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Collection Diversity Has No Borders: A Librarian's Experience at FIL, CILELIJ and FILIJ

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PATRICIA MORÁN

Patricia, a Spanish Bilingual Youth Librarian for Multnomah County Library, develops and maintains relationships with the community, neighborhood organizations, and the great population served by the library. She has experience in selecting and promoting rich and diverse Spanish language collections. Since joining REFORMA in 2009, she has been a member of Bibliotecas Para La Gente, the Northern California chapter, and is currently a member of REFORMA Oregon.

Many public libraries in communities where Spanish is a language preferred by a significant percentage of the population have dedicated Spanish language collections and bilingual/bicultural staff that provides library services and programs. In Oregon, the Latino population is growing faster than the national average, and nearly half of Oregon Latinos are bilingual (Oregon Community Foundation, 2016). In alignment with best practices, and upholding the core values of our profession, libraries dedicate funds and shelving space to Spanish language materials to serve the informational, educational, and recreational needs of Spanish-speaking communities. Libraries that are dedicated to developing and maintaining rich and diverse collections that support thriving and empowered communities demonstrate this commitment through a holistic effort encompassing community engagement, strong relationships with vendors, as well as active participation in professional associations both locally and internationally.

In my work as a bilingual/bicultural librarian, previously in California and currently in Oregon, I contribute to selecting and promoting rich and diverse Spanish language collections. As part of this work, I have been able to expand my knowledge of Spanish language materials while connecting with and learning from professionals locally and internationally. In this article, I will share my experience at three professional development events held in Mexico between 2012 and 2016: FIL (Guadalajara International Book Fair), CILELIJ (Iberoamerican Congress of Language and Literature for Children and Youth) and FILIJ (International Book Fair for Children and Youth). Lastly, I will highlight the benefits of being an active member of a professional organization like REFORMA, and working to develop and promote library resources and services within the Latino/Spanish-speaking community.



FIL

GUADALAJARA INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR

The Guadalajara International Book Fair (Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara) is considered the most important Spanish-language book fair in the world, surpassing 800,000 attendees in 2016. FIL is a public fair with a robust cultural and literary program that starts the last weekend of November and ends the first weekend of December, with three days open for professionals only so that librarians, publishers, agents, distributors, educators and book professionals can work unimpeded. In over 100,000 square feet of space, the Guadalajara Expo contains FIL Niños (a small scale version of FIL for children), over 1,900 national and international publishers from 44 countries, halls for lectures, and rooms that host professional gatherings like the annual International Librarians Colloquium (Coloquio Internacional de Bibliotecarios).

2017 will be the 18th year that U.S. librarians receive support from a partnership between the American Library Association (ALA) and FIL. The ALA-FIL Free Pass Program helps to support the attendance of public and academic librarians. In addition to saving costs, selectors are able to purchase copies of titles with limited print runs as well as publications that cannot be obtained in the U.S. Adán Griego from Stanford University presents an orientation for U.S. librarians attending FIL. The presentation includes an overview of the Spanish-language publishing market, the latest U.S. demographic statistics, a preview of noteworthy items at the fair, and information about working with vendors. The year that I attended, Griego noted that the top three publishing countries are Spain, Mexico and Argentina and that Spanish language publications average 1,000 copies printed per title and 5,000 copies if the title is a best seller.



Treasures found at the Feria Internacional del Libro (FIL) that will surely be popular among library readers.



While visiting family in Guadalajara in 2012, I had the opportunity to attend FIL for the first time and to take advantage of the fair's extensive literary and cultural offerings. I attended dozens of book presentations and panels and took my niece to FIL Niños, where we spoke with authors, looked at art, and attended a free concert with one of Mexico's best bands for children, Luis Delgadillo y los Keliguanes. I familiarized myself with the fair's layout and had a chance to review the latest publications from many of my favorite children's publishers: Ediciones SM, Kalandraka, Ekaré, Tecolote, CIDCLI and Fondo de Cultura Económica.

In 2014 I attended FIL on behalf of Multnomah County Library (MCL) to select materials for all ages for MCL's 19 locations. I prepared by talking to colleagues who had experience purchasing materials at FIL and attended a webinar hosted by Griego and ALA. A colleague from MCL and I were able to review material for children, youth and adults from hundreds of publishers from Spain, Mexico and Argentina. We searched for specific requests from library patrons and staff, including books on cooking and films from the Golden Age of Mexican cinema (the period between the 1930s–1950s when Mexico's film industry reached high levels of production quality). Being able to physically evaluate materials and exchange recommendations with other selectors was tremendously helpful since reviews are not as accessible for Spanish language materials. Books that are published in the U.S. and translated from English are the majority of the scarce review sources that are available.

In 2015, U.S. librarians attending FIL increased by 45 percent from 2014. In preparing for attending the FIL a second time, I reviewed circulation statistics for MCL's Spanish language collection and received feedback from colleagues about the needs at each location. Based on this information, and from learning the previous year how crucial it is to be strategic and stay focused during the limited time at FIL, our selection focused on juvenile materials and



A view of the entrance to the Feria Internacional del Libro Infantil y Juvenil (FILIJ) as school groups arrive at the fair. FILIJ outgrew its location and was relocated in 2016 to the Parque Bicentenario, receiving visits from over 42,000 students from 450 schools.



media. Soliciting suggestions from MCL staff and patrons prior to attending FIL helped us to be responsive to the needs and interests of MCL's Latino/Spanish-speaking community.

In addition to materials selection, attending FIL offered the opportunity to learn about a variety of government programs and community efforts to promote reading amongst children and youth. One idea, *picnics literarios*, involves hosting literary picnics in public parks where blankets and books for children are provided by a community group, local bookstore or library. In some cities, *picnics literarios* have expanded to include theatrical performances, puppet shows and readings by known authors. During the summer of 2016, MCL's St. Johns branch partnered with Portland Parks and Recreation to visit community gardens and host *picnics de libros*. Information about library services and resources, as well as blankets and books to check out, was shared in an effort to promote the library's Spanish language collection. Staff facilitated read-alouds and gave out books about gardening, cooking, food preservation, plants and insects.

As the Spanish-language publishing market expands, FIL attendance continues to grow, and so do its program offerings. Leyhla Ahuile of *Publisher Weekly* reported that FIL 2016 hosted 2,000 publishers with books in 23 different languages, including indigenous languages such as Tzotzil, Zapoteco, Nahuatl and Maya. During FIL 2015 I had the opportunity to attend a book launch of Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* translated into Maya. Due to the increasing geographic diversity of authors and publishers that participate in FIL, the fair has been called the "New Frankfurt" by Tomás Granados Salinas, *The Bookseller*, and others. Frankfurt is the largest and most important book fair in the world.



Las bestias danzan (The beasts dance) performed by a local theater group, La Liga — Teatro Elástico, during FILIJ 2016.



CILELIJ

IBEROAMERICAN CONGRESS OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The CILELIJ (Congreso Iberoamericano de Lengua y Literatura Infantil y Juvenil) is a professional gathering of authors, scholars, researchers and specialists interested in literature for children and youth. The first CILELIJ was held in Chile in 2010 and a second edition took place in 2013 in Colombia. In November 2016, more than 70 speakers from 16 countries came together in Mexico City for the third CILELIJ to discuss the history and current trends of Latin American literature for children and youth. The program included presentations by award-winning illustrators and renowned scholars, as well as a poster session displaying projects in different countries and cities that promote reading through community-led reading spaces and programs. For example, one project included a reading room used by taxi drivers while they wait for work, and another was a private home that was turned into a community library.

The opportunity to be a part of discussions that delved into the guiding values of my work as a youth librarian was profound for my professional development. Maria Elvira Charria, president of CILELIJ's academic committee, spoke to the driving purpose of the gathering and why we create and promote literature, "...The end is not to read to raise statistics or for companies to have greater sales, the aim is that we can exercise more, and more fully, our condition as readers of the world, to know ourselves and to understand the life in which we are in, who we are with and what we have to do to fulfill what we need to accomplish on this earth" (Toro, 2016). Presentations that were most memorable included those given by Colombian author Triunfo Arciniegas, whose short story "Super burro" was received with a standing ovation, and Francisco Hinojosa who reminded us that there is no subject that is inappropriate for juvenile or young adult literature.



The third edition of Congreso Iberoamericano de Lengua y Literatura Infantil y Juvenil (CILELIJ), held in Mexico City in November 2016, brought together over 70 speakers from 16 countries to talk about literature for children and young adults.



A recurring theme amongst authors, librarians and other professionals, including *promotores de lectura*, were the challenges presented by public education systems. Each country's educational system poses its own challenges, but several participants discussed the situation in Mexico and the impact that education reform has had on schools. For example, many students in schools throughout the country are not benefiting from the resources provided by the country's national reading program, *Programa Nacional de la Lectura*. Another major challenge, which was evident at an international level, is the struggle to liberate the act of reading from its didactic function imposed by the education system's increasing standardization. Comparisons could be made with the U.S. public school system and the lack of equity in resources, particularly in the areas of school libraries and librarians.

CILELIJ's three-day program included several breaks between presentations and lunch, allowing attendees to connect with participants from other states and countries. I met several book professionals and librarians with whom I had meaningful conversations about their work. A bookseller from A Leer/IBBY Mexico's bookstore *La Voltereta* was a great resource and made many recommendations for books for children and youth. A Leer/IBBY Mexico also publishes a very useful annual guide of book recommendations, *Guía de libros recomendados*.

Staff working in Mexico's National Institute of Indigenous Languages, *Dirección General de Lenguas Indígenas*, shared information about their latest publications, including materials for all ages in all of the indigenous languages that are documented in Mexico. Also in attendance were librarians and *promotores de lectura* who have worked in their communities for many years coordinating activities to promote literacy in popular non-traditional reading spaces. For example, *Amoxpoani Promotores de Lectura* leads story and craft hours at local markets every Sunday. They continuously explore using new materials and methods for storytelling, including performance, puppets and kamishibai theater. Those conversations inspired great ideas for culturally rich and entertaining literary activities that I would like to try in my work as a bilingual youth librarian.



CILELIJ provided educators, authors, scholars, and librarians the opportunity to connect with each other to learn from each others' efforts to promote literature for children and young adults.



FILIJ**INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**


FILIJ (Feria Internacional del Libro Infantil y Juvenil) is an annual book fair that has been held in Mexico City since 1981. It encourages reading among children and young people. The date for FILIJ is set for mid-November, to coincide with the National Day of the Book celebrated on November 12. Similar to FIL, FILIJ brings together publishers, booksellers, distributors, librarians, teachers and other professionals working to improve the quality of publications in Mexico and to promote reading. The eleven-day fair is open to the public (no professionals-only days), and the program facilitates literary exchanges between countries that bring the public to national and international issues. FILIJ also hosts the annual International Seminar for the Promotion of Reading (*Seminario Internacional de Fomento de la Lectura*) though this year CILELIJ was hosted instead.

In 2016, FILIJ brought together over 420,000 attendees, 142 presenters and more than 1,400 cultural and artistic activities. The 36th FILIJ took place at *Parque Bicentenario*, a public park in a much larger space than in previous years. The fair was organized with various sections of the park named after kingdoms or names of places taken from children's literature. Attractions included a skate park and dozens of quiet and comfortable reading spaces for all ages. The activities and performances were similar to FIL Niños but at a much larger scale, including theatrical performances, concerts, book signings and readings. This year's guest country was Germany, and international guest authors included Anthony Browne, Satoshi Kitamura, and Sebastian Meschenmoser. FILIJ was decorated with public art spaces including murals throughout the fair that kids could take part in creating. People in oversized costumes representing literary characters like Alice in Wonderland, the Wizard of Oz, Don Quijote, and The Little Prince greeted attendees and posed for photographs.

Next Steps Towards Spanish Language Collection Diversity

Collaboration is integral to developing and maintaining rich and diverse collections. It is beneficial to have bilingual and bicultural staff selecting material and maintaining collections in a collaborative effort with both frontline staff and the community. Making full use of available tools such as circulation statistics and reports is important but trying or creating new ways of working towards community engagement can ensure that collections are reflective of users' needs and interests. Having a process in place, and dedicated staff, that regularly solicit feedback and suggestions from the Latino/Spanish-speaking community are helpful for improving collection diversity.

Participation in professional organizations like REFORMA provides staff with opportunities to learn from other libraries, share resources and exchange recommendations for Spanish language materials. REFORMA Oregon members worked together to create a list of 48 recommended publishers for the FIL, available for download from the REFORMA Oregon website. In addition to participating in local organizations, attending professional gatherings like FIL, FILIJ, CILELIJ and REFORMA National conferences provide spaces for reflection and an opportunity to form a global perspective of Spanish language collections.

REFORMA Oregon will host a workshop as part of the Oregon Library Association pre-conference on April 19, 2017. Presenters will cover resources and services for the Latino/Spanish-speaking community and strategies for building relationships and resources for collection development. Information about Libros for Oregon, a project that plans for an Oregon library book-buying cooperative, recommended Spanish-language publishers and exercises will give attendees the opportunity to evaluate their Spanish language collections and delineate concrete steps that can help improve them. 





Libraries working on improving their Spanish language collections with more diverse and inclusive materials can find professional resources at REFORMA Oregon's website: <http://reformaoregon.weebly.com/>

Additional Reading

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