

LIBROS

LIBRARIANS INCORPORATING BILINGUAL RESOURCES FOR OUTSTANDING STORYTIMES



THE PROBLEM

The North Central Regional Library system (NCRL) serves five counties in Washington. Although many households in NCRL's service area are Spanish-speaking, the majority of library branches don't offer bilingual storytime programs to reach these families and children.

Conversations with library staff revealed the main reasons for not offering this program were:

- not feeling confident in their Spanish skills
- not knowing how to select bilingual storytime elements such as songs and books
- feeling overwhelmed about perceived time needed to create a bilingual storytime
- a feeling of "I just don't think I can't do it."

While these were valid concerns, it was also important to get perspective from library patrons. At a small branch where bilingual storytime was offered, a Spanish-speaking mother shared that her family had traveled 25 miles to attend the program, despite living within walking distance to a bigger branch. She explained why:

"WE DIDN'T FEEL WELCOME AT THE OTHER LIBRARY. THE OTHER PARENTS SPOKE ENGLISH AND I DIDN'T. I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE STORIES AND COULDN'T EXPLAIN THEM TO MY CHILDREN. IT FELT LIKE IT WASN'T A PLACE FOR US."



THE PROCESS



The initial goal was to gather as much information as possible about anything related to bilingual storytime. Once this was complete, pieces were culled or sorted into categories which corresponded to a module in an online portal. Information was then organized in an easily-accessible way, resembling an online course with lectures, files, and storytime samples. Content for this project was obtained from several sources: online research about bilingual storytime in libraries across the nation, literature reviews, and interviews with library staff and patrons. Personal experience was also a source. For example, book suggestions were directly from storytime favorites in my own programs.

OUTCOME & NEXT STEPS

The end result is LIBROS, an online resource portal where library staff can learn how to create their own bilingual storytime program. This resource was designed to bridge the gap between library staff and patrons by changing the attitude of "I can't do that" to one of, "I think I can" in regards to offering a Spanish/English storytime. Interactive modules provide pointers on incorporating basic Spanish words into storytime, pronunciation lessons, and other tips. Lists of suggested books and media are available as downloadable files, and the portal is structured so that users may view content online at their own leisure.

LIBROS aims to show that anyone can create a storytime program with some Spanish elements, regardless of their own language background. The next step is for staff members to "check out" the resource and be open to the possibilities it can create for their library and communities.



SEE THE PROJECT:
VIVALIBROS.WEEBLY.COM

THE END GOAL IS MULTIFACETED: TO EMPOWER AND ENCOURAGE LIBRARY STAFF, INCREASE LIBRARY PATRONAGE, AND TOUCH THE LIVES OF FAMILIES THROUGH THE MAGIC OF LIBROS — BOOKS.

Illustrations from Pat Mora's "Book Fiesta!: Celebrate Children's Day/Book Day" (2008) and "Gracias/Thanks" (2005)