabilizer” (Garrison 2003, 36). If the city planners wanted to establish moral order through the cityscapes they created, the library also wanted to create order through their collections, which were used, as Garrison notes, to uphold moral and family standards from the outset (2003, 35).

The library was well patronized; in the second annual report Hill notes a per capita use of 1 3/4 volumes for every resident in Newark, a rate of use (according to Hill writing in the annual report) better than Paterson, Baltimore, Buffalo, Milwaukee, or Detroit. Frank Hill served as the director of the library from 1889 to 1901, leaving soon after the library moved to its new location. During his time as director, he instituted some progressive library policies. For example, Newark was one of the earliest libraries to adopt open shelving (in 1892) for almost all of the books in the library, with only the closed fiction shelves being an exception to this policy (NFPL Annual Report 1892). In

1895, the library adopted the Brookline system for library cards, which allowed patrons to take two books out at a time, as long as only one book was fiction (NFPL Annual Report 1895). The Newark Free Public Library was willing to experiment with the adoption of policies such as open shelving and new library card systems before they had been generally adopted by most public libraries.

Innovation continued with the appointment of the next director of the library. John Cotton Dana was hired in 1902; he remained director until 1929. Dana was a prolific writer who founded both the Special Library Association and the Newark Museum during his tenure as director of the library. According to a pamphlet published by the Newark Public Library, Dana believed that “[i]f the public includes immigrants who don’t speak English, then collections of books in their native languages should be formed” (*A John Cotton Dana Library*, 2006, 5). The fact that Dana’s support of immigrants reading in their own languages was not a universal attitude among librarians is another factor in the choice of the Newark Free Public Library for this research. The issue of librarians’ attitudes toward this subject is explored further in Chapter 7.

According to Garrison, Dana “was a catalyst for new ideas in the library world” and a maverick, supporting many types of reading. Although Garrison concedes that “in his last years Dana shifted from his earlier support of novel reading” ([1979] 2003, 94) to a more conservative approach to fiction by his last years as director. He became concerned with the quality of fiction in the library, and he wanted to spend less money on buying new fiction and more on what he considered useful literature, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

4.4.2. History of Branches, Deposit Stations, and Traveling Libraries

The Newark Free Public Library reached more patrons every year from 1892 through 1918 through new branches, delivery stations, deposit stations, and traveling libraries. According to an article in the *Newark Call* (October 13, 1905), delivery stations facilitated the distribution of books that patrons had requested from the Main Library; books could be picked up at and returned to the delivery station. In contrast, deposit stations had collections of 100 to 250 books, a collection that was refreshed monthly. The advantage of this system, according to the article, was that patrons could browse rather than request books from lists. Books could still be requested from the Main Library and delivered to the station, and returns could be made at a deposit stations also. Both were usually placed in retail stores. The Annual Reports reveal that in 1891, the first delivery stations were opened in order to make it easier for patrons to get their books although this first experiment was brief; all of the stations were closed five months later. The Annual Report of 1894 announced the reestablishment of six delivery stations; another was added the following year. The first Newark Free Public Library branch opened was a branch in the High School, and other branches and deposit stations were added, including a Foreign Branch (see map in Figure 4.6) and a Business Branch near the central business district. The locations of these branches and deposit stations in relation to the Italian enclaves are explored in Chapter 5.

From the beginning, the library sought a good relationship with the public schools. The staff invited teachers in for tours of the library and taught both teachers and Normal Schools' students (studying to be teachers) how to use the library. Teachers were accorded the privilege of checking out six books at a time. Once the new library was built

and a Children's Room opened in 1901, public school classes were invited to visit the library. In order to get books in the hands of more children, the staff developed traveling libraries. These were boxes of 40–50 books that were sent to classrooms on a rotating basis. This program began in 1899 with six libraries and a total of 120 books; there was a continuous demand for more of these traveling libraries, and in 1919, a total of 15,380 books were sent to classrooms. Special collections of art and poetry were developed, and in 1916, the library reported lending 84,500 pictures per year and 9000 poems for classrooms. Through their cooperation with the schools, the library also came into contact with the children of immigrants.

The number of books in the library and its circulation figures both increased steadily, as recorded in the annual reports from 1889 to 1918. Moreover the library offered space for exhibitions and programs, and a museum was established on the top floor of the new library building. A short paragraph in the 1918 Annual Report reports a major change to the library system. The statement, signed by Dana, informed readers that,

A year ago it was found that rise in salaries and in cost of materials and growth in demand for books and service from the library made it impossible to keep up the branches with the mandatory increase—the product of a levy of a third of a mill on the city's valuation. The Trustees asked the City Commissioners to increase their income by \$30,000 to keep open branches and hold the library up to a standard in books and service proper to our city. The City Council found it impossible to grant the request, and all the branches were closed, except that for businesses in the center of the city and two quite inexpensive ones in two schools, Lafayette and Cleveland. (1918 NFPL AR, 3–4)

The business branch was the only significant branch to be kept open although there was no discussion of how this decision was made. At the end of the period studied in this dissertation, the Newark Free Public Library system was experiencing a major

contraction of services offered through its branches, except for the one branch dedicated to the needs of the businesses of Newark.

Newark Free Public Library's directors reached out to readers through branches, school libraries, deposit stations, and even publications, and its second director, John Cotton Dana, had a significant role in the national discourse of professional librarianship.²⁵ Newark's public library constitutes an interesting institution for the study of immigrants' use of urban libraries.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter provided a historical context for the study of the history of immigrants and public libraries in Newark with an overview of the city in the late 1800s and early 1900s, an exploration of Italian emigration and the establishment of Italian enclaves in Newark during the same period, and ending with a brief history of the Newark Free Public Library system from its establishment as a free library in 1889 to 1919. Newark's industrialization, participation in the "city beautiful" movement, and its expanding immigrant population reflected national trends; the city exemplified a modern manufacturing city accommodating waves of European immigration during the Progressive Era. In the words of John Cotton Dana, a contemporary of this development, "Newark is perhaps the most typical of American cities. It is rich, it grows rapidly, it has many and varied industries, its people are of many nationalities, it is fairly well governed, it becomes moderately self-conscious and is passably proud of itself" (NFPL AR 1919, 8). The city provides a model background for this case study of the role of an urban library in the lives of Italian immigrants.

²⁵ Dana wrote about issues concerning libraries for most of his career, beginning when he was the library director of the Denver Public library in 1890 and continuing until his death in 1929.

In the next chapter, the concept of an Information Neighborhood is developed to more closely examine the information ecologies of Italian immigrants in the enclaves that they established in Newark. It also identifies the information resources that were available to Italian immigrants living in Newark and how immigrants might have accessed them as part of a network of sources that included the Newark Free Public Library.

CHAPTER 5: RECONSTRUCTING THE ITALIAN INFORMATION NEIGHBORHOOD IN NEWARK

As noted in Chapter 2, the Information Neighborhood is a structure that integrates the social, spatial, and institutional spheres within which immigrants' literacies and information use were situated. This chapter will address the information ecology of Newark's Italian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century within the context of the conceptualization of an Information Neighborhood (RQ1). The theoretical structure and model of Information Neighborhoods outlined in Chapter 2 serve as starting points to present the actual information nodes and transmission methods and media in this chapter.

The communication map of Italian immigrants' information neighborhood shown in Figure 2.2 categorizes information resources in the neighborhood into three types of information nodes or places/spaces in which the acquisition and exchange of information took place, including: 1) information grounds; 2) information networks, systems, and communities; and 3) formal institutions. Immigrants used various media and modes for transmission of information within the Information Neighborhood, including print, oral, and hybrid communication modes using multiple types of literacy and media competencies. Next, each of the information nodes and transmission modes and media are examined in turn. This provides a context for situating the library within the broader context of immigrants' information ecology in Newark at the turn of the twentieth century. This strategy creates the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive view of the interactions of libraries and immigrants from the immigrants' perspective, situated within immigrants' information ecologies.

5.1. Information Nodes

As shown in Figure 2.2, the information nodes of the communications circuit within information neighborhoods include both physical places and socially constructed spaces where information acquisition and exchange occurs. These nodes are categorized into three groups in the communications circuit developed in Chapter 2: information grounds, information networks, systems and communities, and formal institutions, all of which are found within the trajectories and practices of immigrants' everyday habitation of cities and neighborhoods. The nodes categorized as information grounds include the streets, religious institutions (churches), saloons, stores, and other institutions. The category of information networks, systems, and communities includes three nodes: friends/family networks, labor agents (padrones), and the immigrant/ethnic press. The final group considered in this chapter is formal institutions, which includes two nodes: bookstores and news agents and libraries.

5.1.1. Information Grounds

The primary purpose of an information ground, according to Karen Fisher (2005), may be to support socializing, shopping, meetings, religious observance, or a number of other practices of everyday life. Within this node in an information neighborhood, information exchanges can occur as an incidental event concurrent with the use of the physical location. The three nodes that are identified in Chapter 2 as information grounds are examined in turn here, beginning with the streets of the enclaves in Newark at the turn of the twentieth century.

5.1.1.1. Streets

In her book *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change among Italian Immigrants, 1880–1930*, Donna Gabaccia describes the social space of the *piazza* or central square in towns in Sicily where people met during their daily routines in the late nineteenth century. She relates an anecdote in which the son of a shoemaker walks his sister to school, and on his way back could “stop at the local piazza, talk there with men gathered about, carry a message from an artisan or *civile* man to his father, or watch for the arrival of the post coach, with its newspapers from Palermo” (1984, 39). Jacob Riis reports a similar phenomenon in the streets of the Italian sections of New York City in the late 1800s. Writing in 1890, he noted, “when the sun shines the entire population seeks the street, carrying on its household work, its bargaining, its love-making on street and sidewalk, or idling there when it has nothing better to do” (quoted in Pozzetta 1981, 24). William Foote Whyte identifies a similar pattern in *Street Corner Society*, as gangs of kids met on street corners and used the streets as playgrounds (1993). As de Certeau suggests, the streets were appropriated for use by the inhabitants, and became a privatized public space, used differently by each person, but collectively as an incidental gathering place.

Michael Immerso reports in his book *Newark’s Little Italy* that in the city, “every front stoop served as the village piazza” (1997, 45). In her dissertation, Linda Jacewich thus records the memories of a student who was in grammar school in Newark from 1905–1913: “I remember everyone sitting on the steps of their apartment buildings and talking outside—especially in the summer. It was cooler outside” (1993, 137). Further,

the streets in Newark were the location for religious feasts and processions that reproduced those celebrations once held in the villages and towns in Italy. Immerso reports a procession through the First Ward neighborhood as early as 1888 for Our Lady of Snows (1997, 81) and includes a photo of a procession down Sheffield Street around 1890 for the Feast of Saint Sabino (1997, 84). His book also contains photos of processions and feasts that were held in the streets of Newark even into the 1960s (1997, 153).

The habit of using the public squares in Italian towns and villages as social places in which the life of a neighborhood was enacted was brought to America, and the public streets were appropriated by Italian immigrants as extensions of their living spaces, much as *piazze* had been used in Italy. Within this daily social appropriation of the streets, opportunities for information exchange emerged. It was a physical location for social interaction where conversations were held, gossip exchanged, and stories told, all modes and methods for transmitting information.

5.1.1.2. Religious institutions

In an unpublished memoir archived at the Immigration History Research Center, an Italian immigrant, Salvatore Castagnola, describes the Catholic Church in his Italian American community at the beginning of the twentieth century. “Father Vogel was not only the spiritual advisor,” he relates, “but the general information bureau for the community. The church became the civic center, the charitable mother, and the ‘*abriga faccende*’ or clearing house for all sorts of trouble” (Unpublished autobiography, IHRC, 89). Churches were familiar institutions, and this familiarity facilitated their use as information grounds.

The importance of a church located within the neighborhood is demonstrated in Newark by the fact that Roman Catholic Churches were established in each enclave as the colony became large enough to support its own parish. In Newark, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was established in 1890 in the Ironbound section, St. Lucy's was established in the First Ward in 1891, and St. Rocco's was established in the 14th Avenue enclave in 1899.

The importance of location is also demonstrated by the Presbyterian Church in Newark, which established an Italian mission with an Italian pastor. The membership list in the 1911 for the church records 126 Italian members belonging to the smaller chapel, while only four belonged to the larger church, located further from the homes of the listed Italian parishioners (Manual of the First Presbyterian Church 1911). Patricia Flock noted that most members lived within six blocks of the chapel and "[c]hurch services there attracted participation primarily because it was the sole Italian language chapel of any denomination in the immediate area and only secondarily because of the faith of the church" (1976, 85).

Italian immigrants in Newark sought out or established churches within their neighborhoods that provided services that were linguistically and culturally familiar. These same qualities facilitated the role of churches as information grounds, as places where people gathered for other purposes, but where information could be exchanged with fellow parishioners when they came together for services, or to organize the many feasts and processions held in the enclaves of Newark.

5.1.1.3. Stores, saloons, and other institutions

The shops established by Italians in the neighborhoods in Newark provided similar opportunities for information acquisition. Shopping was the primary activity in stores, but the interaction between customer and proprietor in local shops provided an opportunity for information exchange. In her dissertation, *Visible Invisibility: Literacy Practices of Non-English-Speaking European-American Immigrant Women*, Anca-Luminata Iancu describes how Marie Jastrow, writing about her own immigrant mother, observes, “the grocery store was the first place where her mother got much necessary information (for example where to look for a better apartment)” (quoted in Anca-Luminata Iancu 2009, 142).

The shops established by Italians in the neighborhoods in Newark provided similar opportunities for information acquisition. Immerso’s book contains photos of many types of shops including, for example, a butcher shop run by Frank Biondi and his family. His daughter is shown working behind the counter and his wife is in the shop also (1997, 18), along with an unnamed customer. The Italian paper *La Frusta* in 1903 and 1904 contains ads for macaroni shops, wine stores, and stores that sold olive oil with Italian proprietors located in the First Ward. These shops had the location and familiarity to create the circumstances for them to act as information grounds.

In his study of the Italian West End neighborhoods of Boston, Herbert Gans describes the function of bars and luncheonettes as “centers for the exchange of news and gossip,” which “played an important communication function in the area” (1982, 118–119). Price (1912) reports that 114 of 122 saloons in the Ironbound district of Newark had “tables and chairs for social purposes” that men find “a convenient meeting place,

work and wages are discussed, [and that] political arguments are frequent and [that] recent immigrants discover it an admirable school in which to learn English rapidly and gain an acquaintance with things American” (9–10). The saloons, which Price reports were predominantly patronized by single ethnic groups, do not seem to be likely places for learning English, as groups of immigrants socializing during limited leisure time probably would not have practiced their English.

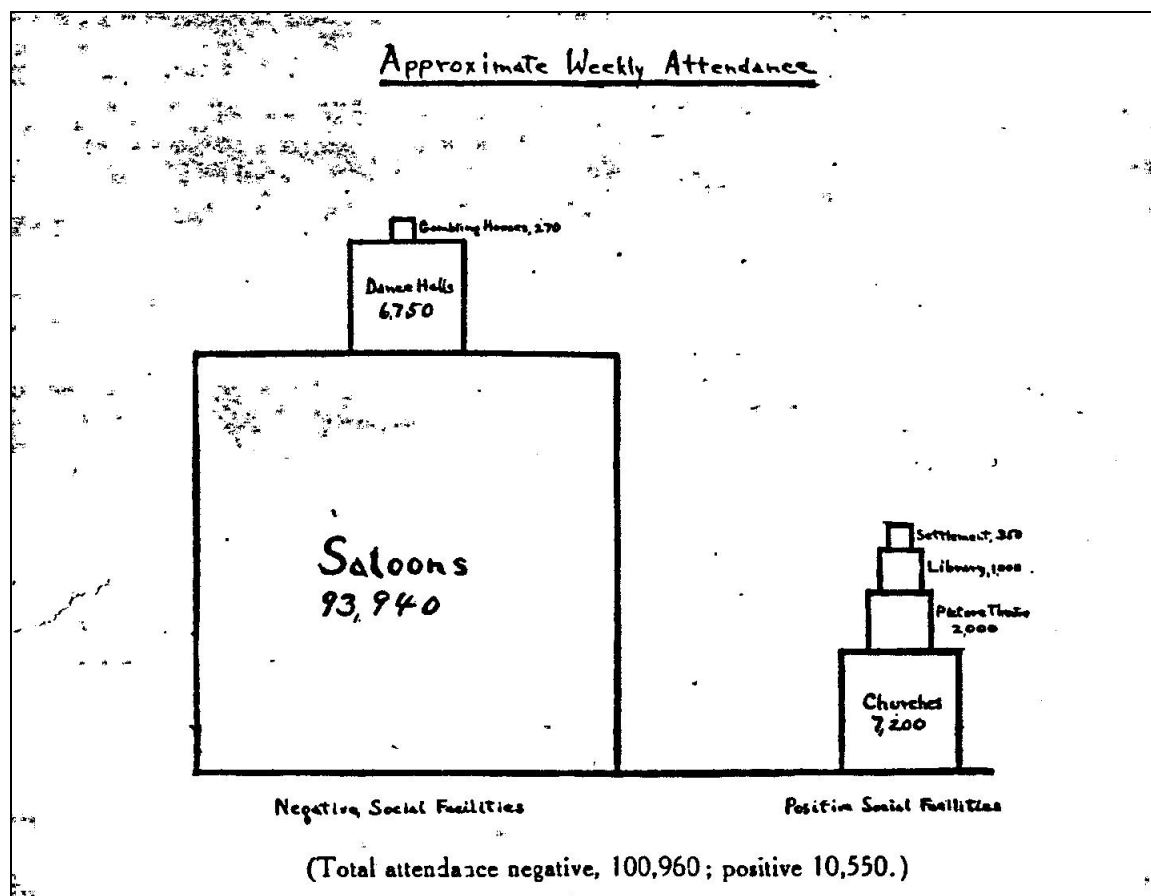


Figure 5.1: Diagram Created by Willard Price.

He graphs the approximate weekly attendance at what he categorized as negative and positive social facilities in the Ironbound Section circa 1912. The statistics were based on counts reported by the facilities themselves. (Source: Price 1912, 8)

In 1912, social worker Willard D. Price produced a report for the Neighborhood House, a settlement house in the Ironbound district that provides several examples of

information nodes within the district. He surveyed social establishments in the district to determine how often immigrants went to different local facilities and developed the graph reproduced in Figure 5.1, divided into visits to what he categorized as facilities that hosted either socially positive or negative activities, based on his estimation of the moral character of the activities that took place there. Positive venues included churches, picture theaters, the library, and the Neighborhood House. Negative social facilities, according to Price, included saloons, dance halls, and gambling houses. However the information obtained within these nodes is independent of the moral dimension imposed by Price, and even he sees saloons fulfilling an important social function for immigrants. All of these locations that Price identifies as social facilities can also be seen as information nodes, and all except the library can be categorized as information grounds.

In Price's graph (reproduced as Figure 5.1), saloons are considered negative influences, as are dance halls and gambling houses. Nevertheless, Price does admit that they could "fill a real and vital social need" as "men, after eating a hasty supper in a dirty, crowded home or boardinghouse, quite naturally leave such unattractive surroundings to spend the evening" (1912, 9) with friends in the saloon. Positive social influences, such as churches, movie theaters, the library, and the settlement house (the Neighborhood House, publisher of the study), as shown in the reproduction of Price's diagram in 5.1, had only about 1/10 the attendance of the negative facilities.

The section of the Ironbound district Price focused on in his report had more Irish and Polish inhabitants than Italian, and only 6 percent, or seven of these saloons are Italian. But there is other evidence of Italian saloons in Newark. According to Immerso, Alfonso Ilaria's saloon at 31 Boyden St became the focal point of the First Ward colony

in Newark. “His saloon, known as the Bee Hive was a haven for Italians and *a source of news*” (1997, 6; italics added). Teacher Grace Irwin, in an article in *Harper’s* on her experience in an Italian school in Newark in the late teens, mentions passing the open doors of a saloon in the Italian section on her way to the school and observing the men inside during the day (1921).

In addition to shops and saloons, other institutions or places existed where people came together. These included the social and political organizations that Price noted sometimes met at saloons and Italian societies that developed fairly soon after immigrants settled in Newark. In 1891, Columbia Hall was listed in the city directories as a headquarters for some of these societies. In 1892, Immerso reports thirty-two Italian societies in Newark helped celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of America. After marching down Broad Street in Newark, they dedicated a plaque to Columbus at City Hall (1997, 7).

In the City Directory of 1895, eleven Italian Mutual Benefit Societies were listed, including two that had addresses at Caposelesi Hall on Seventh Avenue. Six had the address of 27 Market, which in 1890 had been listed as both a home and saloon. In addition to these societies, there were fraternal organizations. Immerso’s book has a picture of the members of the Columbian Guards Committee for planning their annual ball in the First Ward. Several Sons of Italy chapters were established in Newark. Italian religious societies were also plentiful in Newark as were mutual benefit societies (fifty-five of them existed in 1904 according to an article in the Italian newspaper *La Frusta*) that provided opportunities for the exchange of information.

The workplace was another institution that acted as an information ground. Some workplaces were physically located within the enclave, for example, the shops, saloons, and other businesses run by families, and factories near immigrants' homes. The map reproduced in Chapter 4 reveals the density of factory locations within the Ironbound district but fewer factories existed in the other two enclaves. As noted in Chapter 4, Italians in Newark worked on construction and public works projects, which would have taken them out of the enclaves, so some of these workplaces might not have been located within the enclave but were within their everyday trajectories. The places described here are some of the many different shops, saloons, halls, meeting places, workplaces, and other institutions that were information grounds within the Italian neighborhoods.

5.1.2. Information Systems, Networks, and Communities

The second type of information node is distinct from the other two nodes in that it is not located in a precise physical location such as a building or street, but it is an intertwined series of relationships formed by a network, system, or imagined community through which information is exchanged. Three of them are considered here—the network formed by family and friends, the system of labor agents/*padrones*, and the imagined community of the ethnic/immigrant press. These are spaces where information is shared through a system, network, or imagined community.

5.1.2.1. Friends/Family networks

Family, friends, and *paesanos* (fellow countrymen or villagers) were part of a network that existed in the information neighborhood but also extended back to the home country. Often, it was through these networks that immigrants heard of the opportunities in the Americas, and the networks continued to operate once immigrants were established

in their new homes. A pioneer immigrant such as Angelo Mattia did not have a network of family and friends in Newark when he first came to this country although he did have connections in New York, as he had settled there first (Mattia, 1985). Mattia's wife joined him in Newark in 1874, and her brother, Alfonso Ilaria, also came to Newark at the same time (Zanfini and Immerso 1997 vol. 1). In turn, Ilaria became a source of information for later settlers, helping them to find jobs and lodging. Gerardo Spatola, who according to Lee (2008) and Immerso (1997) was another early Italian settler in the First Ward, also assisted later waves of immigrants. Michael Immerso reports that some newcomers arrived with only a piece of paper that had Spatola's name written on it (Zanfini and Immerso 1997). The name on the paper was that immigrant's keyword that allowed him to access information stored in Spatola's database of connections and experiences, which would provide access to jobs and places to stay.

This was a natural extension of the development of neighborhoods created by chain migration. Those from the same towns and regions settled in particular sections of Newark. Existing networks were transported from these villages and worked as sub networks within the larger neighborhoods, connecting family and friends and providing a space where information could be acquired from familiar people, or at least from those whom others had vouched for in the network.

5.1.2.2. Labor agents (padrones)

This section explores the system of padrones (*padroni*) or labor agents that existed in various forms during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They are not information grounds, because they were not situated in a physical location, and their role was to distribute information about employment. In Sicily, a padrone was someone who

owned something, or worked independently, or someone “who controlled the work of or ‘owned’ the social loyalties of another person” (Gabaccia 1984, 5, 7). The word “boss” is not an accurate translation, notes Gabaccia, because it carries the implication of employment, which was usually not the relationship between padrone and immigrant in America. Padrones were individuals who operated as a point of contact between immigrants, particularly those who did not speak English, and employers.

There are several reports of padrones operating in the neighborhoods in Newark. An article in the *Newark Star Ledger* from 1935 describes the padrone system in Newark, which by the 1870s, according to the paper, was already important in bringing Italians to the city. The paper reports that padrones were paid “three dollars per man for getting him (a) job and one dollar a month per man for as long as he remained on the job” (quoted in Bolen 1986, 86). According to Immerso (1997), Alfonso Ilaria, whose saloon, the Bee Hive was an important place for getting news, also acted as a labor agent, and housed workers in a boarding house he co-owned with a German woman (6). Another example comes from an interview conducted in the late 1930s for the Federal Writers’ Project’s New Jersey Ethnic Survey (Cohen 1990, 63–69). An unnamed Italian immigrant who had been born in Italy in 1872 and immigrated to America in 1887 recalled his role as a padrone and banker for Italians in his Newark community. He described how he learned English more quickly than his *paisani* or fellow countrymen and was able to secure employment for them. He lent money, provided lodgings for newcomers, and served as a banker.

The padrone was not always part of the social network of friends and family but came from within the Italian community and therefore was perceived as more trusted

than outsiders. However, not all information obtained in the neighborhood from such “trusted” sources was reliable, even if it came from a fellow Italian, whose word, contemporary writer Sartorio notes, “carries more weight with his fellow-countrymen than that of ten Americans put together” (1918, 43). However, there were reports of padrones in Newark who exploited the system and the trust placed in them by fellow Italians. On September 7, 1907, *The New York Times* reported a complaint lodged by a nineteen-year-old Italian bootblack in Newark, who charged that the padrone had kept him and sixteen others as virtual slaves who had to work eighteen hours a day with no pay. This bootblack also charged that the padrone starved and beat him, and he was not allowed to go out except to work (18). In his *Recollections*, Peter Mattia describes an incident in which he acted as a translator when a padrone was arrested. The man who was arrested was part of a “band of brigands from Italy and Australia,” and the incident leaves Mattia distrustful of padrones who preyed on “fellow countrymen” who were “unsuspecting of any wrong” (1985, 34). Not all of the information obtained through this information node could be counted on to be reliable.

5.1.2.3. Immigrant/Ethnic press

The immigrant/ethnic press, which consisted of Italian newspapers published within the enclave, created a sense of community among the readers. This was an imagined community, one where no personal contact was required for information to be shared. The papers were constructed spaces that connected readers with Italy and with other Italian immigrant communities. The press is unique among the nodes in the communication circuit in filling the dual roles of node and medium of transmission.

George Pozzetta notes that immigrants “found solace in journals using a familiar language and stressing news of the land so recently departed” (1973, 41). The Italian press, according to Charles Jaret, “was more attuned to the old country and less likely to present its readers with events and symbols referring to the non-Italian world” while coverage of American stories was limited to those events that had some direct relation to the Italian community (1991, 53). The Italian immigrant press created the space for the transmission of information through a familiar language and news about Italy and about events in their own lives that could not be found in the American press. *La Frusta*, a local Italian paper in Newark, printed obituaries of local Italians, discussed regulations about fireworks, printed notices for society meetings, and had ads for local businesses in Italian, providing a space for this information to be transmitted to the community. Thus, their lives were reflected back to them in the press.

Pozzetta said immigrant newspapers “were important mediating agencies between the immigrant culture and that of the host country” (1973, 41–42). Oscar Handlin agrees, saying the papers were the “instruments through which the immigrants learned to interpret the issues and events of the larger American society within which they were situated” (2002, 161). These papers presented and interpreted American culture from an Italian perspective, at the same time providing information that immigrants needed to adapt to their new environments and other stories that would help them contend with rules and regulations in the city. For example, one notice in *La Frusta* reports that the rules limiting fireworks during religious feasts in the nearby city of Orange were as the title claimed “*Peggio Che A Newark!*” (“Worse Than in Newark!”) and recounted the efforts being made to appeal these regulations. The regulations against fireworks

represented a cultural shift from Italian customs, and this article both informed readers of the regulations and demonstrated that there were options available to attempt to overturn the rules. It also let readers know that things were worse in Orange than in Newark, which evidently had different fireworks regulations.

According to Handlin, every immigrant group “found a medium in a press of its own, edited to satisfy its own needs, and published in its own language” (2002, 160). Some, like *L'Eco d'Italia* and *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, were national ethnic papers. By 1900, *Il Progresso* had the largest circulation, both in New York City and nationwide, of any Italian newspaper (Pozzetta 1973, 34). But there were also many papers that were locally produced and distributed in many cities.

Newark had fourteen weekly Italian newspapers published for varying durations between 1893 (first known paper) and 1921 (end of the period covered in the dissertation). By 1890, according to census reports, there were almost 3,000 Italians living in Newark, and this appears to have been the critical mass necessary for establishing a weekly newspaper that circulated within Newark. Most of the established papers began to disappear by the end of the 1910s, indicating that the demand for newspapers produced in Newark had peaked. Table 5.1 consolidates information from several sources, primarily from the *Directory of New Jersey Newspapers, 1765–1970*, supplemented with information from the *Manual of the Legislature of New Jersey* as well as a few other sources that mentioned Italian newspapers, to produce an overview of the Italian language papers published in Newark. All of the papers in the table are weekly papers; there does not seem to have been a daily Italian paper produced in Newark at the turn of the twentieth century.

The earliest Italian newspaper published in Newark was called *Monitore Catolico*, a weekly paper that was published for about a year (1893). Several other papers had short runs including *Luce Evangelica*, a religious paper and only published in 1896. One religious paper that lasted longer, *Verita and Mount Carmel Bulletin*, moved from nearby Orange, where it had been published since 1903, and was published in Newark from about 1916 to 1919.

Some of the Italian papers had political orientations. The one paper identified as Democratic, *L'osservatore*, was a short-lived publication (only two years), as were the two Socialist papers, *Avanti!* (two years) and *Il Tribuno* (six years). The two Republican papers—*La Montagna* (twenty-seven years) and *L'Ora* (eighteen years)—were two of the longest running papers in Newark, evidently reflecting a stable readership and favorable circumstances for their production. *L'Ora* began publication in 1902 as *Corriere di Jersey City*, and Urquhart (1916) reports it had a weekly circulation of 1,500 copies in 1916. Two unaffiliated papers were also published for many years. *La Frusta* was published for eighteen years, and *La Rivista/The Review*, an Italian/English paper was produced for seventeen years.

From 1895 to 1903, there were three Italian papers produced in Newark, and from 1904 to 1920 there were either four or five papers being published each year. Six Italian papers were published in Newark in the years 1913, 1916 and 1917. Unfortunately, of all of these, only copies of a few years of *La Frusta* (1903–1904) have been collected in Newark archives. Nothing was found in the catalogs of the state library or in the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota. Those who might have saved issues of the various publications locally appear to have chosen not to collect

papers representing this part of Italian immigrants' print culture, allowing institutional memories to disappear.

Table 5.1: Italian Weekly Newspapers Published in Newark, NJ 1893–1920.²⁶

Titles	Dates of Publication	No. of Yrs. Issued	Orientation/ Focus	Owner/ Publisher
<i>Monitore Cattolico</i>	1893	1	Religious	Unknown
<i>Patria</i>	1894–1900?	7	Unknown	Unknown
<i>La Montagna</i>	1894–1920?	26	Commercial/ Republican	F. A. Fiore
<i>Luce Evangelica</i>	1896?	1	Religious	Unknown
<i>Secolo Nuovo</i>	1897–1899?	3	Unknown	Unknown
<i>La Frusta</i>	1899–1917	18	Commercial	Pasquale Matulla
<i>Lasservatore</i>	1901–1902	2	Democratic	John Ponzini & Co
<i>L'Ora</i>	1903–1920?	18	Commercial/ Republican	Pasquale Matullo
<i>Avanti!</i>	1904–1905	2	Socialist	Unknown
<i>La Rivista</i>	1905–1921	17	Italian/ English	Richard Mattia
<i>Il Tribuno</i>	1908–1913?	6	Anticlerical/S ocialist	Unknown
<i>Corriere del New Jersey</i>	1913–1917?	5	Italian/ English	Unknown
<i>Verita & Mt. Carmel Bulletin</i>	?1916?–1919?	4	Religious	Unknown
<i>Tribuna Del New Jersey</i>	1916–1920?	5	Commercial	Olindo Marzulli, editor

Note: Question marks indicate probable start or end dates for the publication. All of the papers listed here were weekly papers produced in Newark.

²⁶ This table is based primarily on information in the *Directory of New Jersey Newspapers, 1765–1970*. Additional information was obtained from the yearly *Manual of the Legislature of New Jersey*, lists of periodicals owned by the IHRC, the city directories of Newark, and the masthead of *La Frusta*. The directory listed some dates with question marks when they were not able to verify beginning or end dates based on their research, and this convention is followed in Table 5.1.

The names of most of the editors or owners of most of the papers are unknown, and no information was found on F. A. Fiore (*La Montagna*), John Ponzini & Co. (*Lasservatore*), or Olindo Marzulli (*Tribuna del New Jersey*). Research revealed information on two other proprietors—Pasquale Matullo and Richard Mattia. Pasquale Matullo, an Italian immigrant who went to technical school in Italy and worked as a printer for several years in America, published *La Frusta* and *L'Ora* (Urquhart, 1913, 3:297). Urquhart describes Matullo's equipment as modern and of "the most approved models" (1913, 3:297) of printing machines. In the undated photo in Appendix B (Zanfini and Immerso Collection), Pasquale's sons pose with their printing equipment in the First Ward.

Richard Mattia was the editor and publisher of *La Rivista (The Review)*, which was issued in both English and Italian. Richard Mattia is Peter Mattia's brother (author of *The Recollections of Peter Mattia*). Peter does not mention his brother's paper in his recollections, but Urquhart (1916) says Mattia worked as a photographer and later established the paper, acting as both publisher and editor. The paper contained articles in both Italian and English, and according to Urquhart it was "devoted to the interests of young Italians" (1913, 3: 321).

Both of these publishers ran Italian newspapers created and distributed within the Italian neighborhoods in Newark, creating social information spaces for Italian immigrants living in Newark. The nature of that information space was focused on information about Italy, their own neighborhoods and neighbors, written in a familiar language by fellow Italians. These papers acted as information nodes within Italian Information Neighborhoods.

5.1.3. Formal Institutions

Libraries and bookstores/news agents are both classified as formal nodes because their primary purpose was to provide access to various kinds of print material such as books, periodicals and newspapers, pamphlets, and texts which involved a physical location. Both the materiality of the node as a location in a geographical place and the primacy of their purpose as information providers through access to text define their categorization as formal institutional nodes within the scheme of an Information Neighborhood.

5.1.3.1. *Bookstores/News Agents*

Bookstores and news agents provided access to Italian books and journals that reflected popular reading trends in Italy. The evidence for the existence of Italian news agents and bookstores in Newark, particularly those offering Italian material is limited. The only direct evidence for the sale of books and journals in Newark came from advertisements in *La Frusta*. An examination of the Newark's city directories for 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, and 1920 did not uncover any instances of bookstores or news agents selling Italian print material, as determined by advertisements within the directory or by classification within the directory.

There is evidence in secondary sources that there were bookstores in nearby New York City. According to Mangione and Morreale in *La Storia* (1993), "there were plenty of bookstalls and bookstores that provided a great variety of reading matter in Italian, ranging from Neapolitan and Sicilian songs and literary classics to cartoons and popular fiction." (136). According to George Pozzetta, "bookstalls and small libraries abounded in the Mulberry district" of New York. The material included "great literature classics . . .

comic sheets and Neapolitan dialect love songs . . . and innumerable tragic or amorous novelettes by Carolina Invernizio and other popular writers” (Pozzetta 1981, 24–25). This indicates types of print material that might have been found in bookstores in Newark.

In Newark, Domenico Orgo advertised in *La Frusta* in 1904 that he sold daily, weekly, monthly, and illustrated papers from Italy, as well as literary, political, scientific, and humoristic journals from Italy. Another ad placed by Orgo announced that he had two new novels.²⁷ Both of the novels offered were translated into Italian from other languages: the first, *La Verga della Sapienza*, was written by Guy Boothby, an Australian-born author writing gothic novels, and the second, *In Fondo al Baratro*, was written by French novelist Georges Ohnet in 1901. Its French title, *Au Fond du Gouffre*, was translated into English as *In Deep Abyss: A Novel* (covers are reproduced in Appendix C). *Il Romanzo Mensile* (*Monthly Novels*) were Italian translations of English and French novels published in Italy in a journal format.

Books published by *Il Romanzo Mensile* in 1903:

- 1 - G. Boothby, *La verga della sapienza*
- 2 - G. Ohnet, *In fondo al baratro*
- 3 - A. Conan Doyle, *Le avventure di Sherlock Holmes* (I)
- 4 - F. von Zobeltitz, *Gula-Itan*
- 5 - C. Laurent, *La spia dell'imperatore*
- 6 - A. du Pradeix, *La foresta d'argento*
- 7 - C. Laurent, *L'imperatore si diverte*
- 8 - A. Conan Doyle, *Le avventure di Sherlock Holmes* (II)
- 9 - H. R. Haggard, *Rondine*

The inclusion of detective novels by A. Conan Doyle and an adventure novel by Rider Haggard, considered along with the gothic novel by Guy Boothby indicates that this publisher chose popular genre fiction to translate and publish, rather than literary novels.

²⁷ “Due romanzi bellissimi sensazionali interessanti, peini di situazioni terribili e belle, che divertono ed istruiscono”

Coincidentally, Antonio Gramsci identified such readings as conservative in a miscellaneous note in his *Prison Notebooks* ([1929–1935] 1966). The note is one of many titled “Father Bresciani’s progeny” and Joseph Buttigieg, in his article “Gramsci’s Method” identifies them as a “group of literary bourgeois intellectuals whose reactionary posturings, ideological confusion, nostalgia for a lost order, and populism made them latter day versions of the repressively orthodox, extremely conservative, Jesuitical Jesuit, popular historical novelist and polemicist, Fr. Antonio Bresciani” (1990, 61). Gramsci notes *Il Romanzo Mensile* is one of a group of publishers who published translated books rather than Italian-produced material and that these books were very popular in Italy. Gramsci mentions that Guy Boothby, one of the authors that Orgo advertises in Newark, has been republished many times (1966). According to an article by William Q. Boelhower (1981), Gramsci was championing a national-popular culture that would feature the lives of the Italian lower classes in literature. These translated books, while popular, did not address the experiences of Italian peasants and therefore did not conform to Gramsci’s requirements. Gramsci, while not criticizing the books because of their popularity, would rather have publishers encourage a literature that appealed to popular taste but came out of an Italian tradition of storytelling.

5.1.3.2. Libraries

The final information node to be considered is concerned primarily with providing information, and is, in Alistair Black’s terms (2006), the most formal of the nodes. In some cases there may be multiple libraries in an information neighborhood, as there may be social libraries, or subscription libraries, but in Newark no evidence was found of libraries used by Italian immigrants, other than the Newark Free Public Library.

This node consists of the Main Library of the Newark Free Public Library and its system of branches, delivery stations, deposit stations, and traveling libraries. This system was not static; according to the annual reports of the library, the system expanded and contracted over the years. In September 1891, nine delivery stations were opened, but the 1892 annual report indicates that in January 1892 they were closed due to “insufficient patronage” (NFPL AR 1894, 31). According to the annual reports, they were reopened in November of 1894 due to requests from the public, and the library continued to add facilities in the ensuing years. Delivery stations did not have a collection of books on hand “but were intended only for the collection and delivery of books” (NFPL AR 1891, 17). Delivery stations were gradually replaced with deposit stations, which according to an article in the *Newark Sunday Call* of October 28, 1905 were “a collection of from 200 to 400 books placed in a store or a school from which readers may make selections as at the main library” (NPL Scrapbooks). In May 1905, all of the delivery stations were shut down and replaced by a system of deposit stations (*Newark News* October 13, 1906).

In addition to these, and noted in Chapter 4, a system of traveling libraries was developed. The first of these consisted of boxes of forty to fifty books sent to schools in Newark. This program expanded, with more boxes of books placed in the schools, and others placed in fire stations and department stores, which comprised another element of this institutional information node.

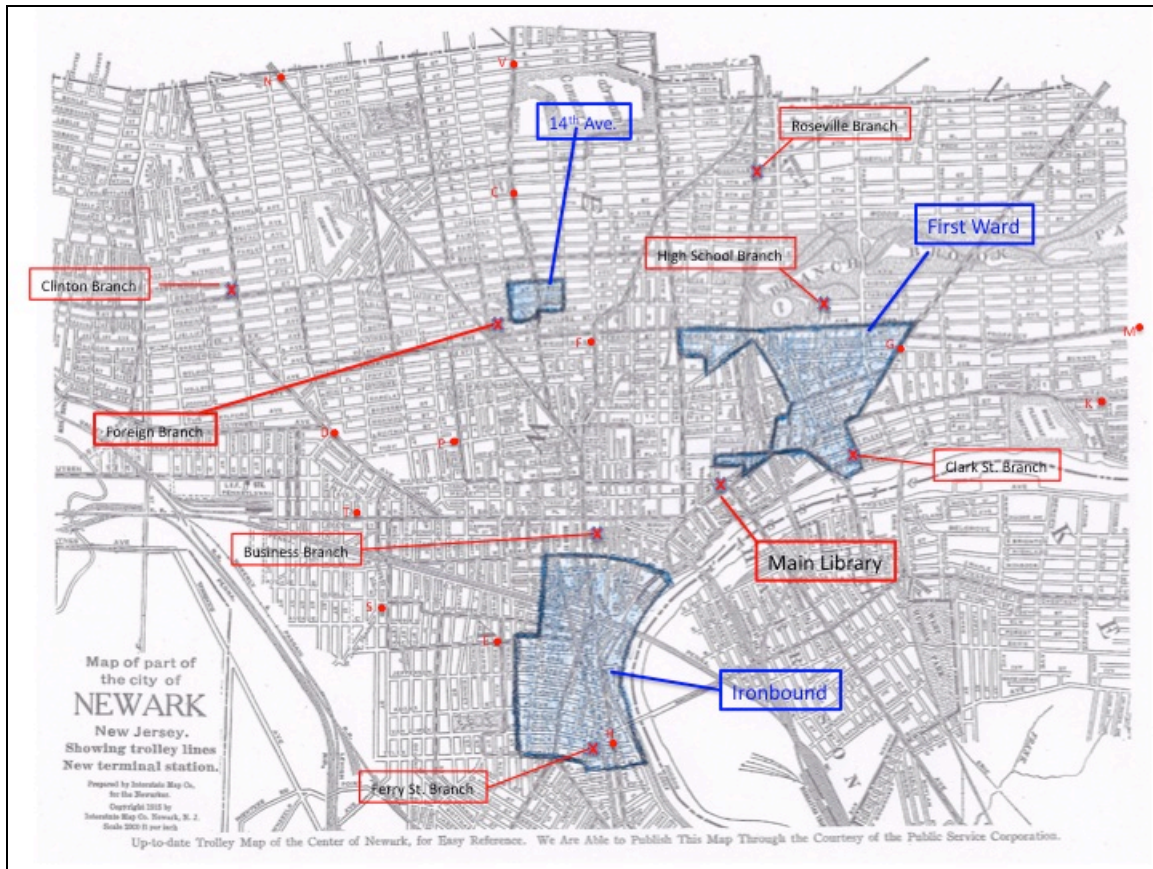


Figure 5.2: Location of Library Branches and Italian Enclaves in 1911.

Figure 5.2 provides a snapshot of institutional space of the library (the physical presence of the library within the city) in 1911. In addition to the enclaves and locations of the Main Library and Foreign Branch shown in Figure 4.6, this map shows the location of all of the branches and deposit stations of the Newark Free Public Library system as of 1911. The three Italian enclaves are indicated by the blue-shaded areas based on the map that was introduced in Chapter 4.²⁸ The main building of the library is shown on the map, as well as the seven library branches (listed in alphabetical order): Business Branch,

²⁸ The locations of the Italian enclaves are based on the 1911 map produced by MacDougall (Figure 3.6) and mapped onto a 1915 trolley map (also published in the *Newarker*). A note on the 1911 map notes the sources of the data for the boundaries of the enclaves as data from Rev. D. W. Lusk, D.D. and a survey for the Newark Presbytery. This map was reproduced in the *Newarker*. The branch locations and deposit station addresses were taken from the same book, a page of which was reproduced in the *Newarker*. A 1908–1909 Sanborn insurance map with street addresses was used to determine the locations of the branches, which were then transferred to this map.

Clark Street Branch, Clinton Branch, Ferry Street Branch, Foreign Branch, High School Branch and Roseville Branch.

_____ The locations of the Deposit Stations listed below are also designated on the map with their corresponding letter (as assigned by the library):

DEPOSIT STATIONS

C—Smith's West End Pharmacy
 D—R.M. Laird
 E—Pacific Pharmacy Co.
 F—A.E. Nuremburg
 G—Galloway & Co.
 H—Newark Social Settlement
 K—Lynes & Fitzgerald
 M—W.H. Warren Co.
 N—D.R. Slitkin
 S—South Street School
 T—Lenrow's Pharmacy
 P—Oheb Shalom Synagogue
 V—W.F. Indergrund

The map in Figure 5.3 reveals two library sites within the Ironbound district, the Ferry Street Branch, and a deposit station in the Newark Social Settlement (H).

According to a 1915 census map reproduced in William Bolen's dissertation (1986, 161), a central section of the Ironbound district had more than 50 percent of residences occupied by Italian families. These two library locations were outside of this section of the neighborhood although still within areas inhabited by Italian immigrants. The Ferry Street location in particular is the key branch in terms of proximity to immigrant enclaves and information neighborhoods.

The Ferry Street Branch is the library that Willard Price included in his survey of social facilities that is reproduced in the diagram in Figure 5.1. Price reports 1,000 visits to the branch per week, based on information from the branch librarian, but unfortunately he does not provide any other information about these visitors so it is impossible to tell

from this how many Italians used the branch. It is also difficult to tell how many Italian language books were at the Ferry Street Branch. The Italian language newspaper *La Frusta* reports the presence of Italian books at the Ferry Street Branch in an article from November 6, 1909 (NFPL Scrapbooks). They may have been moved after this time, as a floor plan of the branch that appeared in the library publication *The Newarker* in its December 1914 issue designates bookcases in the branch for German, Polish, and Lithuanian books but makes no mention of shelves or cases for Italian books (17). It is difficult to determine how much Italian immigrants used this branch.

The First Ward was surrounded by library locations. The Main Library building on Washington Street was several blocks from one boundary of the First Ward while the Clark Street Branch and a deposit station in Galloway & Co (G) were on the edge of the enclave. The High School Branch was located two blocks from another border, near Branch Brook Park. While the boundaries on the maps are indicators of the extent of the enclave, they are not absolute borders although the library locations do appear to be on the periphery of the First Ward.

Although located outside of the First Ward, the Main Library's collection did contain Italian language books at various times. According to a memo in the Staff Notebooks, on November 18, 1907, there were Italian books on the 3rd floor of the Main Library (86). The same source reports that on April 13, 1911, Italian books were housed at the Main Library along with German and French books.

The smallest of the enclaves, 14th Avenue, had one library branch outside of its boundaries. This branch was called the Foreign Branch, and while the branch was not within the enclave, the enclave was within the boundaries of the service area demarcated

by the library for that branch (*The Newarker* December 1913, 424). This area of the city was considered the main foreign district in the city, and the map in Figure 4.6 shows a group of enclaves in the area, including a large German enclave, two Jewish enclaves, and a small colony identified as Slavs.

A memo in the Staff Notebooks dated April 13, 1911, reported Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, Ruthenian, Lithuanian, and Polish books at the Foreign Branch but did not mention Italian books. In a September 1912 article in *The Newarker*, the manager of the Foreign Branch reports that she would like to add Italian books to the branch as they were in demand (179). By August of 1913, in the same paper, another librarian from the Foreign Branch was reporting the presence of Italian books in the branch (354). Books in Italian were not available in this branch until sometime between 1912 and 1913. By February of 1914, according to *The Newarker*, the “collection of Italian books reached the highest percentage of circulation to the number of volumes” (462). The library must have been important enough to some Italian readers for them to seek this information node out even though it was not located within their enclaves.

In addition to the library locations represented in Figure 5.3, traveling libraries were circulating through the schools in Newark (as described in the Annual Reports). In this way, the library entered into the information neighborhoods and could be accessed by the children of immigrants. The Annual Report for 1903 states that “very often a teacher receives a note from a parent asking that she may have, for her own enjoyment, some book which her child has mentioned as being in the class library [traveling library]. In this way we are reaching both old and young.” While it is not explicitly stated that

Italians were among those requesting books, a link between the library and Italian immigrants in the enclaves was possibly forged through the traveling libraries.

In a photograph of the Foreign Branch in a December 1913 article in the *Newark* (see Appendix D), a group of children and adults are lined up in front of the branch, anxious to get into the library. The article mentions that due to the overcrowding of the library, children's access was limited to certain hours. While this article does not identify the children's nationalities, an article about the Main Library in the *Newark Call* on Nov. 17, 1901, "The Children's Room at the Library," describes "Tony, a bright young Italian" who enjoys a "special class of books, very simple in their wording and style, calculated for the youngest readers and for other children not over-familiar with English language" (NFPL Scrapbooks). Another article in the *Newark Sunday Call* dated Jan. 26, 1902, titled "Children and Books" describes the children in the library: "Here are two little Italian girls, the oldest sister bringing the little one under close convoy" (NFPL Clipping Scrapbooks). Even though the Main Library was not within boundaries of the enclaves, based on these anecdotal yet vivid reports, Italian children were using the library.

5.1.4. Summary

Three different types of information nodes were explored in this section of the chapter, along with evidence of their existence in Newark's Italian neighborhoods. Darnton's model of an information society in eighteenth-century France (Figure 2.1) notes Sites and Milieux, and the media for transmission being specific to a particular society, while depending on one another for the completion of a communications circuit (2000). This section identified and described places and spaces in Italian information

neighborhoods where information could be acquired. Next, the methods and media for information transmission are explored.

5.2. Media and Modes of Information Transmission

The information nodes provided the physical locations or social spaces in which information exchange occurred. The other feature of this circuit, the media and modes of information transmission, is explored in this part of the chapter. As shown in Figure 2.2, transmission of information took place through various print and oral media in the spaces and places of the information nodes. Oral transmission of information occurred through gossip, rumor, conversation, reminiscing, storytelling, and songs, while print media included Italian books and newspapers, English books and newspapers, bulletins, pamphlets, advertisements, and manuscript forms such as letters. The two types of transmission are sometimes joined through reading aloud, which combines print and oral modalities.

The focus in the next sections is on the modes that immigrants employed to access the media in print and oral forms. Trends in literacy among Italians and Italian immigrants between 1880 and 1920 are examined as a basis for considering accessibility to print media that provided information. Finally the oral culture of Italian immigrants, including the importance of storytelling within Italian culture and the interpenetration of oral and literate cultures through reading aloud is examined.

5.2.1. Italian Literacy

Italian literacy and illiteracy in both Italy and the U.S. is considered in this section as a context for understanding the use of print sources in Italian neighborhoods.

According to Carlo Cipolla, regional variations in literacy within a country are not

unusual (1969, 15), but the variations in Italian literacy were exacerbated by the political unification of Italy in 1870 and the inequities in economic conditions between northern and southern Italians. The differences are apparent in the literacy statistics collected in Italy and in the U.S. discussed in this section.

Antonio Stella reports that overall illiteracy in Italy was at 68.8 percent in 1872 but dropped to 48.5 percent by 1901 and 37.6 percent by 1911, noting that further reduction in illiteracy depended on providing education to children and the “disappearance of older people” who were not provided with educational opportunities (1924, 53). Francis Clark, writing about Italy in 1919, reported different numbers, noting a drop of illiteracy in Italy since 1900—from 67 percent down to 56 percent. According to Clark, the improvement would have been better “if not for the handicap of the backward south, especially Calabria and Sicily” because “in the northern and progressive province of Piedmont” the rate of illiteracy was at only 12 or 14 percent (161). He blames the poor literacy rates on the condition of schools, particularly in the South. Cipolla reports that in Italy in 1881, 56 percent of the urban population in Italy was literate, while only 35 percent of the rural population was literate (1969, 75). This split between rural and urban literacy has implications for literacy in southern Italy, as more of that population lived in rural areas. This also has implications for Newark, as many of the immigrants who settled there came from rural areas of southern Italy.

Cipolla illustrates the large gap in literacy between the North and South in Italy. In 1858, the two most northwestern provinces in Italy had an adult illiteracy rate of 61 percent, while the Island of Sardinia, far south in Italy, had an illiteracy rate of 92 percent. Based on Italian census data from 1871 to 1911 presented in Cipolla, the

northern region of Piedmont regularly had the lowest rates of illiteracy in all of Italy while the southern region of Sicily had some of the highest rates (see Table 5.2). The rates for illiteracy in both regions declined between 1871 and 1911, but the difference between the regions continued to increase until 1901 (Cipolla 1969, 19), with rates of literacy increasing faster in northern Italy than in the South up to that point. Most of the Italians in the First Ward and Ironbound colonies were from areas in southern Italy such as Campania, Calabria, and Avellino, and settlers in the 14th Avenue enclave were from Sicily (see Chapter 4).

Table 5.2: Illiteracy Rates in Select Italian Regions, 1871–1911.²⁹

Year	Region	Percentage Illiterate	Difference (%)
1871	Piedmont	42	43
	Sicily	85	
1881	Piedmont	32	49
	Sicily	81	
1901	Piedmont	18	53
	Sicily	71	
1911	Piedmont	11	47
	Sicily	58	

Cipolla presents figures that highlight the development of literacy in Italy through the examination of the rates of illiterate bridegrooms and brides, based on the absence of signatures on marriage registers (1969, 122–125). There is a steady decrease in the percentage of illiterate bridegrooms from 1867 to 1900. Almost two-thirds of all bridegrooms were unable to write their names in 1867; thirty-one years later in 1900, about two-thirds wrote their names in the register. Illiteracy among women, based on the same criteria, also declined although the rates remained higher than for their husbands.

²⁹ From data in Cipolla 1969, 19.

Seventy-nine percent, or almost eight in ten women, could not sign the register when they married in 1867; thirty-one years later a little more than half (52 percent) were identified as literate because they could sign their names. While there has been criticism of the practice of using a mark as an indication of illiteracy (Kaestle, et al. 1991, 11–12; Monaghan 1989, 54), these statistics do indicate that the rate of literacy for Italians was increasing rapidly at the end of the nineteenth century in Italy although brides had lower literacy rates than grooms.

Table 5.3 lists by country the percentage of immigrants to the U.S. over the age of fourteen who could neither read nor write and includes information from 1899 to 1910. The statistics for northern and southern Italy are listed separately, and there is a large discrepancy between the two. Only 11.5 percent of immigrating northern Italians were unable to read or write while 53.9 percent of southern Italians were unable to read or write. There were only three countries that had greater percentages of illiterate immigrants than southern Italians—Mexico, Turkey, and Portugal. Even at their much lower rate, the northern Italians' illiteracy rates were still larger than immigrants from northern European countries. When figures for North and South Italy are combined³⁰ the resulting percentage is 46.8 percent, with seven countries with higher illiteracy rates than Italy.

³⁰ Percentage calculated based on information in original source.

Table 5.3: Percentage of Immigrants to United States over 14 Years Old Who Could Neither Read nor Write, 1899–1910.³¹

Nationality	Percent Illiterate
Scandinavian	.4
Scotch	.7
English	1.0
Finnish	1.3
Bohemian & Moravian	1.7
Welsh	1.9
Irish	2.6
West Indies (Except Cuban)	3.2
Dutch & Flemish	4.4
German	5.2
Spanish-American	6.1
Cuban	6.3
French	6.3
Chinese	7.0
Not specified	7.5
Magyar	11.4
Italian, North	11.5
Spanish	14.5
African (Black)	19.0
Armenian	23.9
Slovak	24.0
Japanese	24.6
Pacific Islander	24.7
Hebrew	26.0
Greek	26.4
Roumanian	35.0
Polish	35.4
Croatian & Slovenian	36.1
Korean	38.1
Russian	38.4
Dalmatian, Bosnian & Herzegovinian	41.0
Bulgarian, Servian & Montenegrin	41.7
Other peoples	44.6
Italian (North & South Combined)	46.8
East Indian	47.2
Lithuanian	48.9
Syrian	53.3
Ruthenian (Russniak)	53.4

³¹ Adapted from Frederick Croxton's *Statistical Review of Immigration, 1920–1910* (1911). Based on immigrants' self-reported status.

Table 5.3 Continued

Italian, South	53.9
Mexican	57.2
Turkish	59.5
Portuguese	68.2

While the rates of literacy in the U.S. were influenced by literacy rates in Italy, other factors intervened. Ewa Morawska, in her chapter “The Sociology and Historiography of Immigration,” indicates that “contrary to the well-established stereotype of the ‘huddled masses’” (1990, 1930), most emigrants did not come from the poorest segments and the lowest classes of society, but from the lower and lower-middle classes. The ability to emigrate depended on raising money for passage, something that was beyond the reach of the very poorest families even as prices for tickets became less expensive. Although poor peasants were traditionally thought to be the mainstay of Italian emigration, John Bodnar notes, “the very poor seldom left” (20). Bodnar also presents evidence “that individuals who made the longest moves tended to be more literate than those who moved only short distances or who did not move at all” (23). While Italians were among the least literate groups coming to the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century, those who did emigrate were likely to have better literacy rates than those staying behind. Between the years 1899 to 1910, an average of more than half of all Italians immigrants self-reported as literate, according to the data in Croxton’s *Statistical Review* (1911). The half who was not literate would likely have had access to information through the oral culture of the neighborhoods, as will be detailed later in this chapter.

The 1905 and 1915 censuses of New Jersey report the number of inhabitants in Newark who could read and can write. There is no indication of how this was

determined, what ages were being considered, and if only proficiency in English was considered, or if it included facility in foreign languages also. According to the New Jersey Census, in 1905, the percentage of the population who could read in Newark was 78.4 percent, while 79.7 percent of the population could write. These percentages were slightly lower in 1915, with 77.5 percent who could read and 77.6 percent who could write. Higher immigration rates of people from countries with lower literacy rates between 1905 and 1915 may have caused this slight drop. Even at the lower rates in 1915, more than three quarters of New Jersey's population could read and write.

The rates were even higher in Newark. *The Newarker* in May of 1913 reported illiteracy rates in Newark based on the 1910 census. The illiteracy rate was 6 percent, meaning a corresponding rate of 94 percent of people 10 years and older who were considered literate. However, 91.4 percent of the illiterate persons were foreign born (see table reproduced in Appendix E). Unfortunately, these statistics are not categorized by nationality but do indicate a high rate of literacy in the city, especially as compared to the state. There is also no indication if this rate included literacy in foreign languages, which may have increased the reading rates for immigrants.

Literacy that might have been obtained in an original language could fade away when the opportunities to practice were limited by availability of material or lack of time to read. However, Italian immigrants to Newark were reading. As noted in the first section of this chapter, Newark produced local papers in Italian, which advertised books and journals for sale in the enclaves in 1903 and 1904. In 1909, the Newark Free Public Library produced a pamphlet of the library's rules and regulation translated in Italian to be given to every Italian receiving a library card (Staff Notebooks, 1909). This is the only

mention of translated rules supplied by the library and might indicate Italians were signing up for cards in sufficient numbers to make this necessary, perhaps part of a program encouraging Italians to use the library. It could also be interpreted as a special need to reinforce regulations that were not being followed, by providing this translated pamphlet.

In a 1913 article in *The Newarker*, it was noted that the “foreign branch” needed larger quarters because “foreigners and their children are insatiable readers” (456). The *Newarker* reported in February of 1914 that “the collection of Italian books reached the highest percentage of circulation to number of volumes” (*Newarker* 462). By May of 1914, the Foreign Branch was the second biggest branch in the system in terms of the number of books, containing 10,000 books. In an article in *The Newarker*, the branch manager, speaking of the numerous foreign books collections at the branch, notes that “All these collections are proof of the foreigner’s desire to read.” However, the article also notes that “[n]ew foreign books are not added unless the need is very urgent on account of the expense and labor of buying and cataloging foreign books and the recognized claims of the American reader” (*Newarker*, 178). This demand for books in foreign languages rebuts the idea of illiterate immigrants (179). It is a vivid picture of immigrants’ agency asking for books in their native language, but the library emphasis is not on providing the books that are in demand but on those resources that “make good new American citizens,” (*Newarker* 1914, 456).

Antonio Stella also notes a surprising statistic on illiteracy in the second generation of foreign born versus children of native-born parents. In the 1920 census, he notes, while “only 0.8 of one per cent of the children of foreign born parents were

illiterate, 2.5 per cent of all white persons, ten years of age and over, of native parentage were illiterate” (1924, 56). The description of the Foreign Branch in Newark being overrun by children is interesting in light of this statistic.

As shown here, it is difficult to accurately determine the literacy rates for Italian immigrants to Newark, but there is evidence that despite the expected low levels of literacy for the southern Italians who were a significant component of the Italian immigrant population, they were reading. According to Stella’s statistics, Italian immigrant children had an even better chance of being literate than their parents, and children had access to books within the schools through the traveling libraries. There were also anecdotal reports of Italian children using the libraries.

According to D. F. McKenzie, “literacy, both as a concept and as a historically traceable phenomenon, is inseparable from a concern (both precedent and concurrent) with orality and the recording function of memory” (2006, 205). The next section will explore oral culture as part of the Italian information neighborhood.

5.2.2. Orality

Darnton (2000) includes oral media appropriate to the French information society he is studying in his communication circuit (Figure 2.1) including *bruits publics*, rumor, gossip, and songs. Rumor, gossip, and songs are also part of Italian information neighborhoods, as is conversation, reminiscing, and a tradition of storytelling, as will be shown next in this examination of the oral culture in the information neighborhood.

An interesting example of the speed by which rumor pertaining to Italians transmitted information in Newark is reported in the *New York Times* on April 9, 1908. According to the paper, “Fifteen hundred frantic men and women, parents of children in

the Seventh Avenue public school in Newark, most of whom were Italians, surrounded the building yesterday morning on report of a 'Black Hand' threat that the structure was to be destroyed by dynamite." The information was false; however, it led to tragic consequences as two children were critically injured during the panicked release of students from the school. As seen in this incident, rumor as a medium for transmitting information proved fast and powerful.

Information is accessed in multiple ways regardless of levels of literacy, but there were those for whom "songs and proverbs were the major sources of instruction" (Cipolla 1969, 39–40). This fits with Walter Ong's assertion that "In an oral culture, knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it would be lost: fixed, formulaic thought patterns were essential for wisdom and effective administration" ([1982] 2002, 23). The songs and proverbs were one way of storing knowledge orally. They were part of an oral culture that included reading aloud, storytelling, conversation with family and neighbors, and the talents of those who could bridge cultures by speaking two languages such as padrones who acted as intermediaries between boss and employer and children of immigrants who acted as translators for their parents.

Storytelling was another mode in the oral transmission of information. In his autobiographical fiction, Pietro DiDonato describes Italian men who get together in a saloon and "tell 'tales' that for centuries had been passed from one illiterate generation . . . to another" (1960, 96). In a memoir in the archives of the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC), immigrant Grace Billotti Spinelli remembers, "My father was a great story teller and when families came together he would entertain them for hours by telling stories about certain people they knew. This was particularly true in America when it was

so natural to refer to the past with a nostalgic feeling.” Through this storytelling, her father was passing along his knowledge of a community and a way of life, and making connections between the old world and the new, reminiscing as well as entertaining.

The transmission of intergenerational cultural knowledge through storytelling is demonstrated in Chicago by Rosa Cassettari, an Italian storyteller who was often invited to the Chicago Commons Settlement House to share her stories, which were collected by the author Marie Hall Ets. A note from Cassettari appears at the beginning of a story titled “The Blacksmith” in a folder containing material collected by Ets for her book on Cassettari and her stories. Cassettari comments, “This story is really invented by the Italian people—nobody else but Italian people could invent this kinda story—you die laughing. But I don’t think you like this kinda story.” At the end of the story Cassettari remarks, “You never heard in America stories like that. No, never! That’s an Italian story for sure!” (Ets Papers). The story captured a particular cultural sense of humor, an identity marker that was preserved when these stories were repeated. Many of the recorded stories had morals that were passed down through the generations through the art of storytelling. These stories also serve as a link to old traditions and ways of being in the old country and created a common ground for understanding the social rules of the community.

Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale describe how Italian immigrants brought with them “a form of literature in their proverbs, their legends, and in the oral tradition of their *cantastorii* (the village storyteller), who recounted the stories of miracles, of monsters, and of wars between Christians and Islam” (1993, 353–354). In an unpublished

autobiography, Joseph Fucilla, an Italian who was born in Chicago in 1897 and lived in Racine, Wisconsin, wrote:

“I might mention here that grandmother Maria Francesca was a most loveable old lady, everybody’s friend. Though illiterate she had an amazingly retentive memory. She knew scores of popular folktales by heart, and, in retelling them, had the uncanny ability of dramatizing their action giving the tales life and appeal. We grandchildren so enjoyed them that we used to ask her to tell them again and again.”
(Fucilla n.d., 3)

Reading aloud was another mode for the transmission of information, one that combined oral culture with print culture. In his unpublished autobiography (in IHRC) Fucilla mentions his father reading Italian novels aloud to the family. According to Fucilla, he read “semi-popular stories such as the *Paladini di Francia*, *I Cavalieri della Tavola Rotonda*, and *Guerino detto il Meschino*” aloud to the family “[on] cold winter evenings” (6). *Guerino detto il Meschino* was a chivalric romance written in 1473, and can be translated as *The Wretched Guerrin*. *I Cavalieri della Tavola Rotonda* or *Knights of the Round Table* wasn’t a modern novel either. *Paladini de Francia* can be translated as the *French Paladins* or *French (Chivalric) Knights*. The read aloud choices of this family were, like the *Romanzo Mensile*, Italian translations of French books, and did not represent an Italian literary tradition.

In an article in the *Newark Evening News* in 1902, the writer relates his observations of Italian work gangs during their lunch break. During the break, the writer observes, everyone gathered to eat their lunch, and one person pulls “out a ragged copy of an Italian paper and will soon be surrounded by a crowd of eager listeners” (quoted in Bolen 1986, 171). In his 2006 chapter, “Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader,” Roger Chartier articulates dual functions of reading aloud. If there are members

of the audience who are unable to read, reading aloud is “communicating that which is written to those who do not know how to decipher it, and binding together the interconnected forms of sociability which are all figures of the private sphere (the intimacy of the family, [and] the conviviality of the social life)” (Chartier 2006, 90). The binding together takes place even if the audience can read. Even though the laborers observed listening to a newspaper read aloud are in public, they have created a private space of social interaction through the shared act of listening to a text being read aloud.

Orality had an important place in the communication circuit within the Italian information neighborhood. Oral modes of transmission of information including gossip, rumor, conversation, and reminiscing are used in the type of nodes that are information grounds, where information exchange is a by-product of the primary activity. Oral transmission of information is also the primary mode in family/friend networks and for the padrone system. In addition, all of these nodes used media such as proverbs and stories to communicate traditions and knowledge in ways that were unique to communities with a strong residual oral culture as noted in contemporary recollections and primary sources and autobiographical writings. Finally, reading aloud was a hybrid mode that combined both print and oral traditions and reinforced social connections.

5.3. Conclusion

Patrons’ use of libraries should not be considered in isolation, and understanding the other sources of information available to users places the library within the context of the information ecology of the user. This exploration, using the communications circuit map originally introduced in Chapter 2 as a framework, reveals that the Newark Free Public Library was one of many information nodes in the Italian information

neighborhood. Many of the nodes were within the physical boundaries of Italian enclaves in Newark, but an examination of a map of the library branches and deposit stations at a particular point in time (1911) reveals that the library was located on the periphery of the enclaves. Despite the disadvantages of physical locations on the periphery or outside of neighborhoods, the library still attracted users of Italian material as indicated by the heavy use of the Italian language books in the library as noted in historical sources.

Print and oral cultures intertwined within the information neighborhood, and information depended on both literacy and orality as methods and modes for information transmission. The information neighborhood in this chapter includes a multiplicity of nodes within which information was accessed through print, oral, or hybrid means and methods. It reveals the complex, textured information ecology of Italian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century in Newark. In the next three chapters, the interaction of Italian immigrants with the Newark Free Public Library is considered within the context of the information neighborhoods in Newark.

CHAPTER 6: THE LIBRARY AS AN INSTITUTION

In the Introduction to the book *Libraries as Agencies of Culture*, Thomas Augst notes that “[w]hatever the national and global meanings that elites attach to them, cultural agencies are constituted in practices and uses, within particular communities and local lives” (2001, 14). The library at the turn of the twentieth century was a cultural institution situated at the nexus of the national and professional discourses of Americanization enacted within the local practices of the libraries and their use by patrons. In this chapter, the national discourses within the professional library literature in relationship to its program of Americanization and the influences of these discourses on the policies and practices for the provision of library services to immigrants are examined. This national discourse concerning library service to immigrants was constituted in everyday programs and policies, which are examined in the context of foreign language books and the Foreign Branch of the Newark Free Public Library.

The public library, as an institution of the state, worked within the dominant paradigms of the Progressive Era. At the same time, it was constructed through a series of policies and practices created and carried out by librarians. This chapter explores the hegemonic programs of Americanization and the policies and practices that comprised the library’s everyday execution of this program. Three areas—learning English, promoting citizenship, and discovering American culture—were the focus of assimilation and Americanization programs for libraries at the turn of the last century. In the first section of the chapter, the role of the library in Americanization will be examined through these three aspects of Americanization. The final section of the chapter explores

the Newark Free Public Library's policies and practices for providing library services to immigrants through an examination of the acquisition of foreign language material and the operation of the Foreign Branch. Both are examples of Newark's institutional response to immigrants as users of the library.

6.1. Americanization and Libraries

6.1.1. "Welcoming" Immigrants to America

As discussed in Chapter 4, immigrants often received an ambiguous welcome to the U.S. They were desired for their labor but feared for their effect on America and American culture. John Higham, in his seminal text *Strangers in the Land*, uses the label "nativism" to refer to this "anti-foreign spirit" ([1955] 2008, xi) that manifested itself in the United States during this period. He defines nativism as the "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., "un-American") connections" ([1955] 2008, 4) and categorizes racialism as part of this American nativism. Higham notes that nativism was related to nationalism and the development of an American identity that was grounded in the Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, and republican ideals of the colonial period ([1955] 2008). Immigrants were perceived as disrupting this idealistic vision of the American nation.

Robert Wiebe connects attitudes toward immigrants with economic issues. He notes,

"antialien [*sic*] sentiments, cousins to antimonopoly, were almost as common and equally protean. In one guise they abused the immigrant in a rising crescendo after the middle of the decade [1880s]. Mixing contempt with fear, natives pictured the newcomers as dispirited breeders of poverty, crime, and political corruption, and simultaneously as

peculiarly powerful subversives whose foreign ideologies were undermining American society.” (1967, 54)

Higham reports that increasing immigration at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries and the “growing urgency of the nationalist impulse” ([1955] 2008, 235) led to organized institutional efforts to assimilate immigrant populations through Americanization programs. He identifies opposing discourses of Americanization with similar goals of social unity. Higham classifies one type of Americanizer who was driven by fear of “immigrant radicalism or discontent . . . to an imperious demand for conformity” ([1955] 2008, 237). The contrasting dialogue was sympathetic to immigrants’ struggles to adapt to their new surroundings and suggests a program of a “gentler kind of assimilation” ([1955] 2008, 237). Higham notes “both groups reacted to the stresses of urban, industrial conditions, which were forcing America’s peoples into increasing interdependence” ([1955] 2008, 236); although they followed different paths, both focused on the goal of assimilation. Alston Plummer Jones places librarians on both ends of this continuum that varied from humanitarian assimilationists to nativists driven by national anxieties. According to Jones, “librarians viewed Americanization as either a service to the immigrant community, in periods of relative calm, or as [the librarians’] patriotic duty, in periods of heated debate and agitation” (1999, 10).

Those driven by fear or what Higham calls “nationalist anxieties” ([1955] 2008, 236) wanted immigrants assimilated into American culture and were particularly vocal in times of stress such as that brought on by World War I. A “Memorandum” published by the National Americanization Committee in October of 1917 and titled “War Policy for Aliens” states some of these concerns in the first section titled Reasons for Memorandum.

The list of reasons includes: the large number of foreigners who do not speak English and who live in colonies “isolated from American contacts,” “the influence of the foreign language press among people who do not speak or read the English language,” and a “go-where-you-will-do-as-you-please policy” toward immigrants that reduced the ability to monitor immigrants’ attitudes toward America (first column of pamphlet). The stresses of war heightened fears that unassimilated immigrants were dangerous to American national identity and security.

Humanitarian Americanizers, as defined by Higham, were driven not by fear but by concern over the challenges that immigrants faced, and they worked to help the newcomers to adapt. Higham notes that while “preaching the doctrine of immigrant gifts,” settlement workers such as “Jane Addams and her fellow workers concentrated less on changing the newcomers than on offering them a home” ([1955] 2008, 236). However, even to “many of the humanitarian Americanizers, the immigrant seemed a blessing if redeemed and uplifted but a danger if left alone” (Higham [1955] 2008, 239). Assimilation was the response to an essentialized view of immigrants as a problem that demanded a solution.

The various opinion and attitudes about the project of Americanization within the library profession as presented in the discourse of its professional literature—using *Library Journal*, the organ of the professional library association, ALA, as the major source—are explored in this chapter. The motive for and the means of Americanization varied among librarians, but the necessity was unquestioned. As Josh DeWind and Philip Kasinitz note in their article “Everything Old Is New Again?: Process and Theories of Immigrant Incorporation,” even early twentieth-century scholars of Americanization “shared the

commonsense, if sometimes unarticulated, assumption of their day that the . . . cultural assimilation of immigrants . . . was both inevitable and desirable for the nation and for the immigrants” (1997, 1097), and this assumption of inevitability is revealed in the discourse of the professional literature as represented in *Library Journal*. The various ALA articles and reports from 1876 through 1919 that mention immigrants, English language learning, citizenship, and foreign material are framed in terms of how each contributes to, or hinders, the goal of Americanization and assimilation, without challenging the underlying assumptions of the necessity or benefit of these objectives for immigrants.

One important method for accomplishing this “inevitable” process of Americanizing immigrants was through education, both in formal public schools and through other educational institutions. As Robert Carlson notes in his book on Americanization, education was perceived to be “the best means for bringing the individual into conformity with society” (1987, 3). Rosemary DuMont explains in her book on public libraries that reformers “regarded the educational institutions as great immigrant-assimilating agencies and as the cureall [*sic*] for crime, vice, pauperism, juvenile delinquency, and other social ills of urban areas” (1977, 36). This focus on education as a conduit for Americanization aligned with the discourse of legitimacy within the library profession that situated the library within the educational system of the United States.

Melvil Dewey, writing in his article “The Profession” in the very first issue of *Library Journal* stated, “a library is a school” (September 30, 1876, 6), and in a speech titled “Libraries as Related to the Educational Work of the State,” he referred to public

libraries as the “people’s university,” suggesting that this was a preferable name for libraries (1888, 9). Esther Carrier, in her book *Fiction in Public Libraries 1876–1900* quotes Dewey, “You must think of the library . . . as an essential part of our system of education” (1965, 90). The library was seen as an extension of the public school system, providing a place for people to continue learning throughout their lives. Dewey was expressing a view of the library that created an added value for the institution by emphasizing its usefulness, which had implications for the types of collections and programs offered by libraries.

Newark’s librarians and city officials embraced this vision of the library as an educational institution. The Commissioner of Education in Newark, W. T. Harris, praised the library in 1892, noting, “all persons interested in the subject of education will note with satisfaction the progress of the library. Next after the school and the daily newspaper comes the library in educative power. These three institutions are the great secular means by which our people have to prepare themselves for their singular destiny” (Newark Annual Report 1892, 35). In the *Newark Sunday Call* on December 2, 1906, library director John Cotton Dana indicated his view of the role of libraries as educational institutions when he noted, “[i]n libraries the lamp of learning should be kept always lighted.” Harris’s language reflects Progressive Era goals of uplifting and reforming the working class—including immigrants—through multiple avenues of education, and Dana situates the library as one of these avenues available to the citizens of Newark.

Librarians trusted the power of books and reading, or what was later articulated as the concept of “library faith”³² (Robert Leigh, 1950, quoted in Raber 1997, 67). Douglas Raber notes that the ideology of the library faith:

provided the frame through which librarians viewed the world, judged the condition of libraries, made decisions, took action, and developed structures and means of service. It relied on a particular justification that defined a unique place for the public library as a state institution that contributed in a particular way to a democratic culture. (1997, 67)

An examination of the articles retrieved from *Library Journal* from 1876 to 1919 through a keyword search³³ of volumes 1–44 reveals this library faith, although not articulated as such until 1950, underlies much of the professional discourse about Americanization and service to immigrants in *Library Journal* from 1876 to 1919. The contributors to the publication expressed the belief that getting the right books in immigrants’ hands would enable them to assimilate to American culture, and participate in democratic institutions. Gertrude Sackett, a supervisor of home libraries from Pittsburgh, in a speech printed in *Library Journal* in 1902 notes, “[b]elieving as we do in the elevating power of books, how can we best bring them to these children to make their lives broader, fuller, and richer, thus leading them to a better citizenship and a higher civilization?” (73). Sackett has confidence that getting the right books in children’s hands will have an ameliorating effect on their lives, cultivating their growth within the contemporary social structure. The project of Americanization was an extension of libraries’ educational function that that could be accomplished, based on librarians’ faith

³² The Public Library Inquiry, explored in Douglas Raber’s book *Librarianship and Legitimacy: The Ideology of the Public Library Inquiry* was “a professional legitimating project” (1997, 7) carried out in the 1940s and explored the history of librarianship as a profession as well as offering suggestions for the future of the profession. The term “library faith” was used by Robert Leigh.

³³ The following keywords were used in this search: acculturation, Americanize, Americanization, Americanizing, Americanism, assimilation, citizenship, immigrant, immigrants, Italian, foreign, and Newark.

in books, through providing print material that would help immigrants to assimilate and become citizens.

Alston Plummer Jones concludes that for librarians Americanization “meant simply a two-part process: instruction in the English language and preparation for citizenship” (1999, 10). He overlooks the cultural aspects of Americanization that libraries participated in both explicitly through the programs, classes, and material offered by the library, and implicitly through the genteel behaviors enacted by librarians and the cultural examples in books in the collection. But Jeffrey Mirel, writing about turn-of-the-century Americanization education, includes acculturation when he defines three aspects that were part of the project of Americanization: “teaching English, introducing Anglo-American culture and imparting ideas about American democracy” (2010, 20).

These three areas—teaching English, preparing immigrants for citizenship, and introducing American culture—were the focus of assimilation and Americanization for libraries at the turn of the century. Contemporary writers also emphasized these three strands of Americanization. An article in *Library Journal* in October of 1911 by Peter Roberts, Secretary of the International Committee of the YMCA, lists three items that he describes as “needs of the foreigner,” as seen by those working with immigrants, rather than as defined by immigrants themselves. According to Roberts in this article titled “The Library and the Foreign Speaking Man,” “[t]he first step in the process of assimilation is a knowledge of the English language.” The second ‘need’ is naturalization, and the “alien has a right to expect a helping hand” to achieve this. Roberts notes, “librarians have helped materially” with naturalization. Finally, the “foreigner also should have a

knowledge of the history of America, its resources, its institutions, its ideals and an acquaintance of our habits and customs” (497).

Immigrants were welcomed for their contributions to the American economy but feared for the perceived disruptions they might cause to American culture. One method for addressing this was the implementation of programs that were meant to Americanize immigrants through helping them to learn English, become citizens, and learn about American culture. In the next three sections, each strand of assimilation will be examined through the professional discourse in *Library Journal* along with evidence from various sources of how the Newark Free Public Library addressed each of these elements of the program of Americanization. These three strands are inevitably intertwined but separating them will provide a framework for examining this discourse in detail. Because Americanization was a project that affected all foreign-born people, evidence from both the professional discourse and examples from Newark are not limited to Italian immigrants. The evidence reveals patterns that affected all immigrants, but specific programs and services that the Newark Free Public Library provided to Italians are highlighted.

6.2. Learning English

The first strand of Americanization education examined here is English language acquisition, which libraries facilitated in several ways. Offering classes in the library for learning English was one option although there appears to be little discussion of this in *Library Journal*, based on searches for keywords such as Americanization, immigrants, acculturation and assimilation in each volume between 1876 and 1919 (vols. 1–44).

Libraries also provided English language instruction books as a complement to these classes and for those who wished to study on their own.

Beyond these direct means of helping immigrants to learn English, most of the discourse in *Library Journal* concerning this strand of Americanization was a debate over the role of foreign language books in the process of learning English. As will be shown, there were differing opinions about whether or not library books for immigrants in their own languages hindered English language acquisition. This section explores the various methods libraries employed to facilitate the process of learning English, as well as disagreements over these approaches.

6.2.1. English Language Classes

Offering English classes to immigrants was a minor aspect of public libraries' Americanization effort. More often, as Jones reports, libraries cooperated with evening schools although some "libraries experimented with offering classes at various times of the day" (1999, 19) to reach patrons whose schedules did not allow them to attend evening schools classes offered by other organizations. The Newark Free Public Library does not appear to have offered classes in English for immigrants. The Staff Notebooks for 1903–1912 contained weekly lists of programs scheduled to occur in various rooms in the library, but these lists did not include any mention of foreign language classes, and none are noted in the Annual Reports, *The Newarker*, or in the articles collected in the library's Clippings Scrapbooks.

However, the *Report of the Commission of Immigration of the State of New Jersey* notes that Newark had the largest evening school system in the state. From 1911–1912, according to the report, there were seventy classes attended by 3,500 students (1914,

120). Given their availability in the schools, it is likely that it was not deemed necessary to offer classes in the library. One librarian from the Foreign Branch, Linda H. Morley, expressed her approval for the classes, calling evening schools for foreigners “perhaps the most Americanizing experience the foreigner is likely to have” (*The Newarker* December 1913, 430).

While not every library offered classes, Jones notes, “cooperation with evening school classes was a standard practice across the country” (1999, 18), and this was also the case in Newark. The library assisted students in the evening school classes, making “the young people’s department easy of access to these pupils, most of whom are grown men and women just mastering the rudiments of English and needing simple primers and readers” (1903 NFPL AR, 25). A local paper, the *Newark News*, reported on the work the public library was doing with schools, including evening schools, whose pupils included “adults, who feel that they are seriously handicapped in business by their lack of knowledge in English.” These students, according to the May 2, 1906 article, go to the library where teachers “select simple books suited to their tastes and needs.” The reporter opines that, “[i]n this way the library becomes a considerable factor in the making of American Citizens” (NFPL Scrapbooks). The reporter sees learning English and being successful in business as joint elements in the process of becoming citizens.

In addition to aiding evening school classes for immigrants, the Newark Free Public Library had books for learning the English language in their collection. The *Newark News* reports on January 6, 1906, that in the library the “demand for grammars in Italian, by the use of which the Italians may learn English is constantly increasing.” In an article in *The Newarker* in September of 1912, Catherine Van Dyne notes that “the first

book a foreigner asks for is ‘an easy book to learn English’” and “[a] special effort is made to answer requests [like these]” (179).

In the December 1913 issue of *The Newarker*, Dana includes a list of “Books to Help Foreigners Learn English.” This list includes *English for Italians* and *Nuova guida della conversazione italiana inglese* (*New Italian Guide for English Conversation*) as well as books such as *First Lessons In English for Foreigners*, *Reading Made Easy for Foreigners*, *English for New Americans* (with vocabulary in eleven unspecified languages), *New Reader for Evening Schools* (vocabulary in five languages), and *How to Learn English* (December 1913, 434). The February 1914 issue of *The Newarker* notes one of the bibliographies that the library compiled for use in the branches in 1913 contained “Reading for the foreigner who is learning our language, customs and laws” (463). Addressing immigrants directly in a letter “To the Foreign People of Newark” reproduced in the December 1913 issue of *The Newarker* (see Appendix F), Dana notes that the library “has simple books that with the help of some child who goes to school, will soon teach you to read and write English” (434). He appears to believe, or at least wishes immigrants to believe, that learning English would be easy once foreign language speakers had the right books from the library and help from a school child. Reproducing these letters in a publication intended for an audience of Newark businessmen highlighted the value of the library as a place where immigrants learned English. But the manner in which Dana presents the process of acquiring English could lead readers to think this was easily accomplished, leaving readers to wonder why immigrants were having difficulty with this process.

6.2.2. Foreign Language Books

While the provision of books to aid immigrants who wanted to learn English was highlighted in *Library Journal*, there were also debates that focused on the effect of foreign language books on English language learning and literacy. The first explicit discussion³⁴ regarding the provision of books in foreign languages appears in *Library Journal* in 1894, eighteen years after the journal's first appearance in 1876. The unnamed editor of *Library Journal* writing in the October 1894 issue was wary of libraries supplying foreign language books to the "denizens of the various foreign 'colonies'" because this would be a "factor in maintaining those barriers of race and language which are the most difficult of all barriers to overcome and prejudicial to unity of sentiment and actions" (328). This writer seemed to fear that the availability of foreign language books would increase insularity among immigrants by perpetuating the use of foreign languages and decrease the need to learn English, thus endangering social unity and American culture.

Not everyone agreed with this view. The debate that took place in the space of *Library Journal* over the place of foreign language books in public libraries continued with the publication of an opposing view to the 1894 editorial position. This response, written by Aksel G.S. Josephson from the Lenox Library, appeared in the next issue of *Library Journal* (November 1894). Although not disagreeing with the editor's view of the role of the library in creating good citizens, he argued that cutting off access to foreign language material was not the best way to accomplish this. Josephson criticizes

³⁴ This determination is based on information gathered from online keyword searches (see Chapter 2 for list of keywords) of *Library Journal* from its first issue in 1876 onward. While this type of searching does not guarantee finding every pertinent statement, due to technical errors in digitizing the document, or errors in search functions, or errors by the searcher, the repeated lack of results over so many years of the journal indicates a pattern not broken until the 1890s.

the author of the original editorial, observing that, “There comes in his comment upon this matter a ghost of the dead and buried know-nothingism that was hardly expected in the organ of such a progressive body as the American Library Association.” Josephson evidently sees a direct connection to the Know-Nothing movement of the 1850s that was strongly nationalist and anti-foreign. According to John Higham, they feared “that some influence originating abroad threatened the very life of the nation from within” (2008, 4).

This controversy over foreign language books and English literacy that began with this exchange in 1894 continued in the public space of the professional library literature in *Library Journal*, as the examples that follow show. Sometimes the debate was internal, as an individual’s point of view changed over time. Gratia Countryman,³⁵ a librarian from the Minneapolis Public Library, described this evolution in her thinking in her article “Shall Public Libraries Buy Foreign Literature for the Benefit of the Foreign Population?” in *Library Journal* in June of 1898. She noted that,

For a number of years my views were similar to those expressed in an editorial of the Library Journal of October, 1894, which were in substance that the purchase of books in foreign languages should be minimized; that the library should not serve to perpetuate the barriers of race and language; that the library should be wholly American, and its influence tend wholly toward Americanizing the foreign-born. (229)

She wrote that while she still believed “the library should be an Americanizing institution” (230), by 1898, she had come to the conclusion that foreign books did belong in American public libraries, and “will help rather than hinder to foster Americanism” (231), in part because providing foreign language books would create a rapport with foreigners, since, as she writes, “What, on the whole, could be more Americanizing than

³⁵ This was not a pseudonym, despite the obvious suitability of the name for this discussion. Countryman, according to numerous sources, including the Minnesota Historical Society’s online Minnesota Encyclopedia, became the director of the Minnesota Public Library in 1904 and was elected ALA president in 1934. Accessed at www.mnopedia.org/person/countryman-gratia-alta1866-1953 on 3/26/2013.

the feeling of loyalty which these alien people would feel for the cosmopolitan library that welcomes them and in which they have a part and a place?" (230). In 1898, Countryman's focus remained Americanization, but in contrast to her belief in 1894 that foreign books would hinder the process, she advocated the provision of foreign language books to promote loyalty to the library, which in turn would create favorable conditions for Americanization.

In *Library Journal* in 1906 Arthur Bostwick, Chief of Circulation at the New York Public Library, was challenging the underlying fears that foreigners who did not learn English were dangerous to social cohesion. He noted that he was not concerned that making books available in immigrants' languages would create "permanent foreign communities, retaining foreign ideals, and resisting Americanization" (69). He believed that immigrants would still learn English and become citizens. In November 1909, a report from the Chicago Public Library declared this "old prejudice against the continued use of foreign tongues by the immigrant population is no longer a valid argument" against providing books in foreign languages (486).

The Chicago Public Library may have been a bit premature or overly optimistic in declaring this old prejudice completely dead. In his article printed in the October 1911 issue of *Library Journal*, Peter Roberts, the YMCA representative, said, "Walk the streets of Newark or Scranton on a Saturday evening when the wage-earners do their marketing, and the sound of foreign tongues prevails on all sides. As long as these people use only their mother tongue, they will be alien in sentiment and spirit" (497). Roberts still had the "old prejudice" referred to in the Chicago Public Library report. However, in the article he did not extend this attitude to the exclusion of the foreign language books from

the library. The argument against providing books in foreign languages did surface a few years later in Newark in an article in *The Newarker* in August 1913 signed by L. H. M.³⁶ She wrote about “those who say that it is not the business of a public library in this country to supply books for the people who cannot read English” and were concerned instead only with making “Americans of the immigrants.” The author takes a more cosmopolitan view, asking “is it not an asset to the country as a whole to have, as part of its population, people who have inherited a knowledge of a language and customs other than our own?” (354).

World War I drew attention to the number of foreigners who were not proficient in English. Wayne Wiegand notes that in 1917 when the U.S. went to war, five million people in America could not speak English (1989, 115). Along with continued efforts to provide help for immigrants wanting to learn English, the war appears to have once again heightened concerns about foreign language books in libraries. John Foster Carr, the director of the Immigrant Publishing Society, who worked with the American Library Association, noted in an article in the April 1919 *Library Journal* that librarians were writing to him with questions about the value of foreign language books in the library. One librarian wrote, “[t]he question of circulating foreign books in our libraries seems to have taken on a new aspect since the war,” because the library board members and the legislature, the librarian further explained, did not want to spend money on foreign books (245).

However, there were articles in *Library Journal* both before and after the war in which librarians reported that foreign book collections led to increased reading in

³⁶ This was most likely Linda H. Morley. She was listed as an employee in the Foreign Branch in the Annual Reports.

English. An editorial at the beginning of the August 1907 issue of *Library Journal* pointed readers to bulletins containing lists of the best current Italian books, helpful for English speaking librarians who sought to provide books for their Italian patrons. Providing these Italian books could be justified to those who were critical of this practice because,

It is found in actual working that immigrants of mature age can best be brought into contact with our public library system by the enticement of books in their own tongue; as they make increasing use of the library through this specialty they are more likely to begin the reading of books in English. In fact, for many newcomers this is the only possible open door to the public library. (349)

A report from Passaic Public Library that appeared in *Library Journal* in January 1913 noted a similar position vis-à-vis an outcome of including foreign books in their collection. "That our foreign borrowers are rapidly becoming English readers contradicts the contention of many librarians that the use of books in a foreign language retards the progress of our foreign population in becoming American citizens" (56). According to these articles, it was a common perception among librarians that the provision of foreign language material hindered English language learning. Both of these reports presented justifications for adding foreign language books to library collections in terms of the ultimate goal of English language acquisition.

Carr also reported in *Library Journal* that, "Far from having a tendency to restrict the circulation of books in English, they [librarians] are unanimous in reporting that the foreign department is the most practical and direct means of increasing the circulation of books in English among the foreign-born, particularly books on learning our language, books of American history, biography, books about citizenship and others of wholesome and useful sorts" (April 1919, 245). Carr, in an attempt to justify the inclusion of foreign

books, placed this increase in English language reading directly within the process of Americanization but does not consider pleasure reading.

The polemic concerning foreign literature in the library was focused on what librarians saw as the problem of promoting immigrant literacy in English. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, immigrants appropriated the spaces of their neighborhood through their ways of using the public spaces. The continued discussion in *Library Journal* at intervals between 1894 and 1919 was likely in response to immigrants' attempts to do this in libraries through asking for books in familiar languages. Immigrants faced some opposition, as noted above, due to fears that providing books in foreign languages would hinder their acquisition of English, leading to stronger "barriers of race and language."

Some librarians were sensitive to the difficulty of learning a new language as an adult. J. Maud Campbell, a former employee of Newark Free Public Library and a voice for immigrants in the library world, took a different view of offering books in foreign languages. In a speech titled "Supplying Books in Foreign Languages in Public Libraries" that was printed in the February 1904 *Library Journal* she asked, "Why do we expect to educate him [foreign-born patron] by bringing him into our libraries and saying, 'You can't read here in your own language, but see what fine things we have here in ours'?" (65). Campbell dismisses the argument that immigrants should go to school to learn to read English before coming to the library explicitly: "Must the poor foreigner go through a period of intellectual starvation until he has mastered enough English to furnish him with mental food?" (66). In *The Newarker* in August of 1913, Newark librarian Linda H. Morley asked, "how many people over 35 or 40 years of age do you suppose can acquire sufficient familiarity with a foreign language in their leisure time to make

reading a pleasure?” (354). She was asking readers to empathize with foreign-born patrons who needed books in their own languages because they were slow to learn English, or unable to learn it, and were interested in reading. Both Campbell and Morley recognized the value of literacy regardless of the language in which it was attained.

The principal role for libraries that were aiding immigrants in learning English was the provision of books in support of evening school classes or directly to immigrant patrons. The discourse in the professional periodical *Library Journal* reflected concerns about the best methods for assisting immigrants in this endeavor, with some librarians insisting that providing books in foreign languages would maintain language divisions within communities, while others argued for the inclusion of foreign language books in the library, justified by evidence that this aided in English language acquisition. These debates for and against foreign language books in the library are framed within the discourse of Americanization.

Among these voices in *Library Journal*, there are only a few, such as Campbell at Passaic and Morley at Newark, who are concerned with immigrants’ reading needs that went beyond learning English. Other librarians expressed a chauvinist view of the library as “wholly American” while some communities tried to apply pressure to maintain this focus. The rationalization offered in some of these articles that providing foreign language books facilitated English language acquisition appears to be a response to such community pressure to preserve the American nature of public libraries.

However, one report from the Chicago Public Library in November 1909 provides a radical view of the library’s provision of service to immigrants. It noted that cities have “whole communities of people who do not speak or read the English language,” but

“these people are not only citizens and taxpayers with a right to service from the Library, but they are often precisely those citizens most in need of consideration from the educational agencies of the community” (486). While this writer recognized that the English speaking populations of the city were not the only taxpayers that the library served and that immigrants were one of the library’s publics, providing books for immigrants was still framed within an educational imperative, one that was not focused on learning English. The rights of foreign-born readers as taxpayers were not often discussed in *Library Journal* in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The focus was on the usefulness of foreign language books to encourage learning of the English language, and as discussed in the next section, on promoting citizenship.

6.3. Citizenship

Public libraries were involved in a second aspect of Americanization—helping immigrants to attain citizenship, which involved helping them to become naturalized citizens, but also had a broader meaning. In “Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory,” Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman note that “there are two different concepts [of citizenship] which are sometimes conflated . . . citizenship-as-legal-status, that is, as full membership in a particular political community and citizenship-as-desirable-activity, where the extent and quality of one’s citizenship is a function of one’s participation in that community” (1994, 353).

Providing immigrants material and information for attaining legal status as a citizen was one of libraries’ primary goals, as shown in these examples. In a speech titled, “What the Library Can Do for Our Foreign Born,” given at the Massachusetts Library Club and printed in *Library Journal* in October 1913, Carr notes the library could give

immigrants “such education, civic and other, as they know they need, and so often desire, and to help prepare them for citizenship” (566). The construction of Carr’s sentence is interesting. He separates the need for citizenship that he claims immigrants “know” is necessary but which actually may be a need imposed from outside from the desire to attain citizenship, which not every immigrant wanted. As discussed in Chapter 4, Italians who planned to return home (“birds of passage”) would not have been concerned with attaining citizenship.

The Newark Free Public Library provided material to help immigrants attain legal status. *The Newarker*³⁷ of December 1913 contains a list of “Books on Naturalization and Citizenship for New Americans” that included (among other books in foreign languages) *Messaggio per i Nuovi Venuti Negli Stati Uniti* (*Message for Newcomers to the United States*), which contained useful information for new arrivals (427).³⁸

The Newarker reported in August 1913 that the library purchased some pamphlets from the North American Civic League in several languages, some of which were in circulation, some in reference, and other distributed for free (360). According to Edward Hartmann in *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, active Americanization groups got their start with the foundation of the North American Civic League for Immigrants in 1907 (1948, 38). The league issued a series called *Messages for Newcomers to the United States*, in the form of pamphlets that were translated into nine foreign languages, including Italian. Titles published in the early twentieth century

³⁷ Many of the examples in this chapter come from *The Newarker*. As noted in Chapter 3, Dana promoted the activities of the library in this journal, including its role in Americanizing immigrants.

³⁸ The classified catalogue of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh from 1910 lists an English and Italian version of this book published by the North American Civic League for Immigrants. It included sections on the laws of the United States, history, biography, the people of America, Abraham Lincoln, and a chapter titled “The need for learning English and the advantages of an education” (370).

included *The United States, Its People and Its Laws*; *The Need of Learning English and the Advantages of an Education*; *The New Homeland and Opportunity Offered in Various Sections* along with citizenship primers, and histories of the United States. It was most likely some of these pamphlets that the library purchased although a list of titles they acquired was not included in *The Newarker*.

In *The Newarker* for December 1913, Linda Morley reported that “books and leaflets telling a man how to go about becoming a citizen, what things he needs to know and to do, were scarcely to be found six years ago. Now many associations, formed to help new comers, issue many pamphlets and short books that give the information needed” (430). Morley reported that the library “always has on hand many of these books and pamphlets, so that thousands of foreigners in Newark may be able to easily get the information they contain.” This material was available at the Foreign Branch and the Main Library and “has been gathered together and put in a conspicuous place and is well used” (431). The library thus provided material to help those who wanted to become naturalized citizens and made sure to inform *The Newarker*’s audience about the project of creating citizens. The businessmen who were readers of the publication would have had an interest in immigrants becoming citizens and conforming to American ideas and ideals.

In another article in *The Newarker*, “The Springfield Avenue Branch: What One Branch is Doing to Help Make Several Thousand New, Good American Citizens,” librarian Catherine Van Dyne noted that along with books to learn English, the first books foreigners ask for are “books to help them fill out naturalization papers [and] a special effort is made to answer [these] requests” (*The Newarker* September 9, 1912,

179). Van Dyne noted in the same article that books in foreign languages were not added “unless the need is very urgent” (September 1912, 178) although she had in the same article described the need for more such books to satisfy the desires of the many foreign patrons, indicating the priority the library placed on naturalization material over books in foreign languages.

There was some anxiety over the number of immigrants who were not becoming naturalized citizens. The fear of isolation noted in regards to the enclaves where no English was spoken was related to this anxiety about lack of citizenship, and engendered similar fears in the observers, but was expressed variously in terms of language and citizenship. Carr, in “What the Library Can Do for Our Foreign Born,” reported that the Director of the Census announced that “there were among us 3,623,700 foreign-born males of voting age who were not naturalized.” This meant, according to Carr, “probably 7,000,000 men, women and children more or less out of touch with American ideals and American ideas” (566).

In the May 1913 edition of *The Newarker*, Dana brought attention to the number of foreign-born individuals in Newark who had not yet become citizens when he presented statistics from the 1910 census figures for Newark, which indicated the citizenship status of “foreign born whites.” In Table 3, the naturalization status of immigrants is listed: of 103,234 males of voting age, 21,427 were naturalized citizens, 4,982 had their first papers,³⁹ 19,204 were aliens and 4,061 were of unknown status (309). Although Dana did not comment on these statistics in the article that accompanied these figures, the fact that this was one of a limited number of statistics from the census

³⁹ First papers are the common name for the Declaration of Intent, which was the first step to becoming a citizen. See <http://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/naturalization.html>.

reported, along with a list of the nationalities and number of foreign-born immigrants in Newark, indicates this was thought to be of interest, and perhaps concern, to the publication's audience of businessmen. In her article "Citizenship Denationalized," Linda Bosniak notes that "citizenship . . . embod[ies] the highest normative value" (2000, 451). Dana and Carr both highlighted the number of immigrants who had not yet achieved this despite libraries' efforts to provide resources.

Although immigrants were encouraged to become citizens, it was feared they would have a negative influence on American democracy if their citizenship education was insufficient. In "The Public Library in Political Theory and in Practice" that appeared in *Library Journal* in 1909, Frederick C. Hicks, a former Assistant Librarian at Brooklyn Public Library, was concerned that "the standards of citizenship" might "degenerate" because of the influx of foreigners who "have equal voting power with those of American birth." He suggested the library and public schools join "forces for a common cause—the raising and maintaining of the ideals of citizenship in order that liberty and democracy may flourish." Hicks maintained that the library's "political function is to raise the plane of citizenship so that liberty and democracy may not live in the fear of dissolution" (199). Part of the job of preparing immigrants for naturalization was to provide education so that new citizens would not upset the existing balance of power in the political system.

In addition to providing resources to help immigrants pursue legal citizenship, libraries also concerned themselves with educating immigrants to perform their roles in what Kymlicka and Norman have identified as "citizenship-as-desired-activity," (1994, 353). In the contemporary sources, this was defined as "intelligent citizenship" and becoming "good citizens." For example, at the Narragansett Pier Conference in 1907,

James Hulme Canfield, Librarian at Columbia University, detailed the many ways that the library could be useful for immigrants' "preparation for intelligent citizenship," including as a place where immigrants could "learn of those simpler ordinances of the city which cover sanitation, education, contracts, licenses, carrying of concealed weapons, and those general police regulations with which every intelligent citizen needs some acquaintance . . . that he may 'keep out of trouble'" (66). Canfield defines an intelligent citizen as one who was familiar with the rules that organized society and acted in accordance with those rules for social harmony.

Several examples from *Library Journal* indicate that librarians believed that teaching library patrons to obey the rules of the library prepared immigrants to follow the laws of the country and become good citizens. A report by the Brockton (Massachusetts) Public Library that appeared in the August 1908 issue noted that "many nationalities are represented among the borrowers from [the children's] room and the ready use of which the majority of the children make of the books and the prompt way in which they meet their library obligations emphasize anew that the children's room as a separate library department is no unimportant factor in the making of good citizenship" (336). This was an argument for the importance of the children's department, framed within the context of citizenship.

Anne Carroll Moore, an influential children's librarian in the New York Public Library system, also believed that libraries provided a foundation for citizenship for boys and girls. In the July 1908 *Library Journal* issue, she wrote of a new branch in a poor district of a large city, "The librarian believed the moral lesson conveyed to children by training them to take care of library books to be one of the first requirements of good

citizenship. . . . When grown into men and women,” Moore asserted, “the boys and girls who were taught this first lesson in citizenship will look back upon it with feelings of respect and satisfaction” (271). These were the first steps to “intelligent citizenship”—learning the rules and conforming to prescribed behaviors in order to “participate in the community (271).”

It was not always easy to teach children to take good care of books though. Catherine Van Dyne, Librarian in Charge of the Foreign Branch of the Newark Free Public Library, noted in 1912 that the librarians in Newark were “still struggling with the clean hands and clean book question”⁴⁰ (179) although she does go on to say that “young people have come to understand that library dignity must be maintained” (180) and that they appreciated the librarians’ efforts to maintain order in an overcrowded branch. Adult patrons of the Newark Free Public Library also had rules and regulations to follow in the library. Copies of the library’s rules and regulations were translated into several languages, one of the first being Italian, and handed out to each new Italian patron who received a library card (Staff Notebook, January 1909).

As part of participating in activities as a citizen, Bosniak identifies “citizenship’s psychological dimension,” a collective identity and sentiment meant to “evoke the quality of belonging—the felt aspects of community membership” (2000, 479), which could be called patriotism. In “The Public Library as an Educator,” which appeared in *Library Journal* in January 1910, Louis Round Wilson from the University of North Carolina expressed faith in the library as the institution best fitted to work alongside schools and guide foreign-born adults to citizenship. He saw the library as “the sole agency that can

⁴⁰ Librarians emphasized the necessity of clean hands when handling books; Abigail Van Slyck noted the presence of a sink in a branch in Pittsburgh where librarians would have children wash their hands and even faces (1998, 109).

touch their lives and aid in fitting them for citizenship. It should teach the immigrant . . . the principles of government and a love for the Stars and Stripes which the school teaches the immigrant child” (9). Immigrants were expected to do more than just become naturalized citizens; they were expected to embrace American patriotic ideals.

In an excerpt from an article titled “The Library and the School: A Program for Constructive Work,” Mary E. Hall evidenced a similar preoccupation with the perceived dangers of immigrants who did not “view life from the point of view of American ideals.” In a piece that originally appeared in *New York Libraries* in February 1918 and was reprinted in *Library Journal* in January 1919, she made the following point: “opposition of the foreign-born to the draft is but one indication that less has been accomplished” in the “cultivation of a spirit of patriotism and Americanization of the foreign-born, [and] the helping of aliens to become citizens” than “had been supposed” (49). Hall posited that if the libraries and schools had properly promoted citizenship and American ideals, immigrants would have been properly prepared to accept the draft. Hall blamed opposition to the draft on the failure of educational institutions and saw it as a failure of citizenship rather than a personal choice.

Librarians debated the best methods and materials for helping immigrants to attain citizenship. In an editorial in the October 1894 *Library Journal*, the writer declared the library’s primary duty to be the “promotion of good citizenship” which he perceived as being more important than “the provision of foreign books for a limited class of foreign readers” (328). Aksel Josephson, in his response in the next issue, asked, “how is [citizenship] to be promoted among the foreign immigrants who come to this country?” “Shall they cut off all connection with their past, forget the history of their old country,

never read its literature, abolish the use of their old language? Is it supposed that people who would do this would make good citizens?” (364). Josephson believed after immigrants became familiar with the library as an access point to literature in their own language, they would eventually begin reading about America, and finally begin reading American books in English, learning about their new country, thereby beginning the journey to good citizenship (364).

Jane Addams, speaking to the Chicago Library Club in January 1903, took a practical view when she claimed that many immigrants would not learn English but added, “they may be Americanized by reading books on American subjects” in their own languages (*Library Journal*, 26). Others wanted to offer books on citizenship and American democracy in foreign languages in order to facilitate access to the information. For example, Canfield asked in 1907 at the Narragansett Pier Conference, “How can these people [immigrants] be given most quickly a fair understanding of their new life and their new relations?” (65). He continued by presenting his plan:

There ought to be in every public library of every city of any size at least the classics of several languages, in order that those speaking these different tongues may appreciate our willingness and desire to recognize the literature of their fatherland. This sympathetic temper will help bring these people to our libraries. But we ought to go further than this, and, having brought them within the library and made them its patrons, they should find there good translations of elementary text-books in civics from English into other languages, and other literature that will be helpful to them in their new relations. (65–66)

Just as some libraries and librarians were open to offering books in foreign languages if the final result was increased literacy in English, others sanctioned their presence in the collections if it would advance the process of citizenship.

In the discourse of professional librarianship as represented in *Library Journal*, helping immigrants with the process of becoming naturalized citizens was a mission that

fit well with the self-described role of the library as a democratizing institution. The process of creating citizens entailed introducing immigrants to American democracy, history, and ideals, and many libraries, including Newark Free Public Library, were willing to have foreign language books on these subjects in their collection in order to facilitate the making of “good, new American citizens.” In addition to the information available in the library, teaching immigrants to follow the rules of the library was seen as good practice for learning the laws of and ideals of American society. Teaching immigrants to be good citizens was also part of the process of acculturation, which will be addressed in the next section.

6.4. American Culture

The final strand of Americanization that libraries embraced—acculturation or “introducing Anglo-American culture” (Mirel 2010, 20) and giving immigrants “an acquaintance of our habits and customs” (Roberts, *Library Journal* 1911, 497)—was an extension of the process of creating “good” citizens. Frederick Morgan Crunden, past president of ALA and a St. Louis librarian, asserted in an address to the International Congress in St. Louis in 1904 that the library was:

a school of manners, which have been well defined as minor morals. The child learns by example and by the silent influence of his surroundings; and every visit to a library is a lesson in propriety and refinement. The roughest boy or the rudest man cannot fail to be impressed by the library atmosphere and by that courtesy which is the chief element in the “library spirit.” (Speech to International Congress printed in *Library Journal*, 7)

Crunden credited the library not only with teaching patrons how to follow rules, thus contributing to becoming good citizens, but he also claimed that the very atmosphere of the library provided a lesson in “propriety and refinement.” In other words, the library provided instructions for the proper way to behave, according to American social norms,

in public places. In this way, the library was, according to Abigail Van Slyck, “a training ground in middle-class behavior, preparing working-class readers to fit in at school, at work, or at church” (1995, 109).

Clara Hunt,⁴¹ a librarian from the Brooklyn Public Library, wrote of the acculturating effects of the library in this April 1903 article in *Library Journal*. Hunt described how to design a children’s room in order to control juvenile patrons’ behavior:

Let a child who lives in a cramped little flat, where one can hardly set foot down without stepping on a baby, come into a wide, lofty, spacious room set apart for children's reading, and, other conditions in the library being as they should, the mere effect of the unwonted spaciousness will impress him, and have a tendency to check the behavior that goes with the tenement-house conditions. We of the profession are so impressed with the atmosphere that should pervade a library, that a very small and unpretentious collection of books brings our voice involuntarily to the proper library pitch. But this is not true of the small arab, who, coming from the cluttered little kitchen at home to a small, crowded children's room where the aisles are so narrow that the quickest way of egress is to crawl under the tables, sees only the familiar sights-disorder, confusion, discomfort--in a different place, and carries into the undignified little library room the uncouth manners that are the rule at home.

In essentializing terms, Hunt equated crowded homes with disorder and confusion and cautioned against generating the same unruly behavior by reproducing those same disorderly conditions in library spaces. Both Crunden and Hunt viewed the library as a public space that by its very physical nature shaped behavior. Like the City Beautiful movement discussed in Chapter 4, the reformist impulse was articulated in carefully ordered spaces that were designed to elicit an appropriately decorous response.

An example from the Newark Public Library was reported in the *Sunday Call* in an article describing the new children’s room, where Clara Hunt was the librarian at the time. “The little people must come to the library with clean hands, too. . . . So there is to

⁴¹ Hunt was the children’s librarian at the Newark Free Public Library in 1901 when the new building was opened with the first children’s room.

be a wash basin in one corner of the room, and children whose hands do not pass muster will have to interview that basin.” In addition, the “comfortable little chairs” and the *St. Nicholas* and *Youth’s Companion* magazines on the tables that were available for the price of “clean hands and good manners” provided examples of American culture (December 13, 1900). The library’s role in acculturation and Americanization was enacted in clean hands, comfortable spaces, American books and magazines, and library rules.

In an effort to publicize the library among immigrants and introduce “foreign-born people to a democratic institution,” Dana distributed nine weekly articles to eight foreign language newspapers in Newark, Jersey City, and New York. These articles, as described by Della Prescott, an employee of the Springfield Branch, in an article in the February 1919 issue of *Library Journal*, included “Stories of American Life” a “[l]ist of books designed to acquaint adult foreigners with American people and their ways of thinking” (LJ 2/1919, 77–78), which was published in the local Italian newspaper *La Montagna*. In addition to using architecture and room arrangements to introduce culture and the social norms enacted within the institution as suggested by Hunt, the library also offered books that reflected idealized American norms of culture and behavior.

Although Dana encouraged immigrants to learn English, to become citizens, and to read the books suggested in the lists he sent out to the foreign newspapers, he was also concerned that immigrants “retain as long as possible an interest and pride in the countries from which they come.” Adapting to “our ways,” according to Dana, occurs, “almost too completely and too rapidly” (1991/1914, 42). In a letter that appeared in *The Newarker*, which was translated into six languages (German, Italian, Polish, Russian,

Ruthenian, and Yiddish), he encouraged immigrants to take home available foreign-language books (including Italian), “out of which you can teach your children not to forget the language of their parents.” Dana characteristically outlined a program for immigrants to follow: “If you will make each of your children read aloud a page of your native language each day,” he declared, “they will bless you for it when they grow up, for it will put money in their pockets and joy into their hearts” (*Newarker* December 1913, 434). A copy of this letter is in Appendix F. Dana was encouraging immigrants and their children through the pages of *The Newarker* to maintain connections with their culture, even as he was urging them to become acquainted with American culture; he was a humanitarian Americanizer who leaned more toward cultural pluralism than a melting pot ideology.

As shown by the evidence of reports circulated through *The Newarker*, the Newark Free Public Library, like other public libraries at the turn of the last century, participated in the Americanization of immigrants in three ways. It provided help for foreigners wishing to learn English by providing assistance to Newark’s many night schools and classes and acquired books in both English and Italian that would help Italians learn the language. The library also provided naturalization information for immigrants wishing to become citizens, helped them to become acquainted with American laws and rules, and attempted to introduce citizens to other less concrete elements of citizenship such as loyalty. Librarians believed this gave patrons, especially children, practice in following American laws, and thereby made them better citizens. Finally, the library worked to introduce immigrants to American culture through their modeling of social norms in the library, often in a very conscious way, such as in

children's rooms where clean hands and dignified behavior was required. In the next part of this chapter, the examination of the practices of library service to immigrants in Newark is focused on the provision of foreign language books and the Foreign Branch.

6.5. Library Service to Immigrants in Newark

Newark Free Public Library's Americanization efforts in the context of the larger professional discourse were addressed in the first part of this chapter. However, this was not the only focus of library service to immigrants in Newark. Two other topics are covered in this section: the development of foreign book collections and an overview of the activities of the Foreign Branch of the library.

6.5.1. Foreign Language Books

When the Newark Free Public library opened in 1889, it had a small collection of German books on its shelves that it had acquired from the Newark Library Association, along with about 10,000 other books (*Finding List*, 1890) as well as some French volumes (1889 NFPL AR). It was almost a decade before new foreign collections were added. As the *Newark Evening News* reported in January 7, 1898, "at the request of two local Polish societies, 45 books in the Polish language were purchased. They have been in circulation only six weeks, but the demand is so strong and steady that the books are in constant use." It appears that it took activity on the part of these immigrants to get books in their language in the library.

In January of 1899, perhaps encouraged by reading the article about the addition of Polish material to the library, a letter arrived at the library from the officers of a Lithuanian Society in Newark requesting books in their language to be placed in the library. In the letter, dated January 26, 1899, they "humbly beg the Hon. Library Board to

assist us in our undertaking which we so much desire, that privilege having been denied us in our own country, by the oppressive laws of Russia against enlightenment and education.” This is an interesting dimension of Americanization—immigrants understood that they had the freedom to request access to material in their own language that was unavailable in their home countries.

There was evidently no response because a second letter, dated February 25, 1899, was received, inquiring about the first request. This missive evidently did elicit a response from the Frank Hill, the library director, because the next letter, dated March 9, 1899, which was addressed to him directly, includes a list of twenty-five recommended books in Lithuanian. A letter dated April 13, 1899, from G. E. Stechert (importer of books and periodicals in NY) responded to Hill’s request about the availability and cost of the Lithuanian books, informing him that all of the books on the list were available and could be acquired if desired⁴² (NFPL Correspondence 1888–1901).

In the annual report for 1899, the following item appears: “At the request of residents of Newark speaking the Lithuanian language about 25 volumes of Lithuanian books were purchased. We are credibly informed that the Newark Library is the first to circulate books in this language.” Both sides were satisfied—the Lithuanians had access to books in a language denied to them in Lithuania, and the library was able to claim it had provided a unique service to immigrants.

Italians also actively participated in shaping the library collection for their own needs. According to an article in the *Call* on November 12, 1905, Italian immigrants collected books with the help of the editor of *La Frusta*, which resulted in the addition of a hundred Italian language books to the library that year. Others followed: in 1912, 500

⁴² The files contained only letters received by the library.

Ruthenian books were added as a “result of efforts and interest of the Ruthenian Presbyterian Church to secure books in their own tongue” (*Newarker* 178). In the same year, through intervention by a Polish newspaper, more Polish books were added to the library (*Newarker*, 178). This pattern of immigrants requesting books in their own languages indicates the desire of the ethnic communities, including Italians, to have foreign language books in the library. It also demonstrates that involving immigrant institutions such as the local Italian newspaper *La Frusta* improved the chances of these requests being fulfilled.

6.5.2. The Foreign Branch

The Foreign Branch of the Newark Free Public Library originally opened on November 16, 1907, and was variously called (in the Annual Reports and *The Newarker*) Branch 4, the Springfield Branch, the Polysyllabic Branch, and the Foreign Branch. It was located in an area of Newark called the Five Corners, about which Linda Morley, one of the librarians in the branch, noted, was “foreign to the extent of being unintelligible to the average American,” where even the signs “are in languages and characters that he [the average American] cannot read” (*The Newarker*, August 1913, 354). The 1911 map in Chapter 4 shows the location of the branch in the midst of large German and Jewish enclaves and several blocks from the nearest Italian enclave, the 14th Avenue colony. In the December 1913 issue of *The Newarker*, L. H. M. describes the demand for reading among immigrants as being so strong “that Newark has had to establish a branch library with some 12,000 books largely for the use of the foreigners who have made their home in this city” (423).

When the Foreign Branch opened, requests for material continued to be made. According to Morley, “At first the only books were German, and these satisfied only a very small proportion of the cosmopolitan population. Soon urgent requests poured in from several nationalities for books in their own language. The Jews were particularly energetic in their appeals and their wants were the first to be satisfied” (*The Newarker*, September 1912, 178). It was through the urging of immigrants that this branch began to provide books in a variety of languages and became known as the Foreign Branch. Although the 1913 Annual Report said that “[f]oreigners and their children are insatiable readers,” (12) it still required effort on the part of immigrants to get foreign books for them to read into the library.

The Newarker noted in a December 1911 article that the branch would be moving into a new building in 1912 and that the original building was “overcrowded from the day it opened.” Furthermore, the people “who work and live” near the branch “are the most determined, persistent and insistent readers that the library comes in contact with.” The article concludes, “As before there will be books in English, German, Hebrew, Yiddish” (30). According to an article in the December 1913 issue of *The Newarker*, the designated service area of the Foreign Branch was populated by 70,000 foreign-born residents and 9,000 American-born residents (424). In the December 1914 *Newarker*, the Foreign Branch, now in its new building, was identified as the Polysyllabic Branch Library and reported to have books in ten languages, situated in a neighborhood where “the elders in almost every family were born across the Atlantic” (28).

But there was apprehension among other library patrons in Newark about providing foreign language books, even at a branch located in a section of the city

densely inhabited by immigrants. The following article in the September 1912 issue of *The Newarker* reflected the concern some patrons appeared to feel at the idea of a branch dedicated to foreign language material and foreign patrons. Catherine Van Dyne from the Foreign Branch wrote,

“Don’t forget the Yankees.” This was the half-joking, half-serious remark of a thorough-bred American citizen, as his books were finally selected after a long and diligent search through the fiction shelves. Perhaps there are still a great many public library readers, to whom this remark sounds almost superfluous. Who is to be considered if not the Yankee?—they would ask with all justice. However, the remark takes on a new and significant emphasis at the Springfield Avenue Branch. It is rather—Who shall be considered in addition to the English speaking adult and to what extent? (177)

Van Dyne, in asking the question “who shall be considered in addition to” is demonstrating an awareness of the differing perspectives, and takes an interesting position. She had developed a relatively more cosmopolitan view in comparison to the chauvinism of the patron above. She was ready to advocate for the branch and its immigrant patrons, but she was aware of the concerns of some “thorough-bred Americans” and needed to diffuse this apprehension by addressing it at the beginning of the article and making a case for the “foreigner’s desire to read.” Despite making this case for foreign language material, later in the article she does concede the “recognized claims of the American reader,” (178) on the budget for new books, once again signaling the primacy of the English reader.

The Foreign Branch was also a distribution point for Americanization material. In an article in the February 1919 *Library Journal* by Newark librarian Della R. Prescott, she described using foreign newspapers to reach immigrants with Americanization information. “In the Springfield Branch [Foreign Branch] of the Newark Library in June 1917, we experimented with foreign language newspapers read in the city. Mr. Dana had

believed for a long time that they formed an undeveloped and potentially valuable field in the education of our foreign population. . . . As a result of our experiment we felt certain that the foreign language press would be found to be the quickest and most effective means of getting Americanization information to foreign-born adults” (77). Prescott and Dana are using one information node in immigrants’ information neighborhoods—the ethnic press—to bring attention to another information node—the library, with a focus on providing information for Americanization.

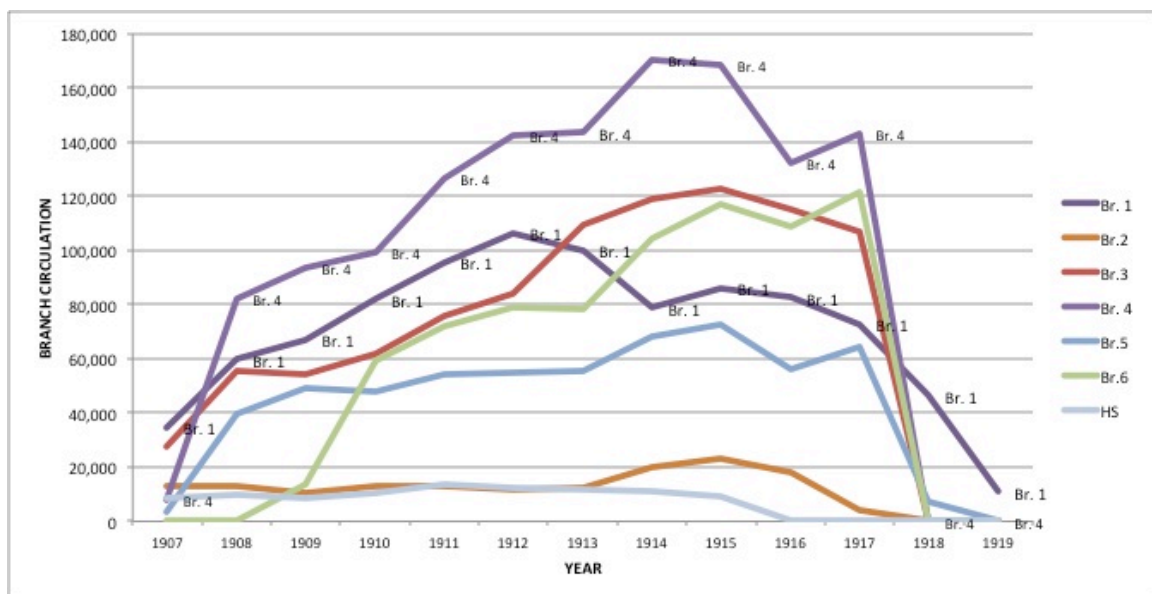


Figure 6.1: Circulation for Newark Free Public Library Branches 1907–1919. Developed from statistics in the annual reports of the library. Branch 1 is the Business Branch, and Branch 4 is the Foreign Branch. Other branches include: Branch 2—the Clark Branch, Branch 3—the Roseville Branch, Branch 5—the Ferry Street Branch, Branch 6—the Clinton Avenue Branch, and HS—the High School Branch.

Examining the circulation statistics for the branches between 1907 and 1918 demonstrates the heavy usage of the Foreign Branch when compared to the other

branches in the system. Figure 6.1 shows the circulation figures for Branches 1–7⁴³ and the High School branch for the years 1907 through 1919. Branch 1 is the Business Branch, and Branch 4 is the Foreign Branch; these are marked in the graph to highlight the difference in circulation between the two branches that represent two different populations that the library chose to dedicate branches to. The other branches are included to provide a comparison for the activity of these two branches. The locations of these branches are shown in the map depicting the library and Italian enclaves in Chapter 5 (see Figure 5.2).

The circulation for the High School and the Clark branches remained low but stable between 1907 and 1913, when the High School branch began to decline, and the Clark Branch increased slightly before the branch was closed. All of the other library branches showed a fairly steady increase in circulation until they were closed in 1917, with the exception of the Business Branch. This branch's circulation reached the highest point in 1913 and then continued to decline through 1919. While there are some dips and recoveries between 1914 and 1917, which may have been caused by issues pertaining to World War I, with the exception of the Business Branch, circulation at the branches was steady and generally increasing.

While the statistics for the Foreign Branch are not separated by language or even into foreign language and English, this branch situated at the heart of a foreign district was the busiest branch in the system. Even in 1911, according to the Annual Report, when the branch was closed for two months while the new location was under construction, the branch still lent 126,782 books, or 12 percent of the books lent by the

⁴³ The branches are referred to by number in statistical reports in the annual reports. The numbers and names are connected within the reports.

entire library system, while the Business Branch, the next highest in the system, lent 95,715 books or 9.1 percent of the total. Although the Foreign Branch's circulation is higher than that of any other branch, the decision was made based on financial pressures (noted in Chapter 4) to shut this branch, along with eight other branches and to keep only the Business Branch and two small branches located in schools open.

According to the internal publication *Library Notes* after "the catastrophe" of the branch closings, the books and furniture from the Foreign Branch were moved to the main building by February of 1918. The annual report for 1918 notes a more than 50 percent drop in the circulation of foreign books (from 20,303 in 1917 to 9,641 in 1918 [16]), no doubt a direct result of the relocation of books. The business branch circulation also dropped in 1919 because all other books beside business books were taken out of the branch, and the overall circulation of the library dropped 37 percent in 1918.

An article in *The Newarker* on December 1914 said, "Nothing can better suggest to our new citizens from foreign lands, that this is a country not only of opportunity, but also of hospitality and of encouragement of ability, than this simple collection of books in their own tongues placed at their doors," (28) but in 1918 this outreach to immigrants, which had been inadequate, was gone as a result of decisions made in response to financial pressures. All of the branches spread out around the city had now been closed, and their materials were in the Main Branch. This further reduced accessibility to the material for many immigrant patrons who may have already been reluctant to venture outside of their enclave to use the library.

6.6. Conclusion

Libraries participated in the Americanization project in three areas—helping immigrants to learn English, aiding them in becoming citizens, and introducing them to American culture. The debate in the professional library literature contains polemics about the best methods for promoting Americanization among immigrants and the inclusion of foreign language books in libraries. This discourse of Americanization constructed immigrants as a separate class of users whose needs coalesced around material that would help them to learn English and become citizens who were familiar with American culture. The idea that libraries needed to socialize and Americanize immigrants to American culture was imbedded in the institution of the library and was reified through policies and practices of service to immigrants.

The practices of the library in providing services to foreign patrons in Newark were examined through both foreign book collections and the establishment and closure of the Foreign Branch. The Newark Free Public Library's institutional records show a pattern of agency on the part of Italians as well as other immigrant groups demanding foreign language books in the library. They wanted books to read in their own languages, and they wanted cultural representation in the library. However, as the outcome of financial difficulties the Foreign Branch was closed while the Business Branch remained open, a decision made by institutional actors (Dana) rather than the patrons.

The next chapter examines interactions between immigrants and librarians. Studying these interactions will develop another facet of the depiction of immigrants' perspectives of the library through the understanding of the social and cultural attitudes that shaped the behaviors of both immigrants and librarians.

CHAPTER 7: INTERACTIONS: GENDER, CLASS, AND CULTURE

As shown in the last chapter, Americanization was the primary focus of libraries' services to immigrants. The question addressed in this chapter concerns exchanges that occurred when Italian immigrants used the library. A majority of the staff in public libraries in the U.S. were white, well-educated members of a new professional class of women,⁴⁴ while Italian immigrants who came to the United States were employed as laborers, thus presenting multiple hierarchies of gender and class within their transactions in the library. This chapter specifically focuses on the positions of gender, class, and culture as revealed in recorded interactions between librarians and their Italian patrons in the context of the national discourse about immigrants and immigration (RQ 3).

Exchanges between Italian immigrants and library staff were situated in each groups' social and cultural milieus, within the context of their relative positions of power and subalternity. Librarians' impressions were influenced by the national discourse about immigrants and immigration, which also shaped policy in the library. Immigrants' perspectives were similarly shaped by social and cultural attitudes toward Americans. Both perspectives, examined briefly in the first two sections of this chapter, provide a background for examining interactions between librarians and immigrants.

An emerging class of professional women that included teachers, settlement workers, and volunteers for charitable organizations, worked and interacted with immigrants in everyday life. Evidence of everyday encounters between immigrants and

⁴⁴ In 1910, 78.5 percent of library workers in the US were female; in 1920, it increased to almost 90 percent (Garrison 2003, 173).

these professionals recorded in the press and in official institutional records presents a context for the examination of interactions between immigrants and librarians, who were also part of this new class of female workers. The last section of this chapter examines the interactions between immigrants and librarians as recorded in *Library Journal* as well as Newark Free Public Library's annual reports and contemporary newspapers.

7.1. Social and Cultural Attitudes toward Immigrants

Americanization programs at the turn of the twentieth century were promulgated in response to concerns about possible cultural disruptions, fears that immigrants threatened American identity, the racialization of immigrants (Higham [1955] 2008), and concerns about their radical and subversive influence (Wiebe 1967). In their article “‘Little Alien Colonies’: Representations of Immigrants and their Neighborhoods in Social Work Discourse, 1875–1924,” Yoosun Park and Susan Kemp note that overcrowding and poor conditions in cities came to be associated “not with poverty, per se, but with the immigrant poor” (2006, 711). The concerns about immigrants and their disruptive influence helped to create “deeply rooted presuppositions” about immigrants (2006, 712) that shaped and were shaped by the national discourse discussed in Chapter 6.

This construction of Italian immigrants was also shaped by the complicated view held of the country of Italy as a home to high culture in contrast to immigrating Italians who were representative of low culture. This divide between elite culture and popular culture is embodied in the difference between country and people. Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale sum up the multifaceted view that many Americans had of Italy and Italians in their book *La Storia* (1993): “Italy was variously seen as a friend of America,

land of [Giuseppe] Garibaldi, martyr of popular liberty and freedom, birthplace of Dante, *la mere des arts*, Italy the brave, gallant, intelligent. Yet the image of Italian people as being fickle, immoral, and decadent persisted” (26–27).

The duality of this sentiment is evident in an article that appeared in *Harper's* in 1921 entitled “Michelangelo in Newark.” The author of the article, Grace Irwin, recorded two different responses to her announcement that she would be teaching art to Italian children in Newark. One friend was reported to have said, “It must be wonderful, simply fascinating to teach art to Italian children . . . the Italians were great masters of art, weren't they?” (446). The first friend's conception of Italy was connected with masterpieces of the past. The other friend's response was connected to the present. “Teach art—art in *that* district—to *those* children? . . . they need something infinitely more practical. A course in hygiene, morals, besides the three R's” (446; emphasis in original). In an abstract sense, Italy represented genius and art, but in a concrete sense, Italians represented an object for reform.

Italy's “artistic genius,” provided the inspiration for the new neo-Renaissance library building in Newark. On September 3, 1905, the *Newark Sunday Call* called the Newark Free Public Library “Our Renaissance Library” describing it as “Newark's only example of the Italian palazzo, or palace style.” The article contained pictures of the library and the Strozzi Palace in Florence and compared architectural details of the two buildings [NFPL Clippings Scrapbook]. There appeared to be great civic pride in the comparison of the library to a Florentine palace of the high Renaissance.

The library was willing to carry on the customs of Italy; buying books on Italian art and celebrating the acquisition of images of the best paintings from Italy while

maintaining the library's position as an elite cultural institute. "New foreign books" requested by the reading public were, as librarian Catherine Van Dyne notes in *The Newarker* in 1912, "not added unless the need is very urgent on account of the expense and labor" (178).

In contrast, inside the library, Beatrice Winsor, the library's assistant director, adhering to a focus on Americanization, was quoted on October 10, 1905 in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* as saying: "It is not the function of the public library to keep alive Italian and Austrian customs" (NPFL Clippings scrapbook). However, the 1905 Annual Report listed *History of Painting in Italy* as one of the significant acquisitions of the year. In *The Newarker* of April 1915, John Cotton Dana described his excitement over finding a listing in a catalog of "[f]ive volumes on dear old Medical School of Salernum" (listed as *Collectio Salernitana* and published in Napoli) that he marked for the library to purchase (87) although it is not known if this purchase was ultimately completed. This was likely of limited use to the general population of Italians looking for books to read in their native language, but it was a famous collection of important medical thought, and as such was connected to Italy but not necessarily the Italian immigrants in the community.

An incident that was observed in the Newark Library was described in the following article in the December 14, 1890 *Press-Reporter*:

An enterprising organ grinder had stopped in front of the library and after dispensing several airs, the little Italian girl armed with a tin cup stepped through the entrance and immediately began to make the rounds of the catalogue room. The occupants of the room were somewhat startled and a few made motions as if attempting to extract their pocket books, but the doorman intervened and by the ejection of the little girl saved an inestimable amount of cash for the customers of the library.

Several years later, *The Newarker* had a description of another young girl, "disheveled and untidy, but showing the eyes of a dreamer" who was viewing an

exhibition on the Museum floor of the Main Library. According to the writer, the girl's appreciation of the beauty of the items on display in the museum was "deeply implanted in her narrow bosom by a long inheritance from beauty-loving Oriental or Italian ancestors" (April 1912, 94). As an outsider in American culture, she could view the art appropriated by elite culture, but her appreciation for this art was presumed to be from some sentimentalized hereditary notion of beauty.

These two incidents highlight the complex relationship between the perception of Italy as the home to art and culture and the realities that Italians faced as social outsiders when they immigrated to America.

7.2. Social and Cultural Attitudes of Italian Immigrants toward Americans

Italians had a similarly divided view of America and Americans. Ilaria, in her book *The Imagined Immigrant* (2009), notes that to Italians "America represented the idea of liberation from poverty, exploitation, a futureless life," (12) and this myth of America was their image of America. Their opinion of individual Americans once they arrived was less exalted. Pietro DiDonato in his book *Three Circles of Light* says the *paesanos* "considered the American a barbarian" (1960, 158) while according to Jerre Mangione in his book *Mount Allegro* "even before coming to the U.S., Sicilians were educated to be suspicious of Americans" (1989, 224).

The Italian press in America contributed to the negative views that immigrants had of Americans. George Pozzetta reports that, "Most papers also failed to present a balanced picture of American life outside of the immigrant quarters. There existed, in fact, a strong anti-American bias running throughout the commercial press" (1973, 39). According to Sartorio, "[i]t is chiefly from these papers that the Italian population gets its

information concerning America,” and he believed the papers were written by “ignorant men” who had never been out of the colony and gave Italians the wrong information about America (1918, 43). The papers were produced within the enclaves (as seen in Chapter 5), and were part of the information neighborhood, both as a source of information and as a medium for transmitting information; they were subject to the limits of the knowledge bases of the producers. American papers had similar issues, according to Pozzetta, who notes that Italian “journals claimed, with a modicum of truth, that Americans and their newspapers emphasized only the bad aspects of Italian immigrants and avoided notice of more praiseworthy activities at work within the colony” (1973, 39). Thus newspapers contributed to the negative images that Italians and Americans had of each other.

American organizations reached out to Italian immigrants for various charitable and religious reasons, but Italians did not always welcome their interventions. Enrico Sartorio spoke of the impression some of these visitors made on the Italian immigrants in the following passage.

The Presbyterian Church, which has carried on the most successful work among Italians, after many years of mistakes and sad experience has found out that while Italian women will receive an American parish visitor with a sweet smile, the next day they will tell the Italian pastor that they thought her somewhat crazy, or at least very peculiar. There is such a chasm between the mentality of simple Italian women and that of the American lady parish visitor and there is such a strong tendency in the Anglo-Saxon race to enforce its views without much consideration for the views and traditions of the other race, that the results are not lasting. (Sartorio 1918, 123)

Sartorio noted a distance between Italian women and parish visitors, which, while expressed in essentializing terms, reflected cultural differences that created difficulties when the two come into contact. The successful visitor, according to Sartorio, was “of

Italian extraction with good training in both Italy and America” (1918, 123). As noted in Chapter 2, Italians trusted other Italians more readily and understanding the cultural background of the people they were trying to help facilitated the interactions.

This section of the chapter examined some of the stereotypical constructions developed by both Italian immigrants and Americans who interacted with immigrants. Both groups associated positive connotations with the image of the country based on notions of Italian artistic genius or American freedom and opportunities. However, individuals were not viewed as favorably, and there was a marked lack of trust on both sides. In the next part of the chapter, these perceptions provide the context for examining encounters between immigrants and the professional class of workers, including social workers, teachers, and settlement staff, as background for the exchanges between librarians and immigrants in the last part of the chapter.

7.3. Cross-Cultural and Cross-Class Interactions In Newark

Librarians were part of a class of women in the service professions that included social workers, charitable workers, nurses, and teachers who were often working within the same Progressive framework of reform. Women in these professions wrote descriptions of their everyday interactions with Italians in Newark in newspapers, magazines, and in the official annual reports of Newark institutions. These descriptions provide an idea of the images that this professional class, including librarians, projected or could have projected onto Italian immigrants in Newark.

Sicherman notes the problems of studying interactions between classes: “In view of the scarcity of recorded working-class responses and their frequent filtering through middle-class mediators . . . it is impossible to reconstruct these cultural interchanges

definitively" (167). However, Guha (1999) suggests that two types of evidence for these actions can be employed to understand everyday interactions between classes. One type of evidence is immigrants' quotes in institutional records and in newspapers. A second type of evidence is indicated by the response of the authors of official documents to actions taken by immigrants such as a change in institutional policy. Both types of evidence will be used to examine the interactions between immigrants and members of the professional class who had much in common with librarians and then interactions between librarians and immigrants.

The complex perceptions that immigrants and professional women constructed of each other made interactions between them fraught with possible problems. Barbara Sicherman makes this point in her book *Well-Read Lives* (2010) when describing how Jane Addams's "ambitious and idealistic program [at Hull House] work[ed] in practice," noting that "[c]ross-class ventures carry opportunities for misunderstanding as well as for fellowship, particularly in view of likely differences in goals and expectations and the disparities in power between giver and receiver" (167). Librarians occupied a similar professional position vis-à-vis immigrants, in positions of power as part of the cultural elite represented by the library, and they were subject to the same cross-class issues as settlement house workers and parish visitors.

Some of the problems stemmed from the attitude of individuals such as social workers, who, Handlin notes were

"made ruthless in the disregard of [immigrants'] sentiments by the certainty of their own benevolent intentions. Confident of their personal and social superiority and armed with the ideology of the sociologists who had trained them, the emissaries of the public and private agencies

were bent on improving the immigrant to a point at which he would no longer recognize himself.” (2002, 252)

According to Michael Harris, librarians shared this zeal to improve immigrants and “seemed to feel that they enjoyed a mandate from God to enlighten the immigrant and went about their various tasks in a spirit of authoritarianism” (1975, 14). As shown in Chapter 6, this enthusiasm can be seen in the discourse in *Library Journal* surrounding the subject of Americanizing immigrants.

7.3.1. Encounters with the Professional Class

A description of Italian children from an article on the front page of the *Newark Evening News* on November 25, 1887, relates the experiences of a “vivacious young woman” who taught a Sunday School class of bootblacks in Bethel Chapel, which is described as “on the border of Italy” in Newark. The teacher refers to her students as “little urchins” and is frustrated when she tries to teach them cleanliness, only to have them clean their hands and faces, while leaving behind a ring of dirt, and is horrified that they “had performed their ablutions in the canal.” “Think of it,” she says, “in the dirty canal!” She calls them “dirty good natured little bootblacks” and is embarrassed when they follow her around the uptown district, reporting “I have gone up Broad street with burning cheeks” as students “trudged along at my heels.” As Park and Kemp note, “social work representations underscored and supported the problematization of immigrants in the public discourse” (705), and this description by the unnamed Sunday School teacher similarly presents a narrative of Italian immigrants as “dirty” lower class “urchins” who needed to learn American standards of cleanliness.

Grace Irwin taught in a school in one of Newark’s Little Italies in the late 1910s. In the article she wrote for the September 1921 issue of *Harpers* about her experience,

she declares that she would, “never forget the sinking feeling in my heart as I left American buildings and homes behind and found myself walking deeper and deeper into a strange and wholly foreign land.” Both the Sunday School teacher and Irwin refer to the boundaries of the enclave, crossing the border into what they felt was an alien space. The Sunday School teacher located her school on “the border of Italy,” and Irwin described leaving American buildings behind as she walked to the school in the Italian enclave.

Irwin continued, “Swarms of children screamed shrilly or quarreled furiously over their games. Every corner was decorated with a group of young loafers about the age of seventeen. These stared at me with a bold insolence” (446). Irwin became more comfortable with the students as the school year progressed, but she felt responsible as part of her job to give “lessons on the House Beautiful” (452) as well as hygiene lessons. “Social workers characterized immigrants as a population that due to its racial propensity and cultural heredity, tended toward overcrowding and dirty homes” (Park & Kemp 2006, 723). The lessons were part of the program of Americanizing immigrants, which as a teacher, she saw as inevitable and benignly beneficial. As noted in Chapter 5, librarians shared the same inescapable sense of the necessity and benefits of the Americanization of their immigrant patrons.

A report in the Newark Free Public Library Annual Report for 1896 included a summary of responses to a survey sent out to schools in Newark. The library was attempting to determine the interest in the schools for a program of traveling libraries, and in answer to a question: “Could you, and would you, take the responsibility of circulating juvenile or other books among your pupils, provided the library could send, say fifty volumes at one time to your school?” one principal, Eliza A. Brookfield,

answered, “Pupils too mixed, Italians could not” (NFPL AR 1896, table of results). A cryptic response that, within the context of the survey, appears to mean that she believed that the lack of homogeneity among her students would make it difficult for them to use the library, and it would be particularly problematic for her Italian students. Her perception of her Italian students was that they could not be responsible for library books.

Accounts from social service agency reports reveal the tensions in the attitudes and images that the professional class of women had in dealings with immigrants. A report on district work, “A Year’s Work by a Bureau of Social Service (1915–16)” written by Helen B. Pendleton, Supervisor of District Work, describes cooperating with “Italian Benefit Societies . . . the Italian newspapers, and several intelligent Italian men and women who help with needed relief, friendly visiting and investigation” (11). With this aid, Pendleton continued,

[n]o longer does the charming Sicilian or Neapolitan with well simulated despair, declare that his *bambino* is starving, because he knows full well that the nice lady cannot understand or speak Italian and will probably not discover that he is making \$10.00 a week, or has excellent credit at the Italian grocery, or has *paesani*, who would help if the Associated Charities did not. He knows now that truth-telling pays better in the end, and that if he is in real trouble the District Office is a place where sympathy and real help are forthcoming. (11)

Within Pendleton’s description of the interactions between the social services workers and Italians, she is describing immigrants using what de Certeau would call tactics to subvert the intentions of the agency by practicing deception and adapting the situation to his own needs, mostly the need to provide more for his family. The members of the professional class and of the laboring class perceive the same scenario differently; although when other Italians become intermediaries between the agency and immigrants,

the dynamic changes because the language barrier is erased, and there is the possibility of connections with the neighborhood that could uncover the man's ruse.

A report by Miss Dyckman on the North End District found in "A Year of Service 33rd Annual Report of the Bureau of Associated Charities of Newark NJ, 1914–1915" summed up some of the cross-class and cross-cultural problems that occurred when her agency interacted with Italian families. She recorded,

The defensive attitude so natural to the foreigner in a strange country and the equally natural prejudice of native-born people toward the foreigner may be overcome when the few who know both sides of the barrier take the trouble to explain these to each other. Unless they are overcome, constructive work is impossible and relief giving becomes an endless source of misunderstanding and deceit. (n.p.)

Dyckman indicated an awareness of the images both participants in transactions between immigrants and native-born Americans had of each other, and this is notable when compared to other reports of interactions. By acknowledging the "defensive attitude" as natural when in a strange place, she appeared to empathize with immigrants encountering unfamiliar situations and people. She recognized that the intervention of an individual both parties trusted was beneficial to the interaction. However, her goal was stated in terms of "constructive work" and she wanted to minimize deceit as much as Pendleton (in the earlier report), but she employed a different strategy.

In addition to aiding immigrants, social and charitable workers were working to Americanize immigrants. Irwin did this with the House Beautiful lessons. The description given of the Newark Social Settlement Association (whose headquarters were in the Neighborhood House, located in the Ironbound section) read: "An association to maintain settlement houses in congested neighborhoods to exemplify and to make known and correct the social and civic limitation of the people of the neighborhood" (MacDougall

1912, 101). The settlement house workers wanted to “correct” what they perceived as limitations by teaching immigrants American customs and citizenship, a goal they shared with librarians. In Chapter 5, these goals of helping immigrants attain citizenship and introducing American culture were identified as two of the three areas (learning English was the third focus) of Americanization work that librarians made part of their program. The use of the word “correct” indicates again the idea that there was a proper way of behaving, one determined by the dominant society in an effort to promote social conformity.

The various descriptions of Italian immigrants as “dirty” (Sunday School Teacher); “loafers” (Irwin); deceptive (Pendleton); and “defensive” (Dyckman) are indicative of the teachers, social workers, and settlement house staff’s perceptions of the Italian immigrants in Newark at the beginning of the twentieth century. These professions enabled women to enter the public sphere through employment in areas that were extensions of their responsibilities in the private sphere where they were concerned with upholding moral, civil, educational, and cultural standards. As part of an emerging class of professional women, librarians had a similar cultural and educational background. In the following section, examples of interactions of immigrants and librarians in the professional literature and in the records of the Newark Free Public Library are examined and show that their responses to immigrants were similar to other professional women of the era.

7.3.2. Encounters with Librarians

Librarians reported differing impressions of Italians as readers. In the *Library Journal* of February of 1911, a report about a program presented at the New York Library

Club on the topic of “Our Foreign Population” noted, “Where there are Scandinavian, German and Jewish emigrants the library is always well patronized. It is more difficult to get results with Italians. They are more inclined to the arts” (83). A librarian from the New York Public Library observed, “Italian people were difficult to reach because [they are] not a reading public,” while Miss Burns of the Hudson Park Branch of the same library “said that the Italian is retiring and dreamy, and loves literature and poetry and she feels the aesthetic hope of the country lies with him.” In May 1911, a report from the Troy (New York) Free Public Library in *Library Journal* notes that “Italian books are chiefly read by persons of that nationality, whose love for the classics of their own literature is in marked contrast to the reading tastes of other people” (269). Each report treated Italians as a single type of reading public, either difficult to reach, or in keeping with the view of Italy as a home to great art and artists, dreamy and artistic. The tension created by multiple views of Italy and Italians explored earlier in this chapter, as well as the personal experiences of the librarians, shaped these librarians’ perceptions of Italians as readers.

That librarians expected immigrants to be uneducated is shown by this comment published in *The Newarker* in November of 1913:

It is surprising how many of these foreign-born, taught in their home country, read more than one language. It is not at all unusual to see a borrower taking out books in three languages. The other day, when a young man brought his books to the desk, it was noticed they were in five different languages, and they were all for himself alone! (417)

The writer is surprised by the cosmopolitanism of her foreign patrons. There is a tension between the librarian’s stereotypical image of immigrants and the reality of this polylingual foreigner.

The range of impressions these librarians had of Italians was also evidence of the multiple classes of Italians they interacted with. In Newark, literate, educated Italians were explicitly mentioned in either the library records or newspaper accounts. An Italian consul, Mr. Mangini, donated four daily Italian newspapers to the library for several years. In his history of Newark, Frank Urquhart described Dr. Angelo Bianchi as a “physician, druggist and all-around good business man” (1913, 210). The editors of the various local papers were from the literate class—the editor of *La Frusta* spearheaded a drive to collect Italian books from the community for the library.

Not every Italian used the library the same way. Robert Merton (1972) describes individuals as belonging to various status sets. These “variously interrelated statuses . . . interact to affect both their behavior and perspectives” (22). While all belonged to the broader status of being Italian, they may have self-identified as part of a smaller set of Italians from a particular region or town. In addition they belonged to sets based on their education, job skills, age, plans to stay in the country, member of early or later waves of immigration, and generational membership. Each of these status sets or communities of practice could have affected their use of the library.

The librarians at the Foreign Branch, including Linda Morley, Catherine Van Dyne, and Della Prescott worked closely with immigrants and would have interacted with many different types of users. This may have been why they were advocates for the patrons of their branch—they saw them as individual users. In several articles in *The Newarker* they presented the case for providing additional library services for immigrants. Catherine Van Dyne made the case for larger quarters for the branch that served many foreign patrons (September 1912), and L. H. M repeated the plea for larger

quarters for her foreign patrons in the August 1913 and December 1913 issues. In 1917, Della Prescott, working at the Foreign Branch, after describing a foreign patron's intellectual search for the "answer to Faust's question 'Who am I,'" commented in the staff newsletter *Library Notes* that she had been "urging on the people of the neighborhood the need of books and a large branch and adequate service." She continued, "I am in despair. The cause of helping to educate this people is so vital and of such immediate importance and we do nothing! We fear the foreigner, but all he wants is to know the truth and we answer him with tom-toms and liberty parades" (November 15, 1917, 6). Prescott, responding to a heightened focus on patriotism and Americanization connected to America's participation in World War I, attempted to bring attention to the needs of the foreign reader.

On the other hand, John Foster Carr, founder and director of the Immigrant Publication Society, articulated a generalized view of Italian immigrants based on Italian farmers who came to America. At the 1914 meeting of the ALA he said, "The change for the immigrant in coming to America is most often a change from the most primitive agricultural life known on this planet to the most rapid moving urban life of our Western civilization. Here country is already city, all life is urban and wonderful are the educative forces of our city" (141). In another speech, "What the Library Can Do for Our Foreign Born," given at the given at the Massachusetts Library Club and printed in *Library Journal* in October 1913, Carr noted: "[w]e are trying to cultivate intimate and friendly relations with our foreign-born friends, and to do this on so simple and democratic a basis, that there can be no suspicion of a patronizing interest on our part" (568). Carr, generalizing about immigrants, wanted to avoid the appearance of patronizing them, but

he used the word “primitive” to describe their former living conditions, contrasting it to a superior “city,” and asserted that information must be presented simply so as not to arouse immigrants’ suspicions.

As seen in the case of the parish visitors that Sartorio described and Dyckman’s understanding of the defensive position assumed by immigrants, someone trusted by both participants, such as a fellow Italian, facilitated interactions. There is no evidence in the annual reports or other institutional sources that any of the library workers were Italian (before 1919) so opportunities for cross-cultural misunderstandings between Italians and librarians similar to those described in the earlier examples were probably inevitable. The only mention of this kind of intervention is provided by other immigrants in the Foreign Branch. Catherine Van Dyne, the librarian in charge of the branch, noted in an article in *The Newarker* of September 1912 that immigrants “who have become fairly familiar with the English language are always willing to help a newcomer, who may find difficulty in filling out his application” (*The Newarker*, 179).

An editorial in *Newark Daily Advertiser* on May 1, 1901, described the perceptions of a working girl who felt mistreated by the library staff. According to the writer of the editorial, who signed herself Just a Girl,

“[i]f a person goes there stylishly dressed and wearing an expensive hat she can get the best of attention from the attendants, but if her clothes indicate that she is a working girl there isn’t much courtesy shown. When her book is ready it is not ‘Miss Brown’ that is called, but merely ‘Brown.’” “That,” according to Just a Girl, “is one of the reasons why working girls do not care to go often to the library. No girl likes to be held up to scorn, as they are when asking questions of the attendants at the library.”

She perceived in the actions of the librarian a differentiation of manners and courtesies to different classes of patrons within the library, as determined by appearance.

The library appeared to be a more welcoming place to elite patrons, and the attitude toward working girls in a democratic and egalitarian institution had a chilling effect on her use of the library; it left her unwilling to risk further poor treatment from the librarians. The working girl is in a subaltern position, marginalized outside of the power structures of class evident within the library.

Just a Girl does not denote her immigrant or non-immigrant status, but many of the immigrants' working clothes would have deviated from the standards of the well-dressed patrons, depending on the nature of their employment. Just a Girl claims to represent other working girls in reference to these events that occurred in the old Newark Free Public Library building (the new building opened in 1901) and said "Many of the girls who have felt the displeasure, the scorn of the people there, have been afraid to go to the new place, lest they be crushed absolutely under the increased weight of pride in the new building." The new building was an imposing edifice, based on an Italian palazzo, and the building may have intimidated these working girls who already felt that they had been mistreated by the staff.

Librarians may not have expected to see Italian women in the library at all. In her article "Beyond the Stereotype: A New Look at the Immigrant Woman," Maxine Seller says, "According to a librarian [immigrant] women are left behind in intelligence by the father and children. They do not learn English; they do not keep up with other members of the family" (1975, 59). Newark librarian Linda Morley shared a similar view in an article in *The Newarker*. She noted,

Of course it is to be expected that men will acquire [English] faster than the women; because so many of the foreign women seem never to go out of the house. Time and again it happens at the Library that a child asks for a book for his mother and when told to ask her to come to the Library to

sign an application, he will say in a tone of mild surprise and with the air of boredom that one feels in explaining self-evident facts, “She can’t. She has to stay at home.” “But she must go out sometimes doesn’t she?” “No, she can’t. She don’t ever go out.” (December 1913, 423– 424)

This child’s voice is mediated through the librarian’s report and can only be read indirectly, but it provides evidence that immigrant mothers whose children Morley interacted with did not go out of the house, and therefore would have had limited contact with the library, and limited opportunity to learn English. However, the viewpoint of the children must also be taken into account. The meaning of “can’t” as constructed here is unclear—it could mean that she is not permitted by custom to go out or is too busy to go out, and a child might not find that difference important. It is also unclear if he meant that she literally did not go out, or perhaps that she only went out within the enclave and did not go out of the neighborhood. It appears that, whatever the reason, for many women immigrants that the library was not directly within their information neighborhood.

Morley does not reveal in this passage whether or not the mothers requesting books received them without coming into the library. It is interesting that although she categorizes the women as unable to learn English, they were asking for books to read. It is unclear if they are requesting English or foreign language books, but what is clear here is the desire on the part of these women to read books. There is evidence in the *Just a Girl* letter to the editor of working-class women using the library as well as the middle or higher-class women that appeared to the writer to get proper attention from the clerks at the library. But Linda Morley appears to have seen few immigrant mothers using the Foreign Branch of the library.

If immigrant mothers did not frequent the library, their children did, sometimes as messengers for their parents, as above and sometimes for themselves. An article in

Library Journal in April 1906 described children in Newark bringing books home for their parents. The article, "Library and School Work in Newark, NJ" reported:

Some of the teachers in parts of the city more remote from the library, its branches and deposit stations, asked to have books for the parents in their school rooms. With such libraries are sent lists of the books included in each case, and these lists the children take home and from them the parents make their selection. The children then become messengers for their parents, carrying the books back and forth. So large a proportion of the parents in Newark are of foreign birth that in some localities the children's books are more acceptable than the adult books, and here regular school room libraries serve a double purpose. Doubtless many people who would not otherwise use the library do so in this way. (167–168)

In this case adults at home were receiving books, in contrast to the uncertain outcome in Linda Morley's report. The library in Newark was reaching immigrants through the traveling libraries for adults, which supplemented the system of traveling libraries already established for children by the library beginning in 1899 (NFPL Annual Reports). In the 1903 annual report, Dana said, "Very often a teacher receives a note from a parent asking that she may have, for her own enjoyment, some book which her child has mentioned as being in the class library. In this way we are reaching both old and young" (27). Children provided access to books for their parents through the traveling libraries that were circulated among the schools in Newark, reaching parents who, like the immigrant mothers mentioned by Morley, could not get to the library themselves.

There is also ample evidence of children using the library and its branches. In the Second Annual Report of the Newark library (1890), the Reference Department brags, "Students resort to [the Reference Department] daily, and after school hours pupils wend their way hither to prepare for the morrow's work" (15). In the Third Annual Report (1891), Hill noted that use of the Reference Department fell by one half in the summer because children were not using it for school assignments.

Immigrant children who attended school were acclimated to American institutions. The writer Rose Cohen, a Russian Jewish immigrant, is quoted in Sicherman's book as commenting, "A child that came to this country and began to go to school had taken the first step into the New World. But the child that was put into the shop remained in the old environment with the old people, held back by the old traditions, held back by illiteracy" (2010, 205). Without the acculturation of school, children were comfortable in their enclaves, but when they interacted with American institutions such as schools, they were able to interact with other institutions more comfortably.

In the September 1912 edition of *The Newarker*, Catherine Van Dyne, who was in charge of the Foreign Branch, described the situation regarding children's books and the high volume of use. There were twelve public schools within "easy walking distance" and,

The appearance of the book cases was deplorable, with very few books when the children started their quest and almost none at the end of the day. Often desirable books returned by one child were discovered by the next in line and spoken for then and there, so that there were certain books which almost never reached the shelves during the winter months. (177)

In 1912, the Foreign Branch did not have Italian books, but most of the younger users were, according to Van Dyne, using encyclopedias and other reference books for schoolwork. The article in *The Newarker* reported that the hours for children were 3:00–5:30 and 12:00–5:00 on school holidays and they were not allowed in the library at night—although young working people were welcomed at night.

In November of 1913, as reported in *The Newarker*, the children's hours at the Foreign Branch were from 3:00–5:30, and they would "come by hundreds" (417). The older patrons came in for foreign language books while the younger patrons, who

“through their teachers obtained their first library card,” were looking for books in English. In the December issue of the same year, in an article that was making the case for larger quarters for the library, the author reported that the library was so crowded that there was no room for quiet reading and contemplation, and some of the tables and chairs had to be removed from the space due to crowding. “The children cannot be wholly separated from grown people and they disturb the latter” (426).

Among all the children who used the library, Italian children were given particular attention in newspaper articles. In the *Newark Sunday Call* dated November 17, 1901, an article titled “The Children’s Room at the Library” described children’s interactions with the librarian in the Main Library:

A special class of books, very simple in their wording and style, calculated for the youngest readers and for other children not over familiar with the English language, are known to the young ladies in charge of the room, and in general library parlance, under the catalogue number of 428. Tony, a bright young Italian finds these books quite to his taste. “Got any more of those two-forty-eights?” he asked the other day. (NFPL clippings scrapbooks)

This was the only mention in a two-column article of the nationality of one of the children, and it both singled out Italian children as reading easier books and also as less conversant with the language. One other child is quoted, no nationality mentioned, but his comment is an interesting analysis of British author G. A. Henty’s imperial views that ends with “I don’t think I will read his books any more.” The contrast between the descriptions of the two boys is interesting. Although Tony is described as “a bright young Italian,” it is the other boy whose nationality is not identified who is presented as a discriminating reader. The librarian echoes and reinforces stereotypes; while attempting to praise Tony as bright, she points out a mistake. Tony is attempting to appropriate the

space of the library for his own use, but the librarian appears to be resisting by pointing out his inability to properly use the library.

An article from the *Newark Sunday Call* dated January 26, 1902 (NFPL clippings scrapbook) titled “Children and Books” described the behavior of children in the library. The author said, “Here are two little Italian girls, the oldest sister bringing the little one under close convoy, pushing and prodding her persistently with all the oppressive mothering which older sisters of every nationality are so fond of showing.” Again in a two-column article this is the only mention of nationality of children although the actions of other children had been described. Perhaps it was because Italians were the fastest growing immigrant population in Newark at the turn of the last century, but it may also have been because Italians represented a particular kind of social outsider. While there is benevolence expressed in this recounting of the incident, there was no reason to call out the nationality of the sisters and then associate the actions with words such as “pushing,” “prodding,” and “oppressive.” The librarian appears to be reacting to nationality first, and actions second.

7.4. Conclusion

Tensions existed in the images that Americans and Italian immigrants constructed of each other that influenced their interactions. The perceptions that each developed of the other in social situations as individuals differed from the idealized views of the best each country had to offer. Thus, Americans viewed Italy as the home of great art that was to be celebrated, even drawn upon as the architectural inspiration for their Newark Free Public Library building, a central cultural institution in the city, but they viewed the working-class Italian immigrants as social outsiders. Likewise, Italians saw America as a

place that provided them with opportunities, but Americans themselves were “peculiar” and “barbarians.” These negative images were also reported in both American and Italian newspapers, reifying the reciprocal perceptions each group had of the other.

Librarians shared an educational, social, and cultural background with other newly developing professional classes such as teachers, settlement workers, and volunteers for charitable organizations. Evidence of their interactions with Italian immigrants provides a context for examining the cross-cultural and cross-class interactions of librarians and immigrants. The discourses in the sources examined in this chapter revealed that women in the emerging professional class that included librarians viewed immigrants as objects of Americanization, and there were differences in cultural and class hierarchies that created power inequities in many interactions.

Most of the interactions that were recorded by librarians concerned Italian children. They used the library often and were the contact point between the immigrant communities and the library, both in the branches and through the traveling school libraries. Italian children were acculturated to public institutions through public schooling, and this familiarity with cultural institutions extended to libraries. However, accounts in local newspapers singled out the actions of Italian children in the library, reporting on behaviors that marked them as different from other children, who were not identified by nationality.

This chapter investigated the interactions between librarians and immigrants in the library. The next chapter will examine the fragmentary evidence of Italian print material in the library between 1889 and 1919 and the discourse of the “fiction question”

to determine what media was available to those who wished to read in their native language.

CHAPTER 8: ITALIAN PRINT MATERIAL IN NEWARK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

According to Wayne Wiegand, “The cultural politics of public libraries are written in the collections they acquire and make accessible to their patrons” (2011, 263). While this research did not uncover enough information to go from the books to the cultural politics of libraries and librarians, some assumptions will be made about the books in the library from the cultural politics evident in national and local discourses. This chapter focuses on the print material in Italian available in the Newark Free Public Library as well as the national professional discourse around the selection and reading of fiction known as the “fiction question,” (RQ4) particularly as it applied to the shaping of the Italian collection.

This narrative is constructed from the library’s official records and internal documents as well as external sources such as English and Italian language newspapers, which contained references to Italian language books, magazines, newspapers, and miscellaneous printed material in the collection s well as the few reports of circulation figures included in the Annual Reports and *The Newarker*. The general collection development policies are examined as well as decisions about appropriate material for libraries, which focuses on what was known as the “fiction question” in professional circles. This allows a reconstruction of the materials available to Italian immigrants at Newark Free Public Library between 1889 and 1919 and helps to create an understanding of the library from immigrants’ perspectives in terms of what Italian language material they might have encountered if they used the library.

8.1. Italian Language Print Material

Finding evidence of Italian language material in the Newark Free Public Library between 1889 and 1919 called for consulting a variety of primary sources including the library's annual reports, staff notebooks, printed finding lists, and newspaper articles in the library's scrapbooks, with varied success. Unfortunately, the Newark Public Library does not appear to have saved its circulation records for the years 1889 to 1919, which could have yielded the most reliable data about the contents of the Italian language collection and the patrons who borrowed the books.⁴⁵ According to an article in the May 1913 issue of *Library Journal*, accession books, another valuable source of information about books in the library, were not used at Newark Free Public Library (256). Therefore institutional records and newspaper articles provided the evidence for a partial reconstruction of a list of Italian language and periodicals held in the library from its establishment through 1919. A review of the sources consulted to compile the overview of Italian print material and circulation figures shown in Table 8.1 follows, with commentary that indicates not only what was in the sources but also where information was not found.

Two sources partially replace the information that would have been in acquisitions records although they primarily indicate the lack of Italian language books in the library collection for the years that they represent. *The Finding List of the Free Public Library of Newark, N.J.* was published originally in October 1889 to coincide with the opening of the library, with updates until 1896, when a second complete list was published. A *Finding List* containing only adult English prose fiction titles followed in

⁴⁵ Christine Pawley's book *Reading on the Middle Border* demonstrated how this data can be used to explore reading in a community through an analysis of the titles added to the library collection, and tracking which books were read and by whom.

1900. The original 1889 list includes, according to the prefatory explanation, “about 10,000 volumes” (n.p.). To supplement these finding lists and provide information to their users regarding recent acquisitions, the library published a monthly newsletter, *The Library News*, which contained a list of all new books added to the library each month. Today, the Newark Public Library only has volumes 5–13 (1893–1902). The finding lists and the monthly volumes of *The Library News* categorize nonfiction books by subject and English fiction by author. Both the original *Finding List* and the available issues of *The Library News* were examined for the subject headings “Italy” or “Italian literature.” No Italian language material was listed either in the opening library collection catalogued by the first finding list or in the available issues of *The Library News*.

As both the *Finding List* and *The Library News* covered only the early years of the library indicating the lack of Italian language titles in the library before 1902, additional sources were consulted to uncover evidence of such material in subsequent years. Each Annual Report from 1889 to 1919 was examined to find any mention of Italian language material in the library. The format of the reports varied from year to year and reflected the style of the particular individual writing the reports. The reports in the late 1800s, written by Frank Hill, contained narratives about the library, some statistics about books circulation, and lists of every periodical that the library received. The library did not subscribe to any Italian publications during this period. Later when evidence from other sources, such as newspapers, pointed to the presence of unnamed Italian publications in the library the Annual Reports no longer provided lists of individual periodicals and newspapers.

The reports written by John Cotton Dana provide more statistics with less narrative, but the format and detail of information contained in the reports he wrote also varied from year to year. In 1906, a list of every mimeographed item and the number of copies were part of the report, spanning four and a half pages, while the next year the report on mimeographs was dispatched in one paragraph. It was difficult to develop a continuous record of material available in the library from the annual reports due to the uneven nature of reporting, however, they contributed some information. The lack of detail on Italian language print material in the Annual Reports reflects the priorities of the library director in authoring a report that was meant to reflect positively on those aspects of library work that would most appeal to the bureaucratic audience of the report. Information about Italian material was not a high priority in these reports.

Another source of information was *The Newarker*, edited by Dana and published monthly by the library from November 1911 to October 1915. The subtitle of this publication was *A Journal Published to Introduce a City to Itself and to its Public Library*, and the target audience for this publication was Newark businessmen. *The Newarker* contained information about material and services for immigrants that Dana felt would be of interest to the intended readers as evidence of the library's usefulness to the business community through efforts to Americanize foreign laborers. A similar problem of continuity plagues this source in part because many of the statistics presented in the publication were from the annual reports; however, the articles contained additional information not found in the annual reports. *The Newarker* is available in a searchable form so in addition to reading all of the issues, searches using the terms

“Italy,” “Italian,” and “immigrant(s)” provided additional insights into the composition of the collection.

The library compiled scrapbooks of newspaper articles, both complimentary and critical of, the library. Articles were primarily from the local English press but also included those from foreign language papers, including the Italian paper *La Frusta* and a few from papers outside of Newark. Some of the newspaper articles collected during Dana’s term as director carried his by-line, others with no by-line were written by library employees for inclusion in the newspapers, generating publicity for the library. The newspapers gave the libraries space for library news, comments, and book lists that according to the 1911 Annual Report amounted to nearly 3,000 articles and notes in local newspapers “aggregating to 950 columns . . . largely contributed by library staff” (18). In the 1912 Annual Report, newspaper articles included “219 items large and small covering about 59 columns” of newsprint (19). Two other internal library documents, the Staff Notebooks and the Library Notes also yielded information, as seen in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 contains a summary view of the books, periodicals, and newspapers mentioned in the sources described above as well as the few circulation figures found in these sources. This is a very fragmented view, but at a minimum it provides a glimpse of the collection of Italian language books as well as Italian newspapers and periodicals that were available between 1904 and 1913 at the Newark Free Public Library.

The table graphically illustrates the types of material available pertaining to Italian print material in the library and the sources. The lack of consistent data for any of the categories limits analysis. The apparent increase in the number of Italian books in the library between 1905 and 1915 coincides with the growing Italian population in

Newark—there were ten times as many Italians living in Newark in 1920 as in 1890, and the population more than doubled from 1900 to 1910. The entries in the table are discussed in more detail in the next two sections, “Books” and “Newspapers and Periodicals.”

Table 8.1: Italian Language Material in the Newark Free Public Library between 1904–1917 as Referenced in Contemporary Sources.

Year	Italian Print Material in NFPL, 1904–1917				Source
	Books	Period- icals	News- papers	Circulation Statistics	
1904	N/A	N/A	<u>2</u>	N/A	NFPL Annual Report; <i>News</i>
1905	100 (added)	N/A	3	N/A	<i>News, Sunday Call</i>
1906	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	<i>News</i>
1907	N/A	4	N/A	N/A	<i>Sunday Call</i>
1908	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	NFPL Annual Rpt. Staff Notebooks
1909	400 (total)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<i>La Frusta</i>
1910	500 (total)	4	N/A	N/A	<i>Morning Star</i>
1913	750 (total)	3	N/A	3937	<i>The Newarker</i>
1915	325 (added)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<i>Library Notes</i>
1917	N/A	N/A	N/A	409 (Foreign Branch only)	NFPL Annual Report

Note: Italian Material in the library by year as reported in the NFPL Annual Reports: *The Newarker* (library publication), *Library Notes* (internal library communication), *Finding List for the Newark Free Public Library*, and local English (*News, Sunday Call, Morning Star*) and Italian (*La Frusta*) newspapers. N/A indicates no information available.

8.1.1. Books

The first mention of the presence of books associated with Italy in the library appeared in the *Finding List for Newark Free Public Library* dated October 1889 in a section titled, “Italian and Spanish Literature.” This section listed two volumes of Dante Alighieri’s works translated to English, two volumes in English on Italian poets by Hunt (most likely the two volume *Stories from the Italian Poets* by Leigh Hunt), and *Studies in Italian Literature* by Catherine Mary Phillimore. These are not shown in Table 8.1 as they are in English; they are mentioned here to indicate the absence of Italian language material at this point in the library’s history. There are also two small sections on Italy, “Travel and Descriptions” and “History,” which listed books in English about Italy. A note in the section on German and Scandinavian Literature, which similarly lists English language books, directs readers to a list of works in German to be found in the German catalogue. No such note appears in the Italian section, which indicates the probable lack of a list of Italian language books, and perhaps even a lack of books in Italian. In 1889, as the library opened to the public, and the number of Italians living in Newark was small, it appears that material related to Italy and Italian literature was only available in English. If Italian immigrants living in Newark at the time read English, they may have made use of this information node (library), but if they only read Italian, the library was not a good source of information at this time.

The Annual Report for 1891 boasts of having “between 400 and 500 French books, comprising the best works of many of the representative French writers” with the same number on order from Paris, and noted “[t]here are now about 2,000 German books in the library,” (14). No mention is made of any other foreign language books in this

annual report. The 1902 May–August issue of *The Library News* contained a list of thirty-one French books and thirty German books added in those months but no mention of Italian books. Germans were the largest immigrant group in Newark until 1910 although their numbers peaked in 1890 and then declined (see Figure 4.4). There was never a large French immigrant population in Newark, but the books in French were probably included due to the reputation of classic French literature.

In the November 1897 issue of *Library Journal*, a short paragraph of news about the Newark Free Public Library mentioned that “[a] collection of foreign books—Polish and Italian—were added to the library in October, at the request of residents of those nationalities” (717). There was no mention of how many books were added, and the Italian books were not listed in the *Library News*, under Italy or Italian literature, or in the annual reports.

The next mention of Italian language books in the library comes from an article in the *News* in June of 1904. The writer began with a description of the collection of German language books and then mentioned Italian literature, which consisted of “the classics and a small selection of novels, with some Italian-English language books.” In 1905, this collection was enhanced by the addition of one hundred books. The *Call* reported on November 12, 1905, that these books were collected due to the efforts of the editor of the Italian language newspaper *La Frusta* and Newark’s Italian consul as well as donations from the Italian community. According to the paper, the books “will be given a place on the shelves with the few Italian books the institution already possesses.” This is supported by an article on January 6, 1906, in the *Newark News* that reported, “there were many excellent books” in Italian in the library, of which “a large number were

contributed by the Italian people of Newark.” This article confirmed both the donation of books mentioned in the *Call*, and its own earlier report of a small collection of Italian books already in the library in 1904.

La Frusta reported (in Italian) on November 6, 1909, that there were 400 Italian books in the library (NFPL Clippings Scrapbooks). These books were available, according to the paper, at the Main Library, at 213 Springfield (the Foreign Branch) and at 205 Ferry Street. The Ferry Street Branch was located in the Down Neck section of Newark, within the Italian neighborhood, although, as noted in Chapter 4, outside of the area with the largest concentration of Italian immigrants. Several months later the *Morning Star* reported the presence of 500 volumes in the Italian collection, which “represents the classic authors, as well as the best of the present day writers” (February 3, 1910). Neither article has a by-line, but the specificity of numbers of books and their location in the first article and the wording used to describe the quality of the books in the second article suggest the information may have come directly from the library as part of their public relations campaign.

By August of 1913, according to *The Newarker*, there were 750 Italian books in the library. Only two foreign languages—German and French—were better represented, with 4,500 and 2,600 books respectively. Books in other languages included 500 Polish, 400 Yiddish, 200 Hebrew, 200 Russian, 200 Ruthenian, and 150 Lithuanian books. As reported in the February 1914 issue of *The Newarker*, the circulation of Italian books was 3,937 in 1913. Based on the collection of 750 Italian books as reported in the same publication in the summer of 1913, this was quite a robust circulation of this small collection of books. *The Newarker* declared that circulation of the “collection of Italian

books reached the highest percentage of circulation to number of volumes” (463) and the highest of all foreign language books. As noted in an earlier chapter, this demonstrated a high demand for books in Italian and substantial use of the collection. In comparison, the collection of 2,600 French books only had a circulation of 2,128. Each Italian book would have circulated an average of 5.25 times while each French book circulated an average of less than once (0.82 times), clear evidence of the use of these Italian language books.

In December of 1915, it is mentioned in a typed copy of the *Library Notes* that 325 Italian books were added to the library, including 250 fiction and 75 nonfiction books. At this point, there could have been at least one thousand books in Italian in the library, presuming all of the previous 750 books plus the recently added 325 volumes were all still in circulation.⁴⁶

The annual report in 1917 reports a total circulation of only 409 for Italian books out of the Foreign Branch, but this figure most likely does not represent the total number of Italian books lent because not all foreign books were located at that branch. The circulation numbers for other foreign language books at the Foreign Branch were: 3,885 Yiddish books; 2,972 Polish; 1,503 German; 1,438 Russian; 1,238 Ruthenian; 1,088 Hungarian; and 343 Hebrew books. These larger numbers of books lent in other languages appear to be consistent with the location of the Foreign Branch of the library in an area within the German, Jewish, Ruthenian, and Slavic neighborhoods (see map of ethnic enclaves in Chapter 4) but not convenient to the larger Italian neighborhoods in Newark.

⁴⁶ It is likely that with the heavy use indicated by the high circulation of Italian books noted in 1913, some volumes would have been damaged, lost, or too worn to continue to be circulated. Although it is equally possible that some books were added in the interim but not reported in any of the sources consulted.

Based on the fragmented evidence presented here, Italian language books were being added to the Newark Free Public Library, primarily in the decade from 1905 to 1915. However, based on the heavy use of these books, even though not every Italian in the city would want to read books in Italian, or was even literate in either Italian or English, Italian-speaking patrons appeared to be underserved by the library.

8.1.2. Newspapers and Periodicals

In the early 1900s, there were several Italian language newspapers and periodicals available in the library. In 1904, *La Frusta* and *L'Ora*, two of the locally published Italian newspapers, were listed in the Annual Report as gifts to the library, and in 1905, the *Sunday Call* listed three Italian newspapers at the library: *L'Frusta* [sic], *L'Ora*, and *Montagna* [sic], another locally published paper. All three papers were in print for many years before that time. *La Frusta* was published from 1899–1914, *L'Ora* from 1901–1920, and *La Montagna* was the longest running of the three, published from 1894–1920. Despite their long publishing history, this is the only specific evidence found of their inclusion in the library. In addition, they were there because they were given as gifts, not because there was a decision to purchase them for the collection.

There was a reference in the *News* in 1906 to the 400 newspapers carried by the library—four of which were Italian but no indication as to names of the Italian papers or even if they were locally published. The annual report for 1908 mentioned that the library received four daily Italian newspapers. This was elaborated on in the Staff Notebooks—the papers were given to the library by Mr. Magnano and consisted of one each from Milan, Rome, Palermo, and Naples. Magnano was identified as the Italian consul in the Staff Notebooks, and Frank Urquhart (vol. 3 1913) reported that Alfred Magnani, an

Italian doctor, was also the Italian consular agent, so this was likely the same person. As both a doctor and Italian consul, he was part of the elite class of Italians living in Newark. The four dailies from Italy strategically covered major cities in both the North and South of Italy. In 1908, both the Staff Notebooks and the Annual Report mention that while these papers were still being received, they were not readily available in the reading room, rather they needed to be requested from the librarian. This coincided with a general trimming of available newspapers in the reading room. It would have been interesting to discover how often these papers were asked for.

Between 1907 and 1913, the library subscribed to various Italian periodicals. In 1907, the *Sunday Call* referred to *Nuovo Antologia* and three other unnamed Italian magazines available in the library. In 1910, *Nuova Antologia* was once again mentioned in the *Morning Star* on February 17, 1910 in a column, Art and Books, along with *Illustrazione*, *Scena Illustrata*, and *Lettura*. All four magazines were illustrated; *Illustrazione* was a weekly, *Scena Illustrata* a bi-monthly, and both were described in the article as “the most popular in style.” *Illustrazione* represented “the best that is in Italian art and literature, and is a current history of the times.” *Lettura* was described in the column as “a popular illustrated monthly” while *Nuova Antologia* “more serious in character is devoted to current literature and topics of the day.” John Foster Carr’s 1914 book *Immigrant and Library: Italian Helps with Lists of Selected Books*⁴⁷ described *La Lettura* as a “cheap monthly magazine with an illustrated cover” where “cheap” refers to price and is not a value judgment. According to Carr, *La Lettura* contained “many short

⁴⁷ John Foster Carr was the founder of the Immigrant Education Center, which published books such as this one in partnership with the American Library Association. They were meant to provide librarians information on working with immigrants and contained recommended lists of books and periodicals to assist with collection development.

stories and continued novels” as well as articles on “travel, politics, biographical sketches, art, etc.” (86). The same publisher also issued what was “commonly considered the best newspaper in Italy and with high rank among the newspapers of the world,” and both were also declared “clean” and suitable for libraries (86). Carr described *Nuova Antologia* as a magazine of “greatest distinction and importance” which “deals with politics, science, art, poetry, literature” (85). An article in the May 5, 1907, *Sunday Call* reported that “only the residents of the Italian colony having a good education and considerable taste for the best in their literature read” *Nuova Antologia*. The readership of this periodical was highly literate and interested in serious literature.

Three years later, the library reports subscribing to foreign magazines so that readers could “keep in touch with at least some of the current literature of other countries” and through the magazines they “may read of the new men with their new thoughts” in their home countries (*The Newarker* December 1913, 432). Three Italian magazines were listed—*La Lettura*, *Arte Italiana*, *decorative e industriale* (Appendix H), and *Revista d’Italia*. The 1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica* described *Rivista d’Italia*⁴⁸ as a monthly literature review issued in Rome. *Arte Italiana* was an art magazine sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce in Italy. The choice of these periodicals will be examined further in a later section of this chapter.

8.1.3. Children’s Books

Very little evidence exists for the presence of children’s books in Italian in the library. As discussed in Chapter 7, the children used the library, and mediated between

⁴⁸ Rivista and revista both translate as review or magazine, however, the former is the Italian word and the latter is Spanish in current usage. A copy of the journal in Google Books shows the title as *Rivista d’Italia*. It is unclear why it would have been listed in *The Newarker* as *Revista*.

the library and their parents. Children were willing to go outside of the information neighborhood, going to the Main Library or the branches to request books for themselves and for their parents. They also brought books home from the traveling libraries in the schools. Children were expected to, and often did, learn English in school so Newark seems to have made little provision for those children that may have wanted to read in Italian. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Dana did encourage families to read aloud from library books in their first language so that they “can teach . . . [their] children not to forget the language of their parents” (*The Newarker* December 1913, 434).

In 1902, when a special issue of *The Library News* listed 700 of the best books for boys and girls there were four books related to Italy. Three had English language titles: *Italian Child Life* by Marietta Ambrosi and *Rollo in Naples* and *Rollo in Rome*, both by Jacob Abbott. These last two were part of the series *Rollo's Tour in Europe*. The final book listed was *Courè* by Edmondo de Amicis and may have been in Italian but was most likely in English. Translated editions used the Italian title on the cover with the subtitle *An Italian Schoolboy's Journal* on the title page. This book was the most popular book in Italy in 1906, and by 1923, was the first novel in Italy to sell over a million copies, boosted to this level of popularity, according to Ann and Michael Caesar in *Modern Italian Literature*, by its “patriotism and a pedagogical imperative” that made it a classroom staple in Italy (2007, 129). However, this seemed to have been one of the few books available for children at the Newark library that connected them with their parents’ and relatives’ lives in Italy.

There is one more brief reference to children’s books in Italian in Newark in the *Staff Notebooks*—a note directing the staff to put books in the children’s collection that

were labeled Italian into the “Italian Collection,” which presumably contained adult material also (Staff Notebooks, July 19, 1909). No explanation for this transfer is noted, but this would have limited children’s easy access to books in their parents’ native language.

The fragmentary evidence of the Italian material in the library, gathered from a review of available sources, is a largely quantitative picture of what was available to Italian immigrants wishing to read in their own language. In the next section, the character of these books is explored in the context of the debates over the provision of foreign language print material to immigrants, useful literature, and the “fiction question.”

8.2. Appropriate Material for Libraries

8.2.1. Useful Literature

Tied to Americanization and the concept of the role of libraries as educational institutions was a focus on the provision of useful literature. That meant a preference for nonfiction books, serious literature, and books and periodicals that contained information, as well as a suspicion of reading for pleasure. Even in the late 1920s, when Douglas Waples and Ralph Tyler conducted their survey on reading, the results of which were published in the 1931 book, *What People Want to Read About*, fiction and humorous writing were excluded from the survey of literature, constituting a separate category of reading. The researchers wanted to understand what people were interested in reading, yet the survey, funded by the Carnegie Corporation, and supported by the ALA and American Association for Adult Education, did not look at the “purely recreational reading which is at present so large a part of public library circulation” (xviii). They

hoped the results could be used by those “practical workers . . . concerned about the selection, distribution, direction, and effects of adult reading” (xxvi), so when choosing their subjects for examination, “[f]iction, poetry, and humor were excluded because they are not usually considered useful sources of information” (149). Waples studied reading and defined reading in terms of its usefulness.

In his introduction to the library’s annual report for 1894, mayor of Newark and President of the Board of Trustees, J. A. Lebuquecher, praising the growth of the institution since 1889, noted, “That which I deem of most importance, however, is the constant enlargement of the departments of more useful literature” (4). The August 1913 issue of *The Newarker* included an article titled “Don’t Forget the Usefulness of Your Public Library” in which nineteen questions such as “Have you made your will?” and “Why stay at home this summer and learn nothing new?” are listed. Each of the questions was answered the same way—“Don’t forget the books and journals on all subjects in your public library” (368). These spheres of practical life are just two examples of the importance placed on the usefulness of library material. In his article, *Tunnel Vision and Blind Spots: What the Past Tells Us About the Present: Reflections on the Twentieth-Century History of American Librarianship*, Wayne Wiegand notes that the ALA’s goal was to make “the American library a force for an ordered, enlightened, educated, and informed citizenry” through offering “the best reading” for its patrons (1999, 3–4). Best reading, in an example of what Wiegand calls the library professions’ “tunnel vision and blind spots,” about patrons’ reading interests, did not include fiction. This focus on useful literature extended to foreign literature and the provision of material to foreign-born patrons.

An article in the *Newark News* on May 9, 1906, reported that, according to the children's room of the library, "No juvenile readers in this cosmopolitan town show more discrimination in their choice of books than the Polish and Russian Jews." The article continued,

Fiction, as a rule, is not what brings the young people in question to the diminutive desk; in a large majority of cases it is the desire for information which is the impelling force, and while other children are asking for storybooks . . . [Russian and Polish Jewish children] prefer requests for a history, a biography, something, in short, which will be of assistance in school work. They regard the library as an open door to opportunity and they are quick to enter.

The librarian who brought this to the attention of the paper and the writer of this article celebrate the manner in which students are utilizing the library for educational purposes, rather than fulfilling recreational reading needs.

The children that the article described were using books written in English. Dana also stressed the usefulness of English books to foreign-born patrons in his letter to "The Foreign People of Newark," which was translated into Italian as well as several other languages and printed in *The Newarker* in December 1913 (see Appendix F). "The Library can do something for you," Dana said. "It has English books that can help you to make your business successful. It has books that show men and women how best to carry on their trades and professions" (434). Dana focused on books that contained information for improving businesses in the city, both to appeal to the paper's audience, the businessmen of Newark, and to position the library as a valuable source of information for proprietors of all types of businesses within the city.

The selection of foreign language books was influenced by their usefulness in furthering the three aspects of the Americanization program of interest to libraries—teaching English, promoting citizenship, and encouraging acculturation. Chapter 6

explored the debates in professional library discourse in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of providing books in foreign languages and the questions of whether or not ready access to foreign language books would slow down the process of learning English, and therefore undermine the program of Americanization.

The Newark Free Public Library, as discussed in the last section of Chapter 6, and as shown in the case of Italian books in Table 8.1, did add foreign language books to their collection, but this often required intervention by immigrants and their institutions to prod the library into putting the books into the library. As also mentioned in Chapter 6, Dana urged parents to read books in their first language to their children, encouraging immigrants to retain their languages and their cultures while also learning English.

Dana did not specify what type of foreign language books that parents should read to their children, but Beatrice Winsor, Assistant Library Director for the Newark library, voiced some concern about the one hundred Italian books donated to the library. She was quoted in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* on October 10, 1905 (NFPL clippings scrapbook), as saying, “We are Americans and we want to make American citizens of them [Italians]. These books will not hinder this effort, for they number among them some of the best Italian classics, though a few modern novels have also been received.” Winsor appears concerned about the effect of foreign language books on Americanization although not to the point that she would object to all foreign language books. While Dana is encouraging patrons to come into the library and check out books in their first language, Winsor is approving the additions of foreign books to the library only if they do not create roadblocks on the path to becoming citizens, and she states that the classic Italian books will not hinder this progress toward citizenship.

Winser's reasoning for this decision may have been similar to John Foster Carr, who developed lists of suggested Italian books for libraries such as *Immigrant and Library: Italian Helps, with Lists of Selected Books* (1914). He described what he saw as the pitfalls of adding foreign books to the collection in an article in the *Library Journal* of April 1919,

Of course foreign books must be carefully chosen. If the librarian depends upon the chance and irresponsible advisor, she will soon find her shelves crowded with books of radical socialism, anarchism, bartenders' guides, books of religious propaganda, trash. (246)

Carr, like Winser, was primarily concerned with making American citizens out of Italians, which, along with helping immigrants learn English and about America, also meant not allowing supposedly foreign ideas such as socialism and anarchy and propaganda to be unwittingly put on the shelves of public libraries. Stress was placed on learning about American democracy along with American customs and habits.

Another reason that Winser may have approved of the best Italian classics that were added to the collection when books were donated in 1905 was their value to American students of Italian. Reporting on the new Italian material donated to the library, the *News* began its January 6, 1906 story by noting, "[s]tudents of Italian will find many excellent books in that language" in the library. Five years later the *Morning Star* on February 3, 1910, reported that the Italian collection would appeal to "student[s] of Italian literature whether native or American."

Emphasizing the usefulness of Italian books to American students of the language may also have been an attempt at diffusing the concerns the community had with providing foreign language books to immigrants; educating American students in foreign languages was an acceptable project for the library while providing immigrants with

reading material in their own language was more suspect. As discussed in Chapter 6, Linda Morley mentioned this concern in her article in *The Newarker* in August of 1913 where she cited “those who say that it is not the business of a public library in this country to supply books for the people who cannot read English” (354). Promoting the utility of foreign language books to patrons who can read English helped to justify the purchase of the books for the collection.

The Italian periodicals that the library subscribed to between 1907 and 1913 also contained “quality” literature and informational text. The language used to describe the publications included phrases such as “the best that is in Italian art and literature,” “serious in character” (*Morning Star*, February 17, 1910) and of “greatest distinction and importance” (Carr 1914, 85). These art magazines, literature review journals, and periodicals that contained articles on history, biography, politics, and travel provided a connection with high culture in Italy and fulfilled the educational mandate of the library.

Librarians’ focus on nonfiction books on a variety of topics, quality newspapers and periodicals, and classic literature complemented the belief in the educational role of the library. Concurrent with this focus on usefulness and education was the discourse about novels in libraries, or what is termed the “fiction question.” While most of the debate over the place of novels in the library took place in the context of English print material, this discourse also had an effect on the collection of Italian language material in the library, which will be explored in the next section.

8.2.2. The “Fiction Question”

Related to librarians’ focus on useful literature and the educational function of the library, the fiction question encompassed the debate over the quality of novels added to

library collections. This debate included concerns about the immoral and disruptive qualities of novels and a hierarchy of quality determined by a cultural elite. The fiction question is explored here along with evidence of how it influenced collection development of Italian fiction in the Newark library.

In her 2010 book, *Well-Read Lives: How Books Inspired a Generation of American Women*, Barbara Sicherman sums up the concerns about fiction at the turn of the last century. She says that fiction, “had been suspect from the outset, not least because of its appeal to women and to youth of both sexes, the groups deemed most in need of moral supervision. Arbiters of culture feared the power of fiction to stir the imagination and, in consequence, its ability to undermine the established order” (45). Sicherman highlights the ideas of morality, sensationalism, and disruption that were elements of the debate over fiction, a debate that was carried on in public discourse regarding censorship as well as within the professional library literature.

The concern about fiction’s ability to disturb the status quo, according to John Storey in *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (1998), stems from the “culture and civilization” tradition initiated by Matthew Arnold that was influential from the 1860s to the 1950s. Storey describes how the onset of urbanization and industrialization limited the ability of “powerful minorities” to “police the culture of those without political power” as the working class developed “an independent culture at some remove from the direct intervention of the dominant classes” (21). This led the minority who had previously had broad cultural authority to fear “a weakening of social authority” and “a destabilizing of the social order.” (22). The discourse of the fiction

question was situated within this changing landscape of cultural authority during Newark's golden age of industrialization and growth.

The limited ability to intervene in this independent culture contributed to what Richard Altick, in his book *The English Common Reader*, saw as the rise of a "rigid ineffaceable association of the mass reading public with low grade fiction" as the catalyst that led to "the whole vexatious 'fiction question'" (1957, 64). This association of mass culture with low culture was accepted by librarians, but they could not directly control patrons' interactions with these novels so at the turn of the twentieth century and beyond they attempted to limit access to fiction within the library by not purchasing it and to direct the conversation about the quality of this culture through recommended reading lists and active promotion of classic literature. For example, the library in Newark published a pamphlet called *A Thousand of the Best Novels* for the first time in 1904, and they revised and reissued it four times between 1904 and 1919, with multiple printings of each edition. The fourth revision, printed in 1919, sold for 5 cents, and the second page of this edition lists thirty-eight libraries that used the list (including some duplicates, see Appendix G) indicating the widespread influence of the list that Dana developed.

Most librarians agreed that some fiction did belong in the library although one extreme case of rejecting fiction is the often-noted example (Carrier 1965; Pawley 2001; Garrison 2003) of William Kite. Kite was the librarian of the Friends' Free Library of Germantown, Pennsylvania, in the late 1800s and banned fiction in his library, even for children. He was concerned that lower-class readers might develop unreasonable aspirations due to unrealistic portrayals of life in novels and no longer be content as factory workers and clerks—novels were disruptive and needed to be controlled. This

was a notable case and does not seem to have been the norm, or even to have inspired followers, and eventually even Kite relented and allowed some fiction into his library⁴⁹ (Jellet, 1901).

Determining which fiction belonged in the library was a pressing question. In “The Place of the Public Library in a City’s Life,” an address he gave at the dedication of the Trenton, N.J. Public Library on June 9, 1902, Dana remarked,

As a nation we are expressing ourselves through [novels]; in them we are putting our history, our hopes, our ideals. Many people, confined by nature and circumstances to narrow and laborious lives, will get from their novels, here distributed, refreshment, inspiration, wider views, an admirable discontent. But they should be chosen with care. There are enough of the *best* to fill all needs.” ([1920] 1969, 70; emphasis added)

Dana recognized the growing popularity of novels and was in favor of people reading them, but he insisted this fiction must be of high quality and must be useful to the reader, expanding the reader’s horizons, rather than merely entertaining.

Dana elaborated on the concept of the best in his introduction to the 1904 edition of *A Thousand of the Best Novels*. He said that “some novels are surely better than others . . . it is wise to read chiefly the better ones.” Dana did not believe ordinary readers are capable of classifying fiction into “best, good, poor and bad” because novels “pass from the best to the worst by an infinite series of minute gradations” that are best interpreted by readers with experience. The determination of what to read is framed in a judgmental hierarchy that excludes what elites labeled lowbrow, which included much popular fiction. This discourse about the quality of culture and fiction was expressed in terms

⁴⁹ Jellet wrote that Kite was “most pronounced against fiction, but during the last few years, he seemed to look upon it differently” and then recounts finding a novel (*Deborah’s Diary*) in the library. Despite the reported change in Kite’s views on fiction, Jellet recalls Kite’s response when questioned about the presence of this novel in the library, “they will get in once in a while in spite of us” (Jellet 1901, 10–11).

such as best, good, poor, and bad. Other terms used included trashy, immoral, and sensational, which indicate a moral opinion related to the lack of control that the cultured class felt over mass-produced books. Librarians agreed that “all immoral fiction should be excluded from libraries” (Carrier 1965, 31).

This language is reflected in the annual reports of the Newark Free Public Library. In Newark, Frank Hill declared in the annual report of 1892 that “no trashy books are on the shelves” of the Newark Public Library, only fiction that is “the best of its kind” (30). Similar language is found in an article in the *Call* on November 18, 1910, about the Foreign Branch although the paper called it the Springfield Avenue Branch.

Here is waged a ceaseless campaign against cheap and sensational literature and the indifferent trash that is displayed on news stands and in book stores such as are found in that part of cosmopolitan Newark. Here boys learn through tactful suggestion that there are better books than trashy tales of adventure and girls discover that sensation and clap-trap emotional books do not constitute the whole of literature and that just as interesting things can be read in the books worth while as they have found in the shoddy imitations.

Terms that identify books on the bottom of the hierarchy include “cheap,” “sensational,” “indifferent trash,” “clap-trap emotional books,” “shoddy imitations,” and the article, in words possibly provided by the library, reflects the fiction question debate about the danger of low quality fiction. These terms were also part of the debate about foreign material—Carr warned against trash in foreign collections (see quote on page 257). Winsor, while not using these terms, approved of the addition of Italian novels to the collection only because they were the best of Italian classics, thereby implying they were not trashy.

In his 1892 annual report, Frank Hill referred to a belief about the negative power of reading, saying, “the novels [in the library] . . . are of such character that no permanent

injury can come from reading them,” and in the 1894 report: “present day fiction . . . is mainly trash, injurious alike to the minds and morals of the reader” (14). Garrison notes that many librarians like Charles Cutter of Boston Public Library felt that “long term exposure to popular fiction . . . contaminated lesser minds” ([1979] 2003, 45). As Sicherman notes, the minds that needed protection from “cheap books . . . with their depictions of urban vices and seductions” (2010, 45) included women and children. Cutter was defending fiction in public libraries, but Garrison notes, “Cutter clearly had two groups of readers in mind: the fit and the unfit, the readers of *The Nation* and the hordes of the factories and the tenements” (2003, 34). Similarly William Kite’s rationale for excluding fiction from his library was that he was concerned novels would give those “not having been trained to careful study,” false information about life. He worried that novels would not teach the working class “contentment with their lowly but honest occupations” (quoted in Carrier 1965, 32).

Writing about the novel in the colonial and postcolonial period in America, Cathy Davidson observes, “[s]ustained misgivings as to the social and moral effects of fiction represent, then, an attempt by an elite minority to retain a self-proclaimed role as the primary interpreters of American culture” (Davidson 2004, 105). Dana expressed the place of librarians in this minority in the introduction to the 1904 edition of *A Thousand of the Best Novels*. He explained his view of who should make the determination about the best material:

A good general guide in art, in *belles-lettres*, in fiction, poetry and drama is this: Those things which have pleased the most people for the longest time are the better. . . . Further, those persons are likely to be better judges of the pleasure-giving capacities of a book who have read many books, who take delight in reading, and so have shown themselves to be sensitive to such matters as style, plot and characterization. The old books, then,

which have long been read and enjoyed are probably worth reading again. And of the newer books those are more likely to be worth reading which people with experience, sensitive temperament and brains say are good. (1904, 5)

Dana reserved the right to make judgments about the quality of fiction to cultural elites. The 1904 list was comprised of titles that had been in the collections of the Denver Public Library and the Springfield Public Library in Massachusetts (Dana had been director of both of these libraries) as well as those currently in the Newark library and in the ALA Library at the St. Louis Exposition. This preliminary list was then sent to other librarians in the state for comments, additions, and deletions. Later editions also enlisted the aid of a professor of English (4th revision in 1919). To be put on this list that constituted the best, books must pass the test of time, and must provide pleasure, but pleasure as defined by experts who had the requisite experience and culture, not pleasure as defined by ordinary readers.

The partiality toward useful books and classic fiction reflected in Dana's comments in the introduction to his list of the best novels had not changed much since the first years of the library. In 1894, Hill wrote in the annual report that fiction selected for the library must be "elevating in tone and instructive in character" (4). He advocated the reading of good novels like those classics by Giovanni Boccaccio, François Rabelais, Miguel de Cervantes, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Walter Scott, Makepeace Thackeray, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens and asserted the "older and better writer" is still enjoyed by patrons. In addition to providing instruction and uplift, these books provided a stabilizing cultural influence, in opposition to the disrupting influences of the texts that Carr warned of those

with radical, socialist, and anarchist viewpoints, especially if added to library collections in foreign languages.

At least one patron objected to Dana's right to be an arbiter of culture. In a June 30, 1903 letter to the editor in the *Evening News* in response to an article written by Dana, the letter writer, Mr. Birdsall,⁵⁰ is critical of the "high-toned" Newark Free Public Library. Birdsall quotes what Dana had written previously in the paper⁵¹ on the general work of a public library:

It discriminates in favor of a certain class. The sales from stores and newspaper stands of many millions of copies each year of novels by authors never mentioned in literary journals and never appearing in library lists show that a large part of our people wish for books the libraries do not furnish. The absence of the same people from the public libraries shows that they do not care to read the books the libraries buy. Libraries generally select for purchase novels talked of and read by a very small portion of their several communities. They do not buy for the submerged ninety per cent. Libraries are committed to a policy of selection and discrimination. They can pursue that policy further without violating tradition or precedent.

Dana was not criticizing or proposing to change this policy in Newark. Rather, as Birdsall noted, he planned to "spend less money on fiction" and use the savings to buy other good books, and to promote the library to those who wished to read those quality books. Birdsall asserted that the definition of good as used here "means having literary excellence, a quality which, according to [Dana's] view can only be ascertained after the lapse of many years." Birdsall noted that Dana also proposed not to buy novels until they had been out for a year and then acquire only those found to be good after that period of

⁵⁰ At this point, I have not been able to find out any other information about Mr. Birdsall. This letter to the editor was found in a scrapbook maintained by the library and represents the only article attributed to him in the scrapbook.

⁵¹ The article that Birdsall is responding to is missing from the scrapbook although there is a space that could have originally contained the article. That article may have included substantial parts from an article by Dana originally published in *Public Libraries* and collected in *Librarian at Large* (1991) that contains the same wording that Birdsall quotes from the newspaper on the general work of a public library.

time. Dana had indeed articulated the passage of time as one criteria for choosing the best novels in his introduction to *A Thousand of the Best Novels*. According to Birdsall, Dana “well states the object of the free public libraries ‘to make citizens wiser, better and happier,’” but he criticized Dana’s focus on “good books” as the only way to accomplish these objectives. Birdsall claimed that “nobody, except a pedant, reads novels to acquire wisdom, nor to be made better, but to find happiness,” but for Dana happiness is not a reason to include a book in the library. Hill’s outlook in the 1894 report was similar to Dana’s: “it is not the duty of a city to furnish at public expense that which will only amuse,” only those which “will lead the people in the way of healthful instruction” (4–5). For Hill and Dana neither happiness nor amusement was sufficient justification for placing a book in the library, but as noted in the last section, useful material, which could educate or uplift readers, was appropriate and desired for the library.

Birdsall’s criticism of Dana was biting, and from his view as a taxpayer the library was, by its own admission, not providing services to “the submerged 90 percent” of the public that paid for this publicly funded institution. This 90 percent, according to Birdsall, “are those most in need of having books provided for them.” Many immigrants fell into this category, but Dana’s view represented a policy of many libraries in the Progressive Era, one in which libraries were participating in the reform and moral uplift of society through the quality of the fiction chosen by the library. It was also indicative of the activities of an emerging profession of librarianship trying to establish its authority through the selection of quality books and imposing high literary standards in collections (Garrison, 2003), including in the foreign language material.

The language used by Hill and Dana to describe the types of books that belonged in the library, such as classic, literary, and instructive, as well as those tested by time (classic), are echoed when the acquisition of foreign material is considered. For example, an undated article from an unidentified paper in the NFPL scrapbooks, from the summer of 1902,⁵² was titled “Will Ask for New German Fiction.” A German society in Newark was complaining that books in German in the library were “not up-to-date” and there was “certainly not a particularly exhaustive collection of modern writers” on the shelves. The Assistant Librarian, Beatrice Winsor, was quoted as defending the existing collection as “having a good supply of standard German works now,” in other words, the classics of German literature. Novels such as these that stood the test of time, and were judged to be the best literature, were desirable regardless of the language.

This was also true of Italian fiction. The existence of the division between elite and mass culture was not limited to the United States. Ann and Michael Caesar’s book *Modern Italian Literature* notes the “idea of a cultural whole, guided from the top down, with many of its potential participants at the bottom of the pyramid effectively excluded” that existed in Italy long before the turn of the twentieth century and continued “well into” the century (2007, 10). The one hundred Italian books donated in 1905 included “the works of the best of the modern Italian novelists” (*News* January 6, 1906) that met the standards of best books, and therefore would be added to the library collection even though Winsor appeared a little concerned about newer novels in the donation. She said in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* on October 10, 1905 (NFPL clippings scrapbook), that the collection has “among them some of the best Italian classics, though a few modern novels have also been received.” The *Morning Star* on February 3, 1910 reported that the

⁵² Based on dates of the surrounding articles in the scrapbook.

library's Italian collection contained works of Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarch (Petrarca) and Torquato Tasso, Niccolo Machiavelli's *Prince* and *History of Florence* as well as "Silvio Pellico's thrilling account of his prison experiences." Pellico was the most recently published of these authors, and his "thrilling account" published in 1832, has been called "part of a long and melancholy tradition of prison discourse in Italy" (Klopp 1991, 195).

The article also mentions modern day writers described as "best-known writers of fiction," which included Antonio Fogazzaro, Matilde Serao, Giovanni Verga, and "many others well worth reading." An article in the *News* on March 25, 1911 reported that since the death of Antonia Fogazzaro the demand for his works had been high. According to this article, the library had English translations of his books as well as "a measurably complete collection of his books in the original Italian." Antonio Fogazzaro's "best known work . . . was acclaimed even by critics unsympathetic to his religious and philosophical ideas (Fogazzaro, 1995). Giovanni Verga has been called "one of the greatest of all Italian novelists" (Verga, 1995). These writers were literary and classic, as prescribed by Dana.

"In view of the Italian semi-centennial," an article in the *Evening News* on April 1, 1911, said then, "the Newark library calls attention to its collection of books in Italian as well as English translation." These writers included "Mazzini, Manzoni, Carducci and other Italian authors, whose writings have markedly influenced modern Italian thought." Giuseppe Mazzini wrote essays on culture and music, was known to Giuseppe Garibaldi, and wrote an early Italian constitution that was not adopted. Giosuè Carducci was a poet who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1906, Alessandro Manzoni wrote *I Promessi*

Sposi, which was published in 1827 and was by then a classic (Caesar and Caesar 2007, 101,102,106), also passing Dana's test of time for novels as well as representing the best works. The Italian authors and titles mentioned in the papers all fit into the categories of classic, literary, and instructive literature.

American librarians encountered some difficulties determining the quality of Italian books added to library collections because of language barriers. In *Library Journal* in April 1919 Carr says, "a librarian has sent me for advice a list of books in Italian, urged for purchase. With a single exception they were books of lurid and indecent sort. But it is a part of the librarian's duty to exercise even greater care in choosing foreign books than she does in choosing books in English" (246). The suggested acquisition of these books, most likely "urged for purchase" by Italian language readers, was contradicted by this mentor of morality based on an American cultural hierarchy.

Carr created lists of the best Italian books and periodicals, similar to Dana's *A Thousand of the Best Novels*. To develop the list of books for *Immigrant and Library: Italian Helps with Lists of Selected Books* (1914), Carr relied on a cultural elite that included librarians in the U.S. familiar with Italian literature as well as lists created by Italian librarians (14). As he noted in the introduction to his list of recommended books, "the first purpose [of the list] has been to seek books of fine human quality, of great and attractive simplicity . . . [and to] include no unwholesome or trivial books, no books representing aesthetic or decadent schools" (15). Only the best books, as defined by Carr, made the list.

In this book, Carr described the magazine *Illustrazione Italiana* (also known as *Illustrazione*) magazine, one of the Italian periodicals that the Newark library subscribed

to, as “the most popular of all Italian periodicals.” To prove this point, he noted that “[i]n the hotels, restaurants and ‘caffès’ of Italy, you always have to wait until somebody else finishes with the ‘Illustrazione’” (1914, 86). As Carr, like Dana, was writing from an elite cultural perspective, his use of the word popular must be examined within that context. Dana said in his introduction to the list of best books that books should bring pleasure, but pleasure as defined by experienced and educated readers. A similar assumption can be made about the word “popular” as used by Carr in this sense.

It is more likely that the popular magazines among the masses would be ones like *Il Romanzo Mensile*, which was advertised in *La Frusta* and sold in Newark’s Little Italy by Domenico Orgo. As noted in Chapter 4, these magazines featured translations of Westerns, mysteries, and other popular novels into Italian. The same books that appeared in the *Romanzo Mensile* were serialized in *La Frusta*—the local Italian newspaper published in Newark—and therefore would be automatically excluded from the canon of useful reading best fiction tested by time. Orgo advertised these magazines as “beautiful sensational novels, interesting, full of good and terrible situations which amuse and instruct⁵³” (*La Frusta*). As Sicherman noted, arbiters of culture, in this case librarians, did not want sensational fiction that stirred the imagination in the library. The Italian meaning of *sensazionli* is exciting or thrilling, and is translated as sensational, connoting a similar sense of dangerous arousal of emotions that the contemporary librarians considered unsuitable. The article in the *Call* cited earlier in this section described the Foreign Branch’s campaign against sensational literature that appeared in bookstores and

⁵³ Italian original: “romanzi bellissimi sensazionali interessanti, pieni de situazioni terribili e belle, che divertono ed istruiscono.”

on newsstands and which most likely included popular magazines like *Il Romanzo Mensile*.

Limiting the library's collection of novels by the stringent standards described in this examination of the fiction question would have meant disappointment for patrons coming to the library looking for popular or light reading. As Altick notes, most "contemporary social critics and reformers failed to understand, or at least to sympathize with this imperative need for escape on the part of the physically and spiritually imprisoned" (96) working man and woman stuck in mind-numbing repetitive machine work so prevalent in the industrial age and in cities. Dana wrote, "Perhaps it is impossible to establish the reading habit in those adults who get physically weary every day" (1916, 71) but his definition of the pleasure received from books did not allow for the acquisition of the type of books that fatigued workers would most likely be able to enjoy.

There were librarians like Eleanor Ledbetter of the Cleveland Public Library who in a paper for the ALA in 1922 demonstrated that she understood the complexities of language learning faced by immigrants and related their experience to her study of a foreign language and the struggles she had with reading in that language. Ledbetter said, "if we the library are to become any real part of his [immigrant's] life, we must have books for his recreation—which means books in his native tongue" (ALA Bulletin, 368). But while librarians in the Foreign Branch of the NFPL were willing to champion the acquisition of foreign language material for their patrons as noted in Chapter 6, they did not have much to say about their need for recreational reading.

But was this control ultimately successful? Roger Chartier in *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe Between the 14th and 18th Centuries* claims

that readers “use infinite numbers of subterfuges to procure prohibited books, to read between the lines, and to subvert the lessons imposed on them” (1994, viii). Fiction readers were not easily dissuaded from the type of material that they wished to consume, no matter how hard libraries tried to engage their interest in the best books. Libraries worked hard to control the amount of fiction reading, but circulation of fiction stayed healthy, much to the chagrin of the library community. The newer novels acquired by the Newark library were so much in demand that according to the 1902 annual report, a duplicate collection of new fiction was implemented, and users were charged a penny or two to rent these books. Several annual reports indicate income from the duplicate collection, showing that it was used. There is no mention that this same scheme was employed for foreign language books, but it is likely that their selections would have been submitted under the same regime of quality and safety as the other collections. Immigrants in Newark were not passive users of the public library; they were battling to get their own books onto the library shelves of Newark within the constraints of limitations imposed by the discourse of useful literature and the fiction question.

8.3. Conclusion

The evidence of print material available to Italians presented in this chapter is fragmentary,\ but presents a general context and confirmation of the presence of Italian language material in the Newark Free Public Library. Italian books were added to the library primarily between 1904 and 1917, and newspapers and magazines in Italian were also available at the beginning of the twentieth century. The collection appears to have increased as the size of the Italian population in Newark grew, in part due to the donation of books and periodicals by members of the Italian community in Newark, but fear of

radicalist and anarchist influences in uncontrolled foreign material meant these gifts were scrutinized carefully before being added to the collection. Power relationships were uneven between the library and Italian patrons, but Italians were actively working to get books into the library through donations of books and newspapers in order to appropriate the library for their own use.

The professional discourse on useful literature and the “fiction question” shaped the collections in the Newark Free Public Library, and librarians were intent on placing only the best books in every language, as defined by a cultural elite, on the shelves of the library. There was a focus on classic texts that were proven by time and were moral and uplifting while new fiction was suspect. Italian material needed to fit the standards imposed on the collection as a whole before even donations could be added to the library, and similar standards were evident in the library’s selection of Italian periodicals.

The high circulation figures for the Italian language collection reported in 1913 indicate that the collection was being used although without individual circulation records it is impossible to know whether the borrowers were Italian immigrants or perhaps the students of the language that the collection was designed to appeal to. Considering the increasing Italian immigrant population in Newark between 1889 and 1919, the collection does not seem large enough—and perhaps not composed of enough popular reading material—to have met their needs.

CHAPTER 9: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The impetus for this research was the discovery of the sparse in-depth research on immigrants and public libraries at the turn of the twentieth century. This lack is particularly problematic because it leaves unexplored a dynamic period when the increase in the rate of immigration, a new urbanization, greater industrialization, and the reforms of the Progressive Era coincided with emerging public library movement. The intersection of these trends in the public library is understudied, leaving a gap in our knowledge of the perspectives of marginalized populations and library use. Immigrants are still an important demographic for today's public libraries and attempting to explore the perspectives of historical immigrant library users has implications for understanding possible blind spots in librarianship today, including a lack of attention to users' perspectives.

The overall goal of this dissertation was to add a new perspective to library history scholarship on immigrants and public libraries. The objective was to develop a textured understanding of the information ecology of Italian immigrants in Newark through an exploration of the information nodes and information transmission within ethnic enclaves in New Jersey between 1889 and 1919. The conceptualization of an Information Neighborhood, coined to capture the rich information networks within immigrants' ethnic enclaves, was developed as a framework for this study—one which situated the Newark Free Public Library within immigrants' networks. The result is a user-centered study that privileges Italian immigrant perspectives and provides a deep examination of their holistic information worlds and practices.

Guided by the research questions, four facets of Italian immigrants' information ecology were examined in this dissertation: 1) the actual information neighborhoods in Newark, 2) the institutional policies and practices of the provision of library services to immigrants, 3) interactions between Italian immigrants and librarians, and 4) Italian media in the library. Together they capture the information practices of Italian immigrants at a specific time and place. This final chapter will summarize the major findings of this study, its strengths and limitations, the contributions and implications of the research, and directions for future research.

9.1. Context for the Study

The literature review identified trends in library scholarship that have contributed to a narrow focus on libraries that failed to incorporate patrons' perspectives of the library. Celebratory, progressive, and revisionist library history approaches have studied immigrants and public libraries primarily from an institutional perspective, with a focus on Americanization, that has obscured immigrants' experiences with public libraries. User-centered approaches—which employ Wiegand's notion of the library in the life of the user, rather the user in the life of the library (1991, 24)—were the starting points for this study. The lives of immigrant users studied in this dissertation were situated within an information ecology bounded by the circumstances of urbanization, immigration, and ethnicity; however, their perspectives were difficult to access. These difficulties guided the concepts and conceptualization that were chosen to provide frameworks for this study.

First, Michel de Certeau's appropriation of spaces and texts conceptually organized an understanding of the subversive use of space by immigrants within the

ethnic enclaves of Newark. Specifically his approaches to examining the strategies of power employed by dominant institutions and the tactics of dominated classes subverting imposed regimes guided a critical perspective that focused on the hegemonic institution of the library in relation to immigrant users. De Certeau also influenced the second framework, namely the Information Neighborhood, which was developed as a way of understanding immigrants' information ecology in the context of the appropriated space of an ethnic enclave. The conceptualization of the Information Neighborhood was derived from print culture's focus on the study of communication through texts, specifically Robert Darnton's communication circuit, which he applied to a particular community. This provided a starting point for considering multiple information nodes and transmission of information through multiple media and methods.

The third framework, Subaltern Studies, provided a metatheoretical approach to the study of marginalized groups, such as Italian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century in the United States. The goal was to construct a multi-positional history that did not privilege an elite viewpoint. Originally applied by Antonio Gramsci to the very Italian peasants who were part of the class that immigrated to the U.S., Subaltern Studies provided an ideal frame for this study of immigrants and the public library.

Most of the evidence of Italian immigrants' experiences came from official institutional records and require a "reading against the grain" resistant to elite biases in the sources. Subaltern Studies provided a methodological guide for a critical use of primary sources such as annual reports, library publications, professional library journals, and American newspapers. This subaltern reading of immigrant perspectives in the

archives provided the evidence for a complex set of institutional traces involving immigrants and librarians and the discourse in a broader society.

The case study focused on Newark at the turn of the twentieth century in the midst of its golden age when a large manufacturing base, improvement of city services, and the construction of major city buildings created a demand for more laborers. The labor of Italian immigrants was part of that growth. By 1920, the Italians were among the largest ethnic groups in Newark. Italian immigrants operated within a particular social context that was heavily influenced by the cultures of their native regions transplanted to the urban environments of industrialized cities in America at the turn of the century. By 1911, Italian immigrants had settled into three major enclaves in Newark: the First Ward, the Ironbound District, and the 14th Avenue colony. They adapted the space of the enclaves to their own needs, establishing churches and shops, and shaping the spaces and the places of an information neighborhood. Those formal and informal places and spaces included the library as well as streets for festivals of saints and as stand-ins for village squares. Although the situation of living in certain sections of the city was imposed on immigrants by economic pressures, they responded to these constraints by using the environments in distinctive and idiosyncratic ways, turning them into enclaves so distinct that both insiders and outsiders recognized the differences between “Italy” and “America” as they crossed the boundaries of these neighborhoods. The social and cultural context of immigrants’ lives as lived within these enclaves shaped their experience of and interaction with libraries.

The Newark Free Public Library, founded as a free public library in 1889, was an important entity in this study, as it was established near the beginning of the rise in Italian

immigration, with staff members and library directors who had a voice in the professional discourse of the emerging library profession. Because Newark was representative of rapidly industrializing cities with an increasing immigrant population at the turn of the twentieth century, of which a large portion were Italians, this approach provided a case study of a confluence of library, city, and population in a particular historical situation. The case study highlighted a larger question of the nature of information in a spatial and institutional context.

9.2. Major Findings

This dissertation was guided by four research questions that were designed to contribute to the fulfillment of the research objective for a “thick” description of print and oral cultures of Italian immigrants in Newark at the turn of the twentieth century. Each question guided the examination of one facet of Italian immigrants’ information ecology in Newark. The major findings are presented within the context of each question below.

9.2.1. Research Question 1: Information Neighborhoods

The first research question, explored in Chapter 5, was designed to reconstruct Italian immigrants’ actual information ecologies in Newark through the conceptualization of an Information Neighborhood, a communication circuit containing information resources positioned within ethnic enclaves. In addition to the library, a multiplicity of trusted sources within Italians’ enclaves—where information could be acquired through various media and modes—were identified. These information nodes included the library, bookstores, news agents, stores, saloons, streets, and religious institutions, which encompassed places for information exchange. The information neighborhood also incorporated family and friends networks, and padrones (labor agents), as well as the

immigrant and ethnic press. The circulation of print as well as oral and hybrid methods and media supported and incorporated the information flow in that space. This exploration revealed a rich communication web for the circulation of information within the immigrants' information neighborhoods in Newark.

The library was situated within these multiple access points and means and modes that constituted the communications circuit within the information neighborhood. However, convenient access to the library at the Main Library building, the branches, or deposit stations was unavailable in the heart of the Italian enclaves. A map of library branches and deposit stations overlaid onto a 1911 map of the Italian enclaves in Newark revealed that the library presence existed primarily on the border of, or just outside of the enclaves. The exception was in the Ironbound district, where the deposit station at the Settlement House and the Ferry Street Branch resided within the boundaries noted on the 1911 map of enclaves in the city. Although there was a physical presence within the enclave, the branch only intermittently had Italian language books on its shelves.

Newark's population was highly literate in 1910 however most of the illiteracy was attributed to foreigners. Literacy rates were rising in Italy between 1880 and 1920, and as the literature points to immigrants being among those with more social standing and higher literacy, these higher rates were reflected among those entering the United States. Even with higher literacy rates, the strong residual oral culture is another element in the communications circuit within the information neighborhoods.

Utilizing the conceptualization of the information neighborhood and exploring the information nodes and means of transmission within Italian neighborhoods in Newark revealed a rich information ecology within the enclaves. Italian immigrants were not

information poor. The type of information that circulated was essential to their lives although its importance has been obscured by the focus on Americanization and assimilation. The research also revealed a missed opportunity for the library to engage with the Italian population through placement of library stations and branches within the heart of the enclaves.

9.2.2. Research Question 2: The Institution of the Public Library

Chapter 6 focused on the institutional aspects of the relationship between immigrants and public libraries. The professional library discourse, represented by articles in the *Library Journal*, focused on the best methods for promoting Americanization among immigrants. The national focus on Americanization was reflected in discourse of the librarians in Newark. Both the national and local discourse of Americanization constructed immigrants as a separate class of users whose primary need was material to help them assimilate. The discourse in the *Library Journal* revealed tensions around Americanization, particularly surrounding the discussion about the effect of foreign language books in the library on immigrants' ability and desire for assimilation.

Tensions between fears of immigrants and humanitarian impulses were also evident in the discourse in *Library Journal*. Some librarians feared that immigrants would disrupt American culture by introducing foreign ideas and refusing to assimilate or conform to the dominant groups' social expectations. Others expressed a desire to assist with immigrants' successful integration into American culture because they felt that it would smooth the rough road of Americanization. For public libraries, including the library in Newark, the focus on Americanization meant helping immigrants to learn

English, become good citizens in both a legal and an acting-as-good citizen sense, and acquire a familiarity with American culture. Children's librarians in the Newark system were mindful of instilling a sense of decorum in line with the current social mores, anticipating this training would help mold them into good citizens. This focus on developing good citizenship in immigrants was seen as part of the educational and democratic mandate of the library.

Few librarians were concerned with other information and recreation needs that fell outside of the scope of Americanization. In Newark, various immigrant groups, including Italians, were actively requesting books in foreign languages in the library, and Italians collected books from within their own communities to place upon library shelves. Consistently providing books in English, both for American and foreign born readers, was given a higher priority in the library than the acquisition of foreign language books.

The institutional focus was further studied through an examination of the Foreign Branch of the library. Within this branch, founded in 1907 in a section of the city inhabited primarily by immigrants, but distant from the two largest Italian enclaves, the librarians were sympathetic to the needs of foreign language readers. However, when financial difficulties resulted in a decision to close most of Newark Free Public Library's branches in 1918, the Foreign Branch was closed despite the fact that its circulation statistics indicated heavier use than the other branches in the system. The Business Branch was the only major branch that remained open in the system, reflecting the priorities of the library concerning recreational reading versus the interests of businessmen.

9.2.3. Research Question 3: Interactions

Chapter 7 explored the interactions between Italians and librarians and the social and cultural attitudes that influenced reciprocal perceptions on the part of immigrants and librarians. Italians idealized America as a place of opportunity and Americans admired classic Italian art, architecture, and literature. However, individual interactions between immigrants and librarians or other professional workers did not reflect the idealized vision of the abstract idea of national high culture. A disconnect between the conceptual notion of a nation and the concrete experience of the individual created a national discourse of immigration and assimilation that negatively influenced the conceptions that librarians had of immigrants and immigrants of librarians and other social workers.

In this chapter, institutional evidence of the class of professional women who worked with immigrants as teachers and social workers, and those who volunteered with charitable organizations, as well as librarians, demonstrated interactions fraught with contested expectations of each participant. These cross-cultural and cross-class interactions were the site of misinterpretations by both parties as the program of Americanization and the cultural superiority assumed by the social workers and librarians contributed to the framing that emphasized the unequal balance of power between them. The language that librarians used to describe exchanges with immigrants during the Progressive Era has been described by modern library history scholars such as Alston Plummer Jones as well intentioned, even if patronizing in tone. But the very real focus on reform behind this language had consequences, including feeling dispossessed by the library and an unwillingness to use the library.

If adult immigrants were unable or unwilling to use the library, their children were less willing to be intimidated by the librarians. They overwhelmed the Foreign Branch at times, and they acted as intermediaries between their parents and the librarian, requesting books for their mothers, and for themselves. Italian children were singled out in librarians' descriptions of children in the library, but these descriptions reveal that they were using the library, and appropriating it for their own purposes as they crossed and stretched the boundaries of ethnic enclaves and information neighborhoods.

9.2.4. Research Question 4: Italian Print Material

In Chapter 8, a partial reconstruction of Italian books and periodicals that were available in the library provided a quantitative assessment of the print material. A qualitative assessment of the character of the material was developed through an analysis of collection development policies and practices such as the contemporary discourse in the library profession concerning useful literature and the “fiction question.”

The available evidence indicated that the library collected Italian language material primarily in the decade from 1905–1915. Although Italians had already settled in the city by the time that the library opened in 1889, it was not until sixteen years later that the library began to add books and periodicals in Italian to the collection. In 1905, the Italian immigrant community collected books to donate to the library, an action that revealed their interest in having Italian language books available in the library and in shaping the content of the library collection. Italian language books had the highest circulation of any of the foreign books in 1913, indicating the demand for and use of this material.

Collection development of fiction was guided by a moral imperative to protect library patrons from disruptive and immoral books, both for their own sakes and for the sake of society at large. The library's collection development policies most likely limited the provision of certain genres of Italian books, such as those represented by *Il Romanzo Mensile*, popular English and French novels translated into Italian and sold in Italian enclaves in Newark. The priority placed on useful books and the effect of the fiction question meant librarians who prioritized serious literature, classics, nonfiction books and a collection that was biased toward a reified high culture.

It appears that Italian immigrants were underserved by the library due both to the limited locations of branches and deposit stations within the enclaves, as noted in Chapter 5, and the limited number of Italian language books in circulation compared with the high demand from Italian users. The restrictions on collection development imposed by the discourse of useful literature as well as a focus on Americanization that privileged material that was meant to encourage assimilation and acculturation also point to a lack of accessible leisure material for Italian language readers.

9.2.5. Conclusion

Overall this research revealed a rich Italian information ecology in Newark, fostered by the formation of ethnic neighborhoods and connections and sources within these neighborhoods. The library was situated on the border of these neighborhoods, both geographically and culturally, and while it provided material for those users who were interested in Americanization, useful literature, and high quality fiction, it appears to have fallen short of providing the library services many Italians desired—accessible reading material in their own language. There is little evidence that the library provided

services for any immigrants other than the German population until after the turn of the twentieth century, and even then the library was slow to add Italian language books.

After the turn of the century, immigrant children appeared to have appropriated the library spaces for their own use, and the library also reached children through their traveling libraries in the schools. Even for children, the library's priority was on Americanization and developing good citizens.

9.3. Contributions and Implications

This dissertation makes a contribution to scholarship on immigrants' use of public libraries at the turn of the last century, including library discourse, spaces of information production and use, and Italian media and information practices. It provides new methods and models for research into Italian immigrants' information ecologies and for accessing immigrants' perspectives, ones that can be used going forward to examine other immigrant groups in urban areas at the turn of the twentieth century. This research also provides a complex view of immigrants' information ecologies within ethnic neighborhoods, complicating the idea of information poverty.

A major stimulus for this dissertation was accepting Wayne Wiegand's call to produce research that concerns the library in the life of the user. This proved to be a major challenge, revealing a contributing factor to the predominant lack of immigrants' voices in library history literature. This challenge was addressed through the use of two approaches new to library history. The first, Subaltern Studies, provided a method for reading institutional records critically against the grain to tease out evidence of immigrants' actions and attitudes. The second, the development of the Information

Neighborhood, provided a holistic framework for examining Italians' information ecologies.

These new approaches to examining Italian immigrants' perspectives of library use re-situate the public library within the information neighborhood of ethnic groups and create a richer understanding of Italians' information ecology at the turn of the twentieth century in Newark, New Jersey. The result of this research is a more complex understanding of Italian print culture in an American city at the turn of the twentieth century, complicating the traditional views of library service to immigrants and challenging the one-dimensional view of immigrant patrons than exists in most library history literature.

While recognizing the importance of the networks of communication in the development of neighborhoods through chain migration, studies of immigrant communities often fail to investigate the effect of other information nodes and modes of transmission on the development of an ethnic enclave and on immigrants particularly when considering information practices. Immigration studies recognize that schools were important agents in the Americanization process, however, libraries, which were considered educational institutions, have not been sufficiently explored. Work on libraries in the field of immigration studies has been very limited, as has examinations of their information ecologies. Library history literature also has failed to substantively examine immigration services especially in historical frames. This dissertation contributes to the examination of a larger range of information institutions in immigrants' lives.

This historical investigation of immigrants and public libraries has practical implications for practice in public libraries today. Understanding immigrants' information ecology provides a better platform from which to determine how best to deliver services to immigrant communities, particularly services that address the full range of information and reading material needed and desired by newcomers, rather than the limiting service based on pre-conceived notions of what they should need.

Immigrants are still important constituents of modern urban public libraries' user base, and this research into historic services to immigrants from their perspective provides insight into the needs of current library patrons. An awareness of the blind spots in past library service, such as assumptions about readers' needs, failing to sufficiently answer calls for more and more varied material in foreign languages, and missing opportunities to insinuate the library farther into information networks in ethnic neighborhoods can inform current practice. Issues which seem new, such as questions about allowing games into the library or discussions of the appropriateness of graphic novels have roots in turn-of-the-twentieth-century arguments such as the fiction question. Studying the past discourse provides new insights into the current discussion; understanding the history of libraries is a first step in addressing modern library problems, and this research has contributed another view of the past.

9.4. Strengths and Limitations

The archives accessed for this research were plentiful in some areas and severely restricted in others. The availability of a rich archive of institutional records at the Newark Public Library enabled reading against the grain and helped document the library's practices at the turn of the twentieth century for this historical case study in the

face of limited direct evidence of immigrants' reading and information practices. The scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and the conscientious collection of both favorable and unfavorable articles from the inception of the library through the beginning of the twentieth century provided additional perspectives on the library.

However, only a few of the locally produced Italian language newspapers could be found. The New Jersey Historical Society held only two years of the eighteen years of *La Frusta* while none of the twenty-six years of issues of *La Montagna* or the eighteen years of *L'Ora* was found in archives in the state—one more testimony to the disconnect between the institution and the living information neighborhood. Another limitation was the lack of acquisition records that could have been used to examine reading practices through an analysis of the number and genre of Italian books in the library and an analysis of borrowers. Circulation records would also have contributed to an examination of the lending of those books that were purchased for the purpose of Americanizing immigrants. Institutional records such as annual reports, finding lists, staff notebooks that acted as “diaries” of the library, and newspaper reports of library activities counteracted the lack of acquisition records.

Employing a case study method resulted in an account of a specific historical situation of library and immigrant interaction and allowed for an in-depth examination of Italian information neighborhoods in Newark at that temporal and physical juncture. This research is not generalizable to other ethnic groups or even to other interactions between Italians and public libraries at the turn of the century but may be transferable to other studies of urban ethnic enclaves at the turn of the last century, particularly other Italian enclaves, in terms of methods and basic assumptions. The map of the communications

circuit, limited to the information neighborhoods of Italian immigrants and based on their information ecology, while providing a framework for this research and further studies, may need to be adapted to use in the study of other immigrant groups. For example, important elements in Italian information neighborhoods such as padrones as an information node or the strength of friends and family networks may not be relevant or may take different forms in other cultures. The focus on Italian immigrants both increased the depth of the research and limited the scope leaving other groups in Newark unstudied and providing no basis for comparison with other groups. This suggests avenues for further research, which will be discussed in the next section.

9.5. Directions for Future Research

This research lays the groundwork for future historical explorations of immigrants' information neighborhoods within urban ethnic communities at the turn of the twentieth century. The frameworks can be transferred to Italian immigrants' reading and information practices in other large and small cities where ethnic enclaves developed. Comparative studies of geographically diverse cities, such as Newark and San Francisco, which also had a large Italian immigrant population, could provide new insights into the role of public libraries in Italian immigrants' information use and communications networks. The frameworks can also be transferred to other immigrant groups within Newark, providing a more complex view of the library at the turn of the twentieth century through various users' perspectives.

Two additional areas, both concerned with children, could be the focus of future research. The role that immigrant children played as intermediaries between schools and parents is understudied within the context of library history. Additionally the relationship

between the Newark Free Public Library and public schools, mentioned in many of the Annual Reports, and evident in the investment of time and money developing traveling libraries for the schools, deserves further study to reveal the benefits and drawbacks of this relationship for both libraries and schools. The records of the Newark Board of Education are available and may provide additional information on this relationship. Interestingly, combining school libraries with public library branches as the library did in its early years is considered an option in some areas at present, as resources for libraries are strained. A study of past efforts in this direction can inform current discussions in this area. The Newark Free Public Library has a rich archive and history that will provide material for future projects in library history focusing on immigrants, children, and the development of urban public libraries at the turn of the twentieth century.

9.6. Conclusion

Past efforts to examine the history of immigrants and libraries within the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century have been limited in their approaches and perspectives. In this dissertation, a new model of the information neighborhood provided a framework for situating public libraries within immigrants' information ecology, expanding the consideration of library use outside of the narrow focus of Americanization. As there is insufficient direct evidence of Italian immigrants' reading and information practices, Subaltern Studies, used in other historical research of marginalized groups, was introduced as a method for reading against the grain in institutional archives and for investigating power imbalances between immigrants and librarians. These models and frameworks helped to place immigrants as the subject of their own history of library and information use. Italian immigrants had a complex relationship with public libraries that

has only begun to be explored, and the frameworks and methods used for this research created a foundation for other research to add to the library history literature on this subject.

Italian immigrants in Newark lived in an information-rich environment within their enclaves, and Italian language books in the library were used often enough to make them the most circulated foreign books in the library at one point in time. Focusing primarily on immigrants' use of public libraries in terms of Americanization, as much of the extant library history literature does, obscures the variety of information sources and channels that existed in their information neighborhoods. A multi-dimensional view of the library as part of an information ecology, as presented in this dissertation, uncovers a view of immigrants as library users that privileges the historical understanding of immigrants and library services to immigrants, as well as informing modern public library's service to immigrants as viewed through the perspective of the user.

Some of the questions that were generated at the beginning of this dissertation process through the examination of current library history concerning immigrants perceptions of libraries, the alignment of immigrants needs and perceptions with libraries' vision and services as well as libraries' place in immigrants' information ecologies have been partially answered in this dissertation. A new model was created and frameworks from other disciplines were employed to work around the challenges of accessing immigrants voices. A good beginning was made, but the questions are not fully answered, and research will continue.

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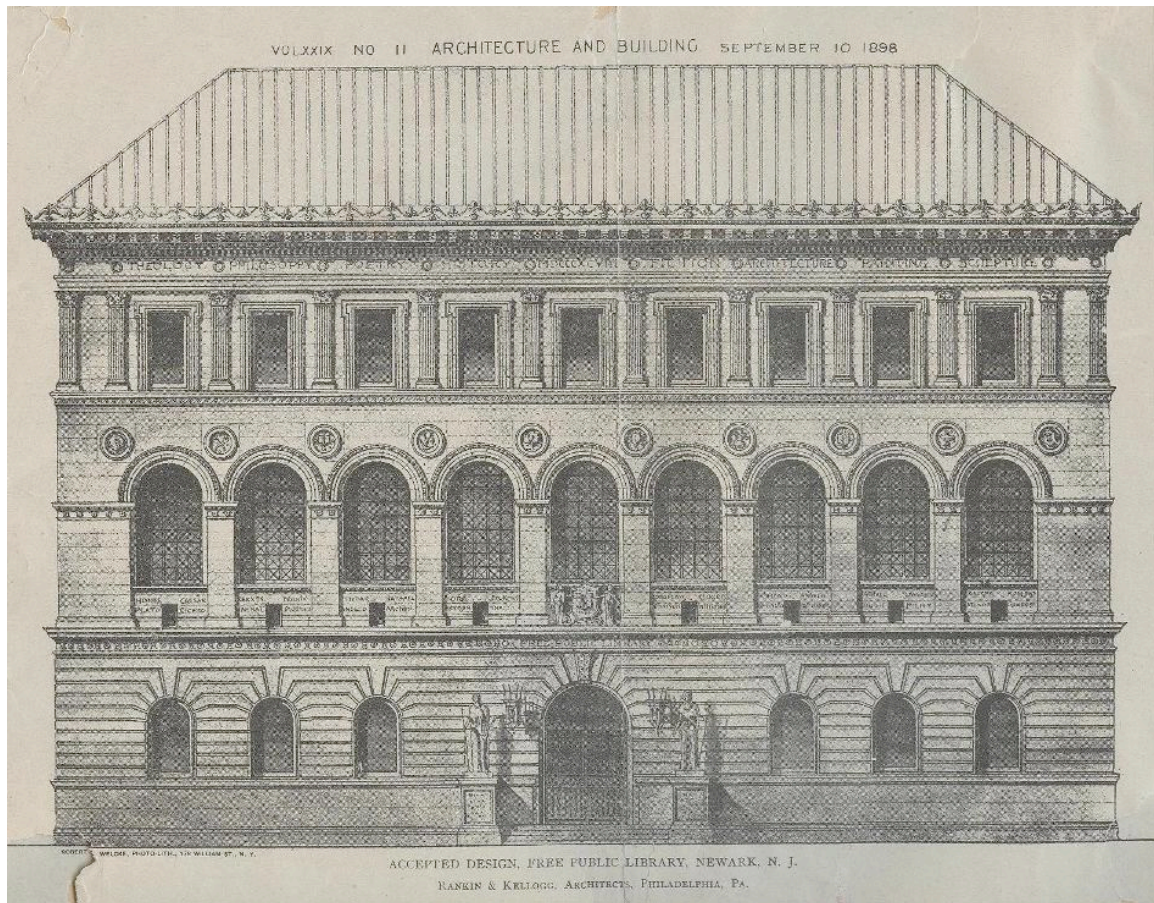
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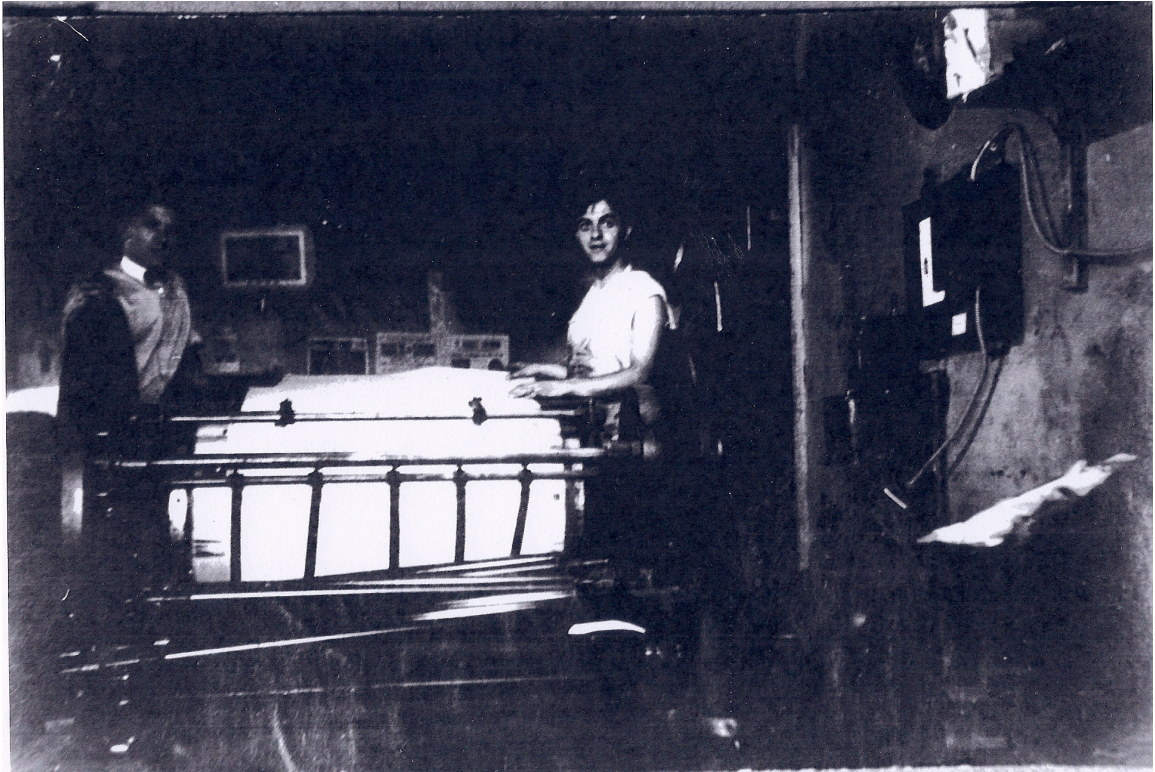
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APPENDIX A: ACCEPTED DESIGN FOR NEWARK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

From Newark Public Library webpage:
<http://www.npl.org/Pages/AboutLibrary/NPLhistory.html> (accessed 7/25/2012).

APPENDIX B: MATULLO PRINT SHOP

Frank and Freddie Matullo in print shop at 4 Garside Street in the First Ward. Their father, Pasquale Matullo, printed *La Frusta*, and *L'Ora* here. Undated. Courtesy of the Gerard Zanfini and Michael D. Immerso First Ward Collection, Newark Public Library.

APPENDIX C: IL ROMANZO MENSILE COVERS



Covers of the translated novels advertised for sale by Domenico Orgo.

Left image accessed 6/10/11 at:

<http://cgi.ebay.it/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?VISuperSize&Item=120727190574>;

right image accessed 6/10/11 at:

<http://cgi.ebay.it/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?VISuperSize&item=120727191214>.

APPENDIX D: CHILDREN OUTSIDE FOREIGN BRANCH

Children outside the Foreign Branch near the 14th Street Enclave. Source: *The Newarker*, December 1913, 426.

APPENDIX E: 1910 LITERACY DATA

Table 23
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, ILLITERACY, ETC.
FROM 1910 CENSUS

	Between 6 and 20	Between 6 and 14
Total.....	97,544	57,529
Attending school.....	61,916	52,885
Per cent. attending school.....	63.5	91.5
Native white of native parentage..	30,348	18,534
Attending school.....	20,640	16,984
Per cent. attending school.....	67.4	91.6
Native white, foreign or mixed parentage.....	48,836	30,963
Attending school.....	32,846	28,678
Per cent. attending school.....	67.3	92.6
Foreign born, white.....	16,256	6,837
Attending school.....	7,283	6,138
Per cent. attending school.....	44.8	89.8
Negro.....	2,087	1,184
Attending school.....	1,318	1,076
Per cent. attending school.....	63.2	90.9
Illiterates, 10 years of age and over.....		16,553
Percentage of total population.....		6.0
Illiterates of native parentage.....		222
Illiterates of foreign or mixed parentage....		553
Illiterates, foreign born, white.....		15,131
Illiterates, negro.....		589
Illiterate males, 21 years of age and over..		6,227
Illiterate males, 21 years of age of native parentage.....		95
Illiterate males, 21 years of age, foreign or mixed parentage.....		166
Illiterate males, foreign born.....		5,694
Illiterate males, negro.....		216

Source: *The Newarker* vol. 2, no. 7, May 5, 1913, 312.

APPENDIX F: LETTER "TO THE FOREIGN PEOPLE OF NEWARK"

434

The Newarker

Dec.'13

A Few New Yiddish Books

נייע אידישע ביכער

6 בינדער שריפטען ראזענפעלד, ירושלים
 3 בענדער ניווילטע שריפטען ראזענפעלד, ירושלים
 ירהאואס לעהרען פון דיא פאטערס.
 ארציבאטעו סאנאד נאליבענע פעריל.
 שייקעוויטש (דער) אונזר.
 זארא נעלט.
 אנדערעו אשמירא.
 סאלסטאי קאזאקעו.
 ליבין נעקליבענע שריפטען.

Books to Help Foreigners to Learn English

First Lessons in English for foreigners.

First reader for foreigners.

Primer of English for foreign students.

English for new Americans (Vocabulary in 11 languages).

New reader for evening schools (Vocabulary in 5 languages).

English for Italians.

First and second books for non-English speaking people.

Reading made easy for foreigners.

English for foreigners.

How to learn English.

Manual of the English language for Russians.

English teacher (English and Russian text).

Buchhaltung fur Yiddin.

Lehrbuch von der Englischer Sprache (English and Yiddish text).

Englischer Lehrbuch (English and Yiddish text).

Nuova guida della conversazione italiana inglese.

Foreigners are Welcome in Newark

The following open letter to the people who use the Free Public Library and to the people who can use it if they will whether they speak and read English or not, appears in other parts of this number in the following languages—Russian, Polish, Yiddish, Italian, German and Ruthenian.

To the Foreign People of Newark:

The thoughtful people of Newark welcome foreigners to this city. The more intelligent a man is the better he understands that each new race brings to us something that we need—some talent, some quality of character, some custom, some knowledge.

This paper is published by the Public Library of Newark. It is published once a month to promote interest in Newark's welfare, and to advertise what the Library can do for the citizens.

The Library can do something for you. It has English books that can help you to make your business successful. It has books that show men and women how best to carry on their trades or professions.

It has simple books that, with the help of some child who goes to school, will soon teach you to read and write English.

It has books in German, Russian, French, Italian, Yiddish, Hebrew, Ruthenian and Polish which you can take home to read, and out of which you can teach your children not to forget the language of their parents. If you will make each of your children read aloud a page of your native language each day, they will bless you for it when they grow up, for it will put money into their pockets and joy into their hearts.

Go to the Foreign Branch of the Library at 83 Hayes Street near 15th Avenue and ask to see the foreign books. You can get books to take home by signing your name.

The Foreign Branch is open daily from 10 to 6.30, except Thursdays and Saturdays, 12 to 9 p. m.

John Cotton Dana,
 Librarian.

Diese Zeitschrift ist von der Public Library in Newark herausgegeben. Sie erscheint einmal monatlich um das öffentliche Interesse an dem Wohlergehen Newarks zu steigern, und um bekannt zu machen, was die Bibliothek für Newarks Bürger tun kann.

Die Bibliothek kann etwas für Euch tun: sie enthält englische Bücher, die Euch helfen können, Euer Geschäft erfolgreich zu gestalten. Sie enthält Bücher, die Frauen und Männer zeigen wie sie am besten ihren Handel oder Beruf betreiben müssen.

Versteht Ihr Englisch nicht, so findet Ihr in der Bibliothek einfache Bücher die Euch schnell das Lesen und Schreiben der englischen Sprache beibringen werden, wenn irgend ein Schulkind Euch dabei hilft.

Die Bibliothek enthält deutsche Bücher, die Ihr nach Hause nehmen könnt und dort lesen, und aus denen Ihr Euren Kindern Beibringen könnt, die deutsche Muttersprache nicht zu vergessen. Wenn Ihr Eure Kinder täglich eine Seite daraus laut vorlesen lässt, so werden sie Euch einst dafür segnen wenn sie erwachsen sind, denn diese Übung wird Geld in ihren Taschen und Freude in ihre Herzen bringen.

Geht in die Hauptbibliothek in der Washington Strasse, Ecke Broad oder in die Zweigbibliothek für Ausländer, 83 Hayes Strasse, nahe 15th Avenue und verlangt nach deutschen Büchern. Ihr könnt Bücher zum Nachhausenehmen bekommen einfach indem Ihr Eure Namen angebt. Die grosse Sammlung deutscher Bücher ist in dem Hauptgebäude und eine kleinere in der Zweigbibliothek.

Die Hauptbibliothek ist täglich geöffnet von 9 Uhr früh bis 9.30 abends und die Zweigbibliothek von 10—6.30 jeden Tag und Donnerstag und Samstag von 12—9 Uhr abends.

John Cotton Dana,
Bibliothekar.

(This is the Italian version of the article in English headed: To the Foreign People of Newark.)

Agli Italiani di Newark:

I cittadini benpensanti di Newark hanno sempre visto con piacere la venuta degli Italiani in questa città.

Il più intelligente è un individuo e meglio egli comprende che ogni razza porta qualche cosa di cui abbiamo bisogno, qualche qualità intellettuale, qualche carattere, qualche cognizione, qualche costume.

Questo periodico è pubblicato dalla Public Libreria di Newark ogni mese, per promuovere il benessere della città e per render noto quello che la Libreria può fare per il pubblico.

La Libreria può fare qualche cosa per voi. In essa sono libri inglesi che vi possono aiutare a far con più successo i vostri affari; ha libri che possono insegnare ad uomini e donne come meglio esercitare le proprie professioni e i loro mestieri; ha libri semplicissimi che, con l'aiuto di qualche bambino che va a scuola, vi insegneranno presto come parlare e scrivere l'inglese; ha libri italiani che voi potete portare a casa per leggere e con i quali potete far sì che i vostri figli non dimentichino la lingua dei loro padri. Se voi farete leggere forte ogni giorno una pagina d'italiano ai vostri figli, essi vi benediranno quando saranno cresciuti, perché questo metterà danaro nelle loro tasche e gioia nei loro cuori.

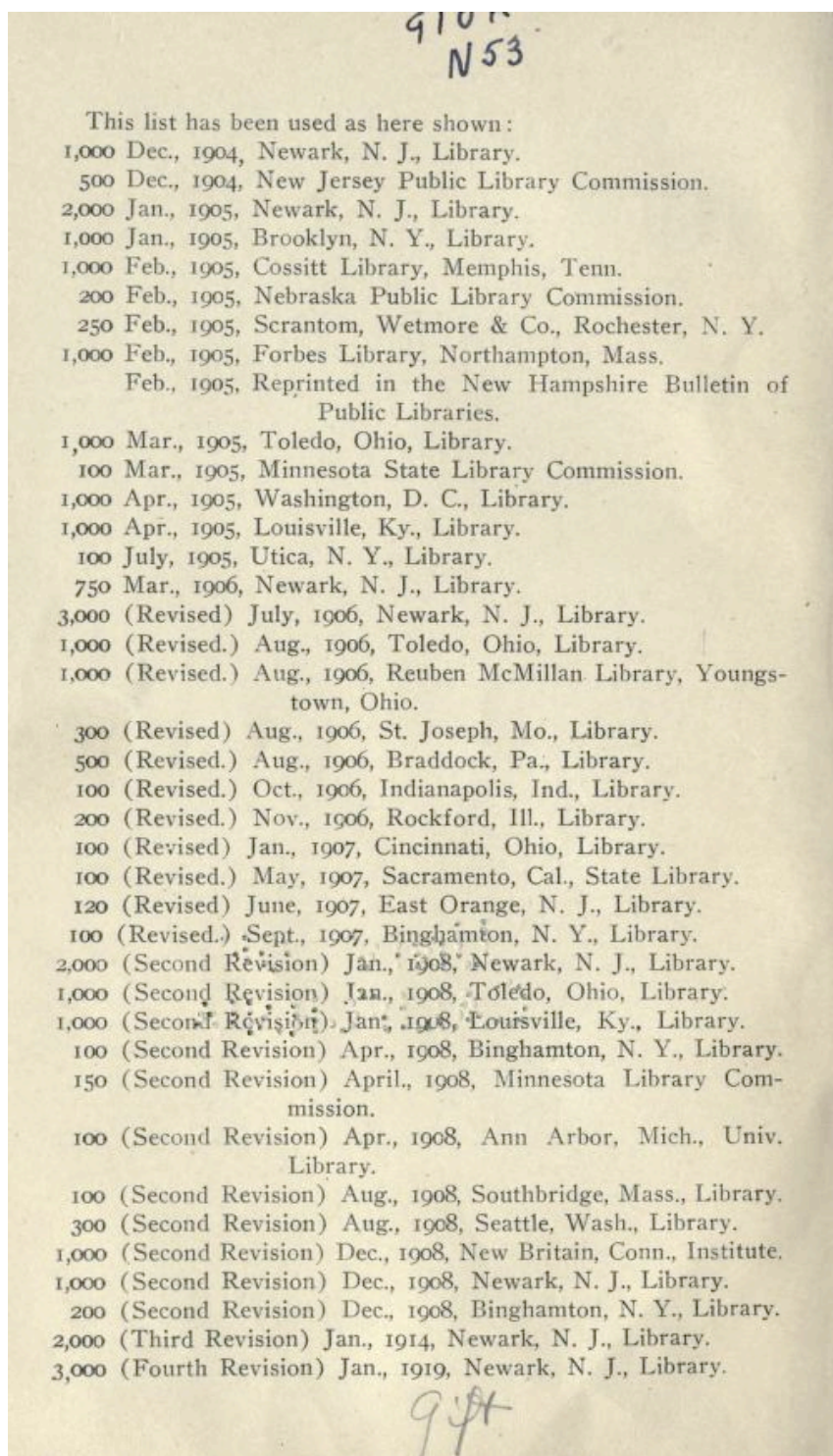
Andate alla libreria principale a Washington e Broad St. o alla succursale a 83 Hayes St. vicino 15th Ave. e chiedete di vedere i libri italiani.

Vi sarà lì qualcuno che parla italiano, e voi potrete ottenere libri che leggerete a casa solo col firmare il vostro nome.

La collezione più grande di libri italiani è alla Libreria principale che è aperta ogni giorno dalle 9 a. m. alle 9.30 p. m.

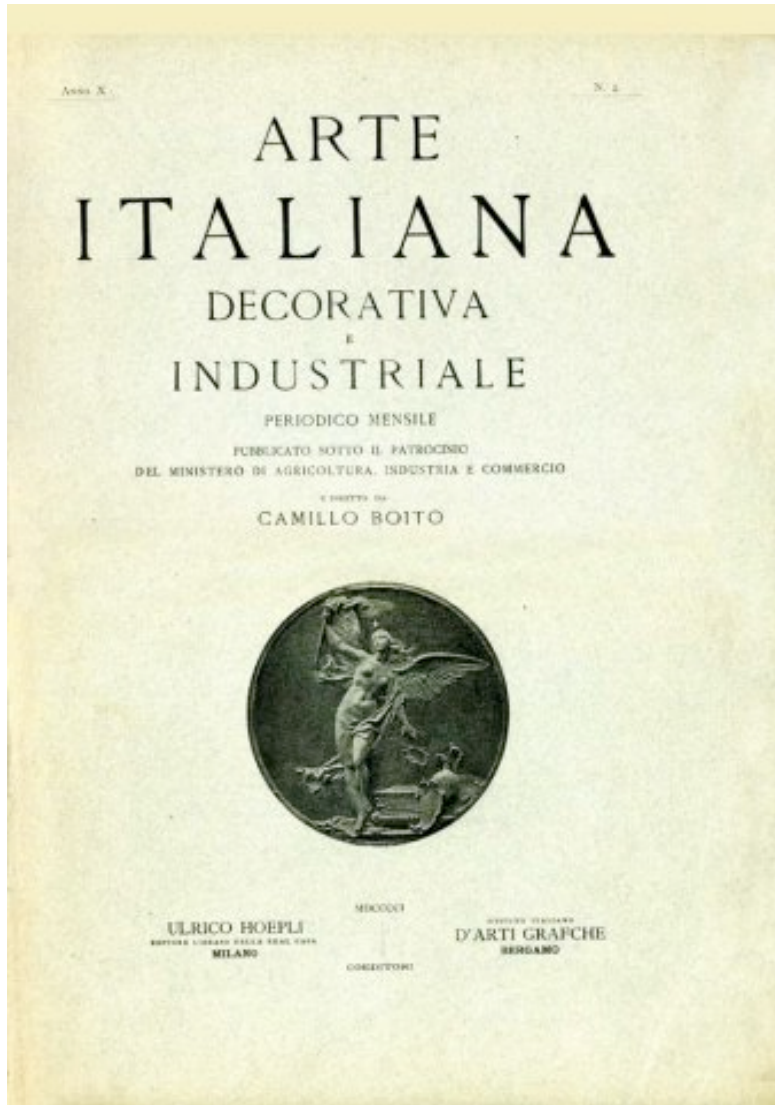
John Cotton Dana,
Bibliotecario.

APPENDIX G: LIBRARIES USING *A THOUSAND OF THE BEST NOVELS*



Source: 1919 edition of *A Thousand of the Best Novels*.

APPENDIX H: COVER OF *ARTE ITALIANA*



Cover *Arte Italiana: decorative e industriale*, 1901.

Source: <http://www.archiviartiapplicate.it/index.php?it/9/periodici/31/arte-italiana-decorativa-e-industriale>.

APPENDIX I: CHRONOLOGY

Year	National and Local Events
1846	Newark Library Association—a paid circulating library—established.
1870	U.S. Census records twenty-nine Italians living in Newark.
1873	Angelo Mattia, reputed founder of the First Ward, accidentally arrives in Newark.
1876	ALA established; Justin Winsor president 1876–1885; first issue of <i>Library Journal</i> .
1877	Melvil Dewey opens first library school at Columbia.
1880	U.S. Census records 407 Italian living in Newark.
1887	Charles Ami Cutter ALA president 1887–1889.
1889	Frederick Morgan Crunden ALA president 1889–1890. ----- Newark Free Public Library (NFPL) opens in the same West Park Ave. building as the Newark Library Association on October 17th. <i>The Finding List of the Free Public Library of Newark, NJ</i> published in October.
1890	Dewey ALA president 1890–1891. ----- Our Lady of Mt. Carmel established in the Ironbound section of Newark. U.S. Census records 2,921 Italians living in Newark.
1891	St. Lucy's established in the First Ward of Newark. ----- NFPL opens nine delivery stations (A-I).
1892	Dewey ALA president for second time 1892–1893. Ellis Island Immigration Station opens. ----- NFPL institutes open shelving for all collections but fiction; according to annual report, only Cleveland and Minneapolis also extend this privilege to their patrons. NFPL closes all nine delivery stations January 31st. NFPL sends a survey to teachers and principals regarding school/library interactions and cooperation.

- 1893 NFPL opens a distributing station for books and periodicals in a reading room called the Howard Lyceum operated in a building owned by Mr. Osborne on November 20th.
- 1894 NFPL reopens six delivery stations in November (A-E).
- 1895 [John Cotton Dana ALA president 1895–1896.](#)

 NFPL adds another delivery station.
 NFPL adopts the Brookline system—two books can be checked out by a patron but only one can be fiction.
- 1896 NFPL sends out survey to public schools to determine interest in traveling libraries.
 Second *Finding List of the Newark Free Public Library* published.
- 1897 NFPL purchases forty-five Polish books to library at the request of two local Polish societies. *Library Journal* reports that Italian books were also added to the library.
 NFPL purchases land for new library building on Washington Street.
 NFPL supplies five libraries (boxes of books) to fire companies
- 1898 Polish books added to NFPL in November of 1898
 NFPL adds fifteen new libraries to fire houses covering every engine company in the city.
 Cornerstone of new NFPL building laid January 26th, 1899.
- 1899 St. Rocco's established in the 14th Ave enclave.

 Cornerstone for new NFPL building at 5 Washington Street laid in January.
 NFPL begins circulating six traveling libraries of fifty books each to grammar and high schools in Newark beginning in January.
 Lithuanian organization requests books—NFPL adds twenty-five volumes.
- 1900 U.S. Census records 8,537 Italians living in Newark.

 NFPL opens High School Branch.
- 1901 New NFPL building at 5 Washington Street opened to public March 14.
 Frank Hill resigns as director of NFPL.
 Beatrice Winsor is named interim director of NFPL.
 NFPL opens delivery station at Morton St. Grammar School

- 1902 John Cotton Dana becomes director of NFPL on January 15.
German Society asks NFPL to provide new German fiction.
Duplicate fiction collection established at NFPL—costs 1 or 2 pennies to rent new fiction.
NFPL opens delivery station in May at 48 Bowery St., closes in October. Delivery station at 209 Ferry St also closed in October.
NFPL opens a deposit station
- 1903 NFPL closes Morton Street School delivery station; opens five deposit stations, including one on Springfield Avenue that includes German and Polish books.
- 1904 Domenico Orgo advertises the sale of Italian newspapers and *Romanzo Mensile* in *La Frusta*.
The *Newark News* notes a collection of Italian classics, a small collection of novels, and some Italian-English books in NFPL.
A Thousand of the Best Novels published by NFPL.
NFPL opens department store libraries in Bamberger & Co., Hahne & Co., and Strauss & Co.
NFPL opens Business Branch (Br.1).
- 1905 [Frank Hill ALA president 1905–1906.](#)

NFPL closes all delivery stations and institutes a system of deposit stations.
Editor of *La Frusta* oversees collection of one hundred Italian books from community that are added to NFPL's collection.
NFPL opens Clark Street Branch (Br.2) when Clark Thread Co. turns over operation of their library to NFPL.
- 1906 New Beaux Arts style City Hall opens in Newark.

NFPL has four Italian newspapers in periodical section.
NFPL replaces delivery stations with deposit stations.
NFPL opens Clinton Branch in October.
- 1907 [North American Civic League for Immigrants founded.](#)

Essex County Courthouse opens in Newark.

Roseville Branch (Br. 3) of NFPL opens April 1, 1907.
Ferry Street Branch (Br. 5) of NFPL opens November 16th.
Foreign Branch of NFPL (also known as Springfield Branch and Polysyllabic Branch and Br. 4) opens November 18th.
Four Italian magazines, including *Nuovo Antologia*, are available at the library.

- 1908 Four Italian newspapers donated to NFPL by the Italian consul, Mr. Magnani. NFPL annual report details 324 centers distributing material including the Main Library, six branches, thirteen deposit stations, one factory library, sixteen fireman's libraries, four police libraries, one post office library, 280 school libraries (traveling), and twelve additional traveling libraries.
- 1909 Pamphlet of library rules and regulations translated into Italian by the NFPL; one to be given to each Italian receiving a library card.
Four hundred Italian books in the library, located at the Foreign Branch and the Ferry Street Branch of NFPL.
Museum Association established at NFPL.
NFPL opens the Clinton Branch (Br. 6) in October.
- 1910 U.S. Census records 20,493 Italians living in Newark.
- 1911 In November, *The Newarker* begins publication.
Foreign Branch closed two months to move to new location—has highest circulation among all branches.
Italian books at the Main Library.
Station opened in September in the Jewish Synagogue, Ohem Shalom.
- 1912 Director of Foreign Branch asks for Italian books for the branch.
New station (N) opened in Presbyterian Chapel in November.
- 1913 NFPL adds Italian books in the Foreign Branch.
Seven hundred fifty books in Italian in the NFPL; circulation 3,937.
New Station (V) opened in employees' lunchroom at Bamberger & Co. in January.
- 1914 [WWI begins.](#)

NFPL closes all deposit stations in November; books transferred to Main Library.
Branches remain open.
- 1915 Last issue of *The Newarker* in October.
Three hundred twenty-five Italian books added to NFPL; 250 fiction and 75 nonfiction.
Newark Board of Education takes over High School Branch; buys books from NFPL
- 1916 Newark's 250th Anniversary celebrated with pageants, parades, concerts, operas, sporting events, and an industrial exposition.

- 1917 U.S. enters WWI.
Immigration Act of 1917 includes literacy test for immigrants.

NFPL closes Clark Street Branch in April due to insufficient funds.
NFPL closes Roseville Branch.
- 1918 WWI ends.
ALA Committee on Work with the Foreign Born established in February.

Children's Room of Foreign Branch closed and books transferred to other
branches early in the year.
NFPL closes all branches except the Business Branch and two branches located in
schools later in the year.
- 1919 Fourth revision of *A Thousand of the Best Novels* published by NFPL.
- 1920 U.S. Census records 27,465 Italians living in Newark.