Questions to answer:

1. Are you an immigrant or related to someone who migrated to the U.S. from another country? Are you close to anyone who is an immigrant to the U.S.? What have you learned from this experience?

2. What are the most common needs or questions you have when serving your immigrant library patrons?

3. What do you see as the biggest challenges for you and your library in assisting the immigrant patrons and the immigrant community in your neighborhood?
General Recommendations

Some barriers diverse and international patrons face when coming into the library¹:

- Patrons from foreign cultures may be unfamiliar with the role of the librarian or support services. What do they do? What kinds of help can you receive? If they are coming from another country, there may be differences between what is considered appropriate levels of service from a librarian.
- They may struggle with languages, accents, or social norms that are new or different. Friendliness and patience is required.
- They may be expecting an inhospitable environment with little help from librarians or few resources for their areas of interest. Do not personalize any suspicions or seeming derision for services or collections. Reflecting negative emotions will only diminish your effectiveness.
- They may not realize that their difficulties in the library are actually common to all students, no matter their background. Both high-and low-achieving students may be afraid of admitting confusion.

These are some simple actions that librarians can take to help mitigate these issues. Other solutions may take more and expense, but are also well worth the effort. During direct interactions with patrons, such as reference:

- Don’t be afraid to clarify what you can do for a patron. Offer help proactively, since patrons may not realize when they can ask for help.
- Encourage the patron to return with follow-up questions. Emphasize the hours and modes of service.
- Let patrons know that their questions are not unusual or too basic. “We get this question a lot” can ease some of the anxiety.
- Be patient. Language barriers can increase the time it takes to provide appropriate help. Follow up with supplemental help, such as written guides or instructions that patrons can use later on their own or with a friend.
- Admit limitations when there may not be a lot of available resources on patrons’ topics. Help them come up with ways to work around or adjust the topic.
- Try to figure out what is most important about the topic to the user.

Recommended Resources

Culture

- World of Culture – Geography World Online
  General information about geography, travels, weather, ethnic groups, and so on
  [www.worldofcultures.org](http://www.worldofcultures.org)

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- **World Cultures**
  An online database about cultures around the world with links to over 8,000 cultural communities
  [http://worldcultures.webs.com](http://worldcultures.webs.com)

- **Different Cultures of the World in a Nutshell**
  This site contains a collection of articles about different cultures of the world. A feature on the website allows visitors to listen to these articles.
  [www.buzzle.com/articles/different-cultures-of-the-world.html](http://www.buzzle.com/articles/different-cultures-of-the-world.html)

- **Students of the World - an open window on World’s cultures**
  Detailed information about every country including blogs and forums,
  [http://www.studentsoftheworld.info/menu_infopays.html](http://www.studentsoftheworld.info/menu_infopays.html)

- **Pics4learning**
  Free, copyright-friendly images of every country

- **Smithsonian-seriously amazing**
  The Smithsonian’s work helps to build bridges of mutual respect and understanding of the diversity of American and world cultures. The cultural centers help to build bridges of mutual respect and understanding of the diversity of American and world cultures.
  [http://www.si.edu/CulturalPrograms](http://www.si.edu/CulturalPrograms)

**Translation**

- **Google Translate**
  [https://translate.google.com](https://translate.google.com)

- **Bing Translator**
  [http://www.bing.com/translator](http://www.bing.com/translator)

- **Dictionary.com**

- **SpanishDict**
  Spanish translation and conjugation
  [http://www.spanishdict.com](http://www.spanishdict.com)

- **Babelxl**
  [http://babelxl.com](http://babelxl.com)
Barrier
1. A fence or other obstacle that prevents movement or access.
2. A circumstance or obstacle that keeps people or things apart or prevents communication or progress.
   http://www.onelook.com

Cross-cultural contacts
Outside influences that stimulate cultural change. The Silk Road brought silk to the West and Buddhism to China in the East.

Cultural change
A shift that may occur within a culture usually as a result of outside influences.

Cultural communities
Groups that have a number of cultural traits in common. Most countries include a mosaic of many cultural communities.

Cultural competence
The ability to provide services to clients that honor different cultural beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes and behaviors and the use of multi-cultural staff in the policy development, administration and provision of those services.
Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Title V Block Grant Program Guidance, 2003
http://www.ncccurricula.info/culturalcompetence.html

Cultural components
Attributes that vary from culture to culture, including religion, language, architecture, cuisine, technology, music, dance, sports, medicine, dress, gender roles, laws, education, government, agriculture, economy, grooming, values, work ethic, etiquette, courtship, recreation, and gestures.

Cultural diffusion
The spread of a culture and/or an individual trait, and the factors that account for such a spread.

Cultural dissonance
Elements of discord or lack of agreement within a culture.

Cultural ecology
The interactions between a culture and its physical environment.

Cultural geography
A branch of geography that focuses on cultural traits, the impact of material and non-material human culture on the environment, and the human organization of space.
**Cultural interaction**
The interconnectedness of various cultural components.

**Cultural landscape**
The natural landscape as modified by human activities and bearing the imprint of a culture group or society including buildings, shrines, signage, sports and recreational facilities, economic and agricultural structures, transpiration systems, etc.

**Cultural practices**
Ways of life that are unique to the inhabitants of a particular area.

**Cultural stereotype**
The misrepresentation of a culture that often involves a particular people’s clothing, good, and/or shelter, and most often rests on the notion that certain people live pretty much as did their distant ancestors (e.g., the Inuits are portrayed dressed in animal skins, carrying spears, and living in igloos with dog sleds parked outside; in reality, modern Inuits live much like other North Americans).

**Cultural traits**
Individual tool, act, or belief that is related to a particular tool, act, or belief that is related to a particular situation or need. Seven major traits of culture are: culture is learned, culture is transmitted, culture is based on symbols, culture is changeable, culture is integrated, culture is ethnocentric, and culture is adaptive.

http://www.merriam-webster.com

**Culture**
1. The knowledge, attitude and behavior shared by a large group of people (manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, etc.) It is what a person has learned from their environment and surroundings and it is passed on from generation to generation. Culture is learned, is collective and changes over time.

www.dictionary.com

2. Culture is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization (a corporate culture focused on the bottom line)

http://www.merriam-webster.com

**Culture areas**
Regions with shared cultural traits (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa).

**Culture hearth**
An area where a distinctive set of cultural traits develops, such as the Fertile Crescent and the Nile River Valley.

**Culture region**
A portion of the Earth’s surface that has one or more cultural elements.

**Diversity**
The condition of having or including people from different ethnicities and social backgrounds.

http://www.onelook.com

**Environment**
The overall setting, including natural elements and elements created by humans, in which a world community exists.
Ethnic change
A situation in which one cultural community is expanding or contracting in opposition to another, often leading to an atmosphere of tension and conflict between communities.

Ethnic groups
A collection of people distinguished, by others or themselves, primarily on the basis of cultural or nationality characteristics.

Generalization
A principle, statement, or idea having general application.
http://www.onelook.com

Global diversity
The existence of thousands of cultures having similarities and differences in language, socioeconomic class, religion, and other human traits.

Human geography
The study of the distribution of human populations, their cultures, their activities and behaviors, and their relationship with and impact on the physical landscapes they occupy.

Language
A symbol form of communication – perhaps the most important feature of a culture.

Migration
The permanent (or relatively permanent) relocation of an individual or group to a new usually distant, place of residence and employment.

Multicultural
Many cultures coexisting in a similar time and place.

“Nature or Nurture”
Whether it is our inherited genetic predisposition (“nature”) or what we learn as we grow up (“nurture”) that predominantly shapes us and our differences as individuals.

Race
Features (e.g., skin, hair, and eye color) that are genetic (inherited) and shared by a large group of people. Social scientists now doubt whether race is a useful concept.

Shrinking global communities
As communication and transportation technology has improved, the ability of groups of people to interact quickly across time and space has made distance across the globe and between communities seem shorter.

Social barrier effects
Characteristic that differentiates human groups and potentially limits interaction between them, thus inhibiting the spread of culture (e.g., language, religion, race and ethnicity, and a history of conflict between specific cultural communities).

Rural
Having to do with the countryside; rustic; away from cities and suburbs.
**Stereotype**
Conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception, opinion or image. One that is regarded as embodying or conforming to a set image or type.
http://www.onelook.com

**Suburban**
Having to do with a district, town, village, etc. on the outskirts of a city.

**Symbolic meanings**
Words or other communicative things such as gestures or pictures that stand for something else.

**Tolerance**
The capacity for or the practice of recognizing and respecting the beliefs or practices of others.
http://www.onelook.com

**Urban**
Having to do with cities, or characteristics of cities.

**Westernization**
The process in which non-Western societies acquire Western culture traits, which are adopted in varying degrees of thoroughness.