Spanish Language Outreach Connects New York's Libraries with Communities

Final Report of a Statewide Partnership Project

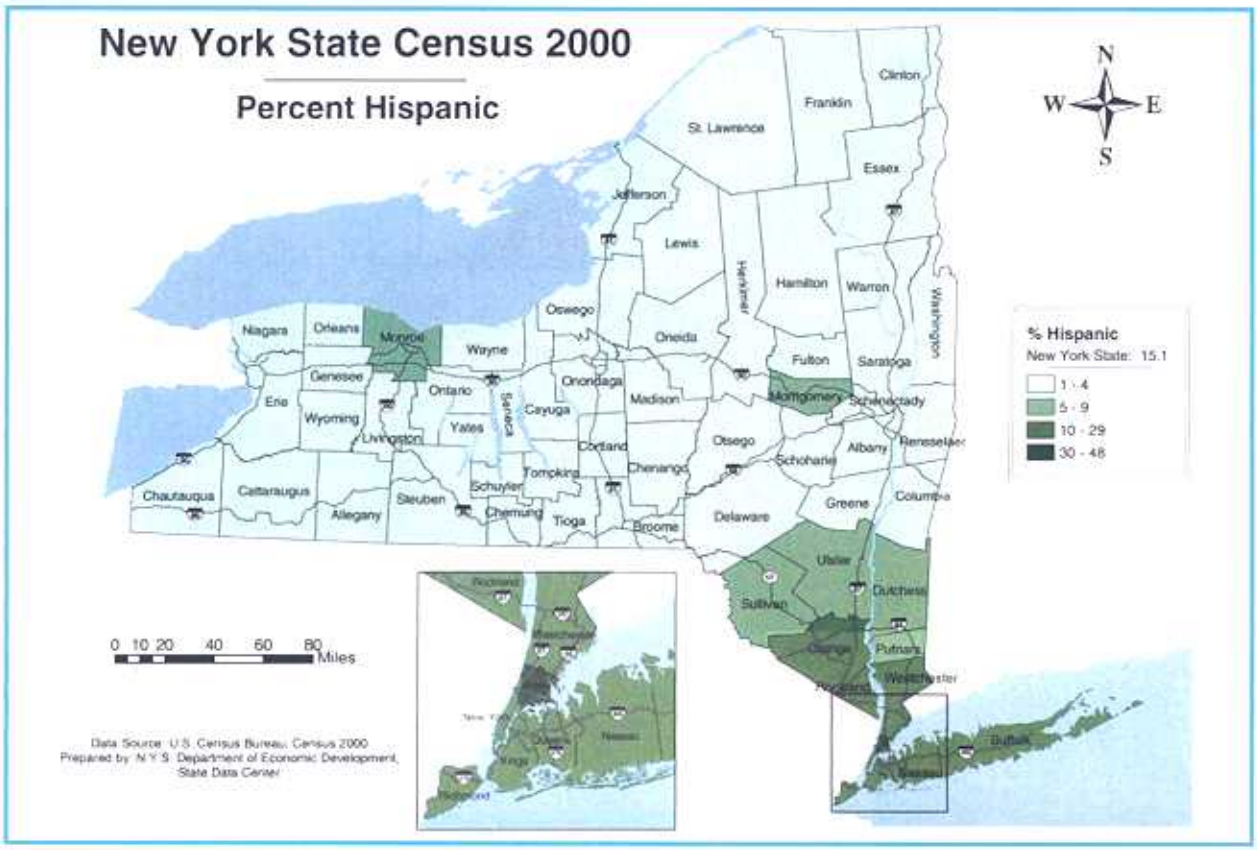
July 2008

Sponsored by:

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Libraries Program
and WebJunction

New York State Library, The University of the State of New York

The State Education Department



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A Collaborative Program of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Libraries Program, WebJunction, the New York State Library, and New York's Public Library Systems

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PARTNERS: New York State Library
Mid-Hudson Library System
Public Library System Directors Organization
New York Library Association
New York State Association of Library Boards

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Haverstraw Kings Daughters Public Library, Haverstraw, NY; Newburgh Free Library, Newburgh, NY; Pierce County Library System, Tacoma, WA; New York State Library, Albany, NY

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the libraries of New York State, we extend thanks to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Libraries Program for the Spanish Language Outreach Program—a training opportunity that enabled many of our state's public libraries to become community centers and important resources for Spanish-speaking New Yorkers.

New York's public libraries have a long history of helping immigrants become Americans. Libraries have served as schools for people who had no other access to education. The historical and the present-day role of the library in providing access to the English language and free education for immigrants is evident in the following description of The New York Public Library's opening in 1911: "Almost overnight, The New York Public Library became a vital part of the intellectual fabric of American life. Among its earliest beneficiaries were recently arrived immigrants, for whom the Library provided contact with the literature and history of their new country as well as the heritage that these people brought with them." *

Today, libraries across the State are continuing in this endeavor. Through the dedication and efforts of the public library system trainers who worked with the State Library and WebJunction, library staff and trustees across the state participated in the Spanish Language Outreach Program's training and support to bring new services, collections, and programs for Spanish speakers into our State's libraries.

Janet Martin Welch
New York State Librarian
May 2008

*The New York Public Library: History
http://www.nypl.org/pr/history.cfm

FOREWORD

To help U.S. libraries address the growing information and technology needs of Spanish speakers, in 2004, WebJunction launched the Spanish Language Outreach Program with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In partnership with state libraries across the U.S, WebJunction has conducted in-person workshops and created a vibrant online community of practice to increase library staff members' knowledge and skills to reach out more effectively to Spanish speakers in their local communities. The program helps library staff learn techniques to improve promotional efforts, give new attention to staffing and staff training, increase library programming for Spanish speakers, and strengthen or forge new partnerships with organizations in the Spanish-speaking community.

To date the program has:

- worked with forty states
- trained 170 trainers and coordinators
- conducted 342 workshops
- trained over 5,000 library staff members

This year the Spanish Language Outreach Program is working with seventeen states to deliver the final round of the program's in-person workshops. We plan to continue to actively build the online community of practice on WebJunction for library staff interested in library outreach to Spanish speakers. Later this summer, WebJunction will launch a revamped site that will allow for more dynamic, creative interaction among members through social networking tools that promote collaboration and information sharing. We look forward to helping the SLO community of practice utilize these new tools!

The success of the SLO program is directly attributed to our collaboration with state libraries. The New York State Library was an outstanding partner and delivered a significantly larger number of workshops than any other participating state. Their approach to the project was strategic and well planned. This report details both the thoughtful planning and execution of the SLO program in New York, highlighting the program's success and informing best practices for similar training initiatives. It was a privilege to be part of this exceptional collaboration with the New York State Library and the program's hard-working trainers!

Laura Staley
Project Coordinator, Spanish Language Outreach Program
WebJunction.org
May 2008

In response to the exponential growth of the Spanish-speaking population, as well as an increased awareness of the growing digital divide, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Libraries Program and WebJunction[1] awarded New York's libraries[2] a Fall 2006 grant of $91,200 to launch the national Spanish Language Outreach Program in New York State. The purpose of the grant was to accomplish the following:

- Teach library staff effective outreach techniques for Spanish-speaking communities.
- Engage the Spanish-speaking communities' leaders in partnerships with libraries.
- Increase the number of Spanish speakers who participate in computer training programs and use public-access computers in public libraries.
- Increase the number of Spanish speakers who use public libraries.

WebJunction, a dynamic partner in the program, is an online community that supports library staff development. A dedicated area of WebJunction serves as a community of practice for the Spanish Language Outreach Program (SLO) trainers and workshop participants. The SLO community of practice offers rich resources, best practices, online courses, webinars, and discussions to support library staff in their efforts to serve the Spanish-speaking population. In New York State, SLO participants have been especially active in this online community, contributing content, attending webinars, and participating in discussions.

The New York State Library's partners in the program included the New York Library Association (NYLA), the New York State Association of Library Boards (NYSALB), the Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISDO), and the Mid-Hudson Library System. New York State's effort was built on established state-funded outreach services that public library systems have provided for many decades. *Cassandra Artale,* Library Development Specialist for the New York State Library, coordinated the program for the twelve New York public library systems that participated in this initiative. Through the shared leadership of the State Library, the public library systems, and the program partners, new models of best practices for service to Spanish speakers are being developed statewide.

In keeping with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Library Program's longstanding mission to expand 21st century information services through public libraries, WebJunction provided the initial training for workshop leaders. It continued by extending support for the regional training workshops and follow-up activities that were designed in response to articulated needs of the Spanish-speaking population.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES IN NEW YORK

A number of challenges confronted the implementation of the Spanish Language Outreach Program in New York State. In some communities, questions arose about the value of offering services in Spanish rather than in English, and some even asked why the library was involved at all. In other places, the Spanish speakers who were recent immigrants considered the public library a government

1 WebJunction is sponsored by OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation <www.webjunction.org>.

2 See Appendix for New York's Spanish Language Outreach Program public library system participants, coordinator and trainer names and web addresses.

The most difficult barriers existed in regions of the state that were subject to unexpected arrests of undocumented workers and the accompanying family disruptions.

agency and were reluctant to participate in library programs. Some saw libraries as a resource for academic and professional persons only and did not understand the array of services that are offered for all kinds of people. Others were not literate in their native language, so the starting point in providing library services needed adjustment.

The most difficult barriers existed in regions of the state that were subject to unexpected arrests of undocumented workers and the accompanying family disruptions. Despite these obstacles, significant breakthroughs resulted from the Spanish Language Outreach Program workshops and the subsequent implementation of library outreach projects in those communities. Needs for library services continue to emerge and are more demanding than first anticipated. The emphasis on outreach continues in the participating libraries.

New York was a participant in Round Two of the national Spanish Language Outreach Program. It benefited from the experiences of those states included in Round One and the Pilot round and has, in turn, shared knowledge and experience gained here with those states participating in Round Three of the program. The sustaining structure for the Spanish Language Outreach Program is a successful combination of Train the Trainer workshops; shared information through follow-up forums and WebJunction's online resources; and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Libraries Program's philosophy of encouraging creativity and risk-taking in the interest of beneficial innovation. This framework for implementation of the Spanish Language Outreach Program contributed to its effectiveness in New York State.

New York's diverse population and its complex needs, including those of children and families, migrant workers, small business entrepreneurs, the incarcerated, and others combined with the scope and design resulting from those needs, offers a model for future programs throughout the United States. Through the Spanish Language Outreach Program, library and community leaders are joining to create and extend library services in the urban, suburban, and rural libraries of New York State. Spotlighting the people, places, and these new services of the Spanish Language Outreach Program in New York State illustrates the value of this collaboration, which strengthens library services by responding to community needs.

CREATING COMMUNITY

The national Spanish Language Outreach Program's regional workshops were adapted to each state's needs. New York's statewide program had three phases.

The Training Institute

In Phase I of the Spanish Language Outreach Program in New York State, the trainers who were appointed by the participating public library systems joined New York State Library and WebJunction staff in Albany for the multi-day Training Institute. *Yolanda Cuesta*, a nationally recognized expert in outreach to multicultural communities who specializes in helping libraries and other non-profit organizations serve ethnic and culturally diverse communities, led the group through the fundamentals of the outreach program. Institute participants learned how to conduct regional training workshops based on the program's principles, with emphasis on including and obtaining input from community leaders.

Jasmine Mondesir and Leyvan Jones, Brooklyn Public Library.

According to *Laura Staley*, Spanish Language Outreach Program National Coordinator for WebJunction, "the program's workshops provide library staff with information about proven marketing techniques, an understanding of cultural differences, best practices in technology

training, and partnering with local community organizations who serve Spanish speakers." Participants in this process learned about new content and methods, and also connected with library staff and community leaders as they established important supportive relationships and implemented the Spanish Language Outreach Program at their libraries.

Regional Workshops

In Phase II, the new trainers returned to their library systems to schedule and present training workshops for local library personnel, trustees, and staff in their regions.

The most important parts of the program implementation were those periods when each system developed and offered workshops tailored to its region. The trainers worked with local library staff and trustees to develop community relationships, implement outreach, and provide specific services and new collections for Spanish speakers.

From October 2006 to May 2007, 47 workshops conducted throughout upstate and downstate New York reached some 756 library staff, trustees, and library/information science graduate students. By the program's end, the public libraries of Bellport and Port Washington on Long Island could compare notes and experiences with the upstate libraries of Buffalo, Geneva, Jeffersonville, Poughkeepsie, Syracuse, and Utica or with the Greater Metropolitan area libraries of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Staten Island. The local settings were very different, but the outreach goals were the same.

Follow-Up and Feedback

Phase III of the statewide effort was a follow-up program ("Spanish Language Outreach Success Stories") presented at the New York Library Association's Annual Conference in Buffalo in November 2007. This program allowed for sharing of experiences, reports on community connections, and information on library program successes and challenges.

Continuity and follow-up were built into the workshops from the beginning. At the Training Institute in Albany, Laura Staley of WebJunction posted a request on the online discussion board. Headlined "Trainer Shout Out—Tell Us about Your Workshops!" the request encouraged participation as follows: "I am starting this topic in Albany during the final day of our Train the Trainer Institute. We have had a wonderful time and we want to make sure to keep the energy, sharing, and support going once everyone returns home and begins delivering their workshops. After each workshop please take a few minutes to tell us about your experiences."

With a mechanism for communication and sharing already in place, many trainers posted reports to www.webjunction.org/ and continued posting throughout the year's ongoing workshops. Local reports shared many interesting experiences—from surprises about the abundance of Spanish-speaking community leaders to discoveries of catering and restaurant assets in the neighborhoods of local libraries across the state. The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Puerto Rico provided only some of the national cuisines enjoyed at the workshops. One librarian remarked that once tasted, pumpkin flan was high on the request list at their workshops!

Some library systems also created regional listservs, blogs, and other electronic means to share experiences among neighboring libraries. The objective was for trainers to offer support to each other and share resources and lessons learned.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Each Spanish Language Outreach Program regional workshop included a panel of community leaders who represented some aspect of service to the Spanish speakers in the area. As a result, workshop leaders began preparing for their workshops by locating, interviewing, and asking community leaders if they would help the library learn about the Spanish-speaking community's needs. This activity established connections with

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community leaders who were willing to tell others about their community's needs and help the library reach Spanish speakers.

Following are a few examples of community leaders who served on workshop panels:

Suffolk Cooperative Library System: A deacon from the Hispanic Apostolate, a workers' rights advocate/organizer for Hispanic day laborers, and a community health physician from the university hospital.

Mid-Hudson Library System: In a workshop for correctional facility librarians, a chaplain, a jail education officer, and a transitional services coordinator.

The New York Public Library: A medical doctor who directs a South Bronx health education program, a school and community health educator who works with parents, and a community college administrator who addressed specific programs available to the Spanish-speaking population.

The Onondaga County Public Library System: The editor of the local central New York Hispanic newspaper, the coordinator for the Syracuse/Rochester Planned Parenthood, the Board President of the Spanish Action League, and the marketing representative of a local health agency serving the Hispanic population.

The Pioneer Library System: A local dairy farmer who employs workers from Mexico, an agency worker confronting legal and medical terminology translation issues with Spanish-speaking clients, and a university professor who described her personal experience of coming to the U.S. as a teenager.

The inclusion of community leaders who told their stories and expressed different points of view added considerable value to the workshops. Many of the community leader panelists were surprised to learn of the resources offered by the public library, and their introduction to the library through the workshop provided opportunities for future partnerships. To help mark the introduction of services to Spanish-speakers, some libraries offered bilingual library cards for the first time. One library introduced signage that facilitated browsing the library when Spanish-speaking parents brought their children to a story hour.

Kim Iraci, trainer for the Pioneer Library System, shared a story about bridging the cultural divide. Kim conducted a workshop at the Wadsworth Library in the upstate dairy-producing community of Geneseo. A community leader panelist explained that toys represented an economic exchange and a type of work, rather than play, for some children. The library director shared this explanation with her eight-year-old son, who owned a handmade wooden painted turtle, a gift he had received. The toy had been relegated to the floor of her son's room until he understood the role it played in the life of the Mexican child who made it. Now it has a prominent place on a bookshelf. A new kind of understanding had begun.

RESULTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

As described earlier, the New York State Library organized a follow-up program for Phase III of the Spanish Language Outreach Program in New York State. A panel discussion afforded the opportunity for the workshop trainers, participants, and others at the 2007 New York Library Association (NYLA) Conference in Buffalo to share information about program accomplishments and challenges. While sharing breakfast, 45 librarians heard from these speakers:

- Kimberly Iraci, Outreach Coordinator and Program Trainer, Pioneer Library System, Canandaigua
- Mary Elizabeth Wendt, retired Associate Director of the Staten Island Libraries, The New York Public Library

■ Lorena Doherty, Multicultural Librarian and Professional Storyteller, North Shore Public Library, Shoreham

■ Laura Staley, Spanish Language Outreach Program National Coordinator, WebJunction.

After the panel presentations, program participants, some of whom had attended a Spanish Language Outreach Program workshop or had been trainers, shared their own successes and challenges in providing library services to Spanish speakers and in outreach to communities as diverse as the South Bronx, upstate Batavia, and the North Shore of Long Island. The challenges are different and the solutions not always comparable, but Laura Staley remarked that the "fabulous group of trainers from New York are helping Gates/WebJunction to continue to modify the national program where necessary and to strengthen what is already working."

A Spanish conversation group meets at the Brooklyn Public Library.

Two important themes emerged from the panel program at the NYLA Conference:

■ What happened as a result of the Spanish Language Outreach Program in New York is a "call to action" to continue the training and support into the future and for proactive thinking about the potential for collaborative support from the community of practitioners.

■ Change doesn't happen in a day. It can take a decade or more, and that's okay.

REGIONAL FOLLOW-UP: *One Public Library System's Approach*

These themes were also dominant in a follow-up workshop held at the Ramapo Catskill Library System a month after the NYLA Conference. Librarians and a community representative shared experiences through the encouragement of the original trainer, *Yolanda Cuesta,* Institute Facilitator/Curriculum Developer for Gates/WebJunction, and *Leslie Riley,* Outreach Manager from the library system. The one-day event brought together area librarians who had participated in the Spanish Language Outreach Program workshops offered by the library systems and had implemented some of the goals of the project in their rapidly changing communities. These communities are within commuting distance of metropolitan New York City and are serving increasingly diverse populations. The U.S. Census American Community Survey for 2005 shows an increase of about 2 percent in the Spanish speaking population since the 2000 census for the library system's four-county service area.

Library staff from Goshen, Spring Valley, Haverstraw, Newburgh, and Middletown, the largest cities in the library system's service area, asked the questions: What is working for you? What isn't working for you? How would you do it differently? What resources have proved most helpful? And they explored the answers together.

All agreed that a valuable tool was getting to know the community, understanding that "one person leads to another person," and that each challenge was also an opportunity. Some emphasized targeting specific populations and tailoring library services to that segment of the population. The consensus was that to do otherwise would make the effort overwhelming.

One discussion focused on an obstacle felt in many of the communities: even when library staff want to create new priorities so that Spanish speakers receive needed library services, resistance may arise if the Spanish-speaking population does not vote or cannot vote on the library's budget. This conversation in upstate New York reflects the one going on across the U.S. and poses a significant political challenge to providing

...a valuable tool was getting to know the community, understanding that "one person leads to another person..."

library service to Spanish speakers. The facilitator underscored what many of the participants have struggled to communicate to their libraries and their communities: "We seem to have forgotten that we are here to serve the entire community. It is a lifelong learning experience for all."

SPOTLIGHTING SUCCESS: *Persons and Programs*

NEW YORK CITY AREA LIBRARIES

Because New York is the point of arrival for so many of our nation's immigrants, New York City's libraries—Queens Library, the Brooklyn Public Library, and The New York Public Library—have been creating and implementing outstanding services for immigrants for decades. The Spanish Language Outreach Program offered new opportunities to expand these longstanding, vibrant programs for immigrants.

Throughout the New York City area, a variety of programs have been developed to fulfill the goals of the Spanish Language Outreach Program. Some examples of new projects and existing services that were expanded because of the Spanish Language Outreach Program include the following:

- Local history documents translated into Spanish
- Exhibits celebrating the cultural heritage of the many different Spanish-speaking communities
- Library staff learning Spanish in formal classes
- Marketing of the availability and accessibility of public computers to the Spanish-speaking community
- Participation of leaders from community agencies in library programs

El Dia de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead) Celebration at Newburgh Free Library. (Photo courtesy of the *Times Herald Record* and Newburgh Free Library.)

Results at The New York Public Library: Library managers, librarians, and staff recognized the need for staff members to have a better understanding of the Spanish language after the completion of the Spanish Language Outreach Program. Fifty-two people met in a series of workshops over ten consecutive Fridays to learn basic conversational Spanish as a direct result of the initial program. The New York Public Library plans to continue offering such classes for library staff.

Results at Newburgh Library: The Newburgh Free Library, the central library or the Ramapo Catskill Library System's 40 member libraries, is located in a Hudson River city that has emerged from almost a half century of challenge to its infrastructure. Due to dramatically shifting demographics, more than a third of the city's general population is of Spanish-speaking background. Only 62 percent of Newburgh's population is reported to have a high school diploma or higher level of education, and 36 percent[3] speak a language other than English at home.

The library, which serves the boundaries of the city's school district, is responding to the unfolding needs of the community. For instance, the library has recently broken new ground in local library management by appointing a bilingual outreach librarian with specific responsibility for outreach to Spanish speakers. In addition to working as a trainer for the Spanish Language Outreach Program, *Joanne Lugo* works with library staff to increase Spanish-language collections, provide computer classes for immigrants, and introduce new signage in Spanish. Ms. Lugo also advocates in the larger community, sharing information on library events and ensuring that the library's notices are included in the local Spanish-language newspaper.

3 Information gathered from American Factfinder by the U.S. Census Bureau (http://factfinder.census.gov).

In the first phase of the Spanish Language Outreach Program, the Newburgh Free Library helped to organize El Dia de los Muertos events (the Day of the Dead) and was an active partner in the festivities. As the Times Herald Record reported, "The parade that marched down Broadway was a blend of both Halloween and Day of the Dead; sombreros and princess gowns, Mexican flags and Chinese dragons." When the Newburgh Free Library planned the next event, a Festival of Masques, community organizations and the library worked together and the library provided open space on its grounds for events. Partnership with the public library is becoming integral to community events, especially those for the Spanish-speaking community.

CHALLENGES FACED: *Libraries and Communities*

RURAL ISSUES

Some barriers to the implementation of new services in libraries did arise in various regions across the state. Rural areas in the Pioneer Library System confronted some of the most difficult obstacles. As explained during the NYLA Conference follow-up program, it is projected that by the year 2050, 25 percent of this library system's population will be Hispanic. Although that figure may be a low estimate because it excludes the many undocumented workers in this upstate farming area, such data can still help libraries make informed decisions about collection development.

Spanish Storytime at the Utica Public Library.

Currently, the system's member libraries and the agencies that provide direct service to the Spanish-speaking population reach out to the churches and send introductory letters to Spanish-speaking residents in the community. Reports noted that the letters helped to build trust. During the first workshop offered by the Pioneer Library System, at the Geneva Public Library, a panel of community leaders shared stories of immigration round-ups that have impacted the local farm economy and the isolation that occurs due to language barriers. The panel introduced Latin American foods that line shelves of area stores and commented on the difficulties some Spanish-speaking teens have in communicating with their peers. The persistence of one farmer who pursued legal aid for workers and the ensuing drama with immigration authorities suggest the potential positive impact of the library system's outreach work in a complicated community situation. Facilitating communication among the community groups, agencies, and the legal system is critical.

Building on Services for Incarcerated Spanish Speakers

There are great challenges in providing library services to the thousands of incarcerated Spanish speakers in the seven correctional facilities served through the Coordinated Outreach program of the Mid-Hudson Library System in Poughkeepsie. The system has been addressing the needs of this population for many decades, and the Spanish Language Outreach Program provided another opportunity to train correctional facility librarians through targeted workshops. The insights and approaches used by *Merribeth Advocate* and *Rebekkah Smith Aldrich*, system staff, and trainers for the Spanish Language Outreach Program are providing materials for replication in other regions of New York State and throughout the country.

A fundamental premise guided the Mid-Hudson Library System's approach: correctional facility librarians are already serving their Spanish-speaking populations and could teach others. Merribeth Advocate, the system's outreach manager, decided to approach the workshops as "an opportunity for sharing, not just a presentation."

Merribeth Advocate, Mid-Hudson Library System staff member and trainer for the Spanish Language Outreach Program.

The definition of "community" as commonly used in the Spanish Language Outreach Program in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Libraries Program and by WebJunction was adapted to the correctional facility environment.

By expanding the idea of stakeholders—community leaders represented by a counselor, a chaplain, an education officer, and ethnic social group leaders—the Mid-Hudson program adapted existing training materials such as the Community Leader Interview Guide[4] to the infrastructure of the correctional facilities. This motivated other correctional facility staff to collaborate with facility librarians. Libraries are now seen as vital in serving the Spanish-speaking population. Correctional facility protocols deny Internet access to those who are incarcerated. This presented special challenges for the program. The efforts made by the Mid-Hudson Library System Outreach Services Team have opened a national dialogue on service to this population. Building on the work of the Mid-Hudson Library System, WebJunction has customized the Spanish Language Outreach workshop curriculum for correctional facility libraries. The curriculum and a discussion area for libraries serving the incarcerated are available on the WebJunction website www.webjunction.org.

SOLVING PROBLEMS: *Challenges Today and Tomorrow*

In the national Spanish Language Outreach Program, the experiences of the Pilot and Round One states benefited those in subsequent rounds. Issues are addressed as they occur and solutions and resources are shared on the discussion boards at WebJunction. Challenges that confront the implementation of outreach to Spanish speakers include these: *How to achieve more effective marketing? How to get parents involved when their children are attending programs? What is the best Spanish-language signage? What is the best way to serve this community with respect to its evolving multicultural needs?*

Other challenges are not easily resolved. These include finding effective ways to reach out to an immigrant population that wants and needs information, but faces precarious economic and legal situations. These situations have revealed hostility towards efforts to assist the Spanish-speaking population from inside and outside the library. Complications also arise in trying to advance English literacy where native-language literacy is absent.

Spanish-speakers have often avoided library programs because of an assumed association of the library with governmental authorities. The Spanish Language Outreach Program has helped to overcome this perception through bilingual staff, customized services, and the libraries' genuine interest in the needs of their communities. The program has also increased library management's interest in recruitment of a diverse staff.

Positioning the Public Library as a Community Hub

The follow-up programming at many of the library systems placed an emphasis on the involvement of community agencies, and this sometimes advanced to establishing an outreach policy within the library. Exhibits at community information fairs and participation in parades and other community festivities became more frequent in some locations. Celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, recognition of the national holidays of Latin American cultures, introduction of bilingual instruction materials and library cards, and programs for parents and children are only some of the ways

4 *Community Leader Interview Guide. WebJunction. <http://data.webjunction.org/wj/documents/11959.doc>*

that the Spanish Language Outreach Program in New York State builds on existing public library services while reaching out to new populations. The library represents the people, the space, and the place for connecting these communities that have begun to communicate in new ways.

Through the Gates/WebJunction Spanish Language Outreach Program, the libraries of New York State learned new ways to connect with their communities' Spanish speakers by involving community leaders. Library staff and partners found each other in nearby communities and, through WebJunction, across the nation. The result has been new services for Spanish speakers in New York's libraries.

Today more Spanish speakers are encouraged to visit libraries to find something of value for study, work, family, and fun. Diverse communities are learning to understand one another through library connections. As the Spanish-speaking population continues to grow, libraries and library staff across New York State will be better prepared to respond to its needs.

Through the Gates/ WebJunction Spanish Language Outreach Program, the libraries of New York State learned new ways to connect with their communities' Spanish-speakers by involving community leaders.

More New York State Success Stories

A good example of the lasting effects of the Spanish Language Outreach Program is found at the Fallsburg Library in the Ramapo Catskill Library System. The library reports a "steady, but distinct rise in the number of Spanish-speaking library users" as well as an increased number of Spanish-language web pages being accessed on a regular basis. In response to these notable changes and due to the lessons of the program, the library has increased its Spanish collection and started a weekly bilingual story time. The library also has an English for Speakers of other Languages (ESL) group that meets in the library, and all members have received library cards.

Another example is found at the Patchogue-Medford Library in the Suffolk Cooperative Library System. SLO Trainer and Reference Librarian Jean Kaleda reports that as a result of the program training and the library director's participation, the need for outreach to Spanish speakers received library support. This support and SLO program results led directly to the library's successful application for a New York State Library Adult Literacy Libraary Services Program grant, "Enriching Community through...Computers, Conversation, and Citizenship." This two-year grant allows the library, in partnership with the Patchogue-Medford School District and Literacy Suffolk, to offer free weekly citizenship classes, weekly bilingual computer classes, and an expansion of weekly conversational English groups.

In addition, Patchogue-Medford Library has recently hired a full-time bilingual Library Assistant to assist in Spanish Language Outreach. Her connection to and communication with Spanish-speaking patrons has already resulted in a 78 percent increase in the number of media items for Learning English that have circulated from 2007 to 2008. She has quickly become one of the "faces of the library" for community members, English speakers, and non-English speakers, alike.

Public Libraries across the state have reported the following:

- **Buffalo and Erie County Public Library** (Erie County), serving a population of 950,265, celebrated "Day of the Book/Day of the Child," which the library intends to make an annual event. The library had a display during Hispanic Heritage month and held a successful Day of the Dead celebration.

- **The Chatham Public Library** (Columbia County), serving a population of 9,318, expanded its Spanish-language collection and the library has implemented a Spanish family story hour with a local Spanish teacher.

- **The Grinnell Library Association** (Dutchess County), serving a population of 26,274, conducted an experimental outreach program featuring students from the Wappingers Jr. High School reading picture story books in English to Spanish speaking children from the Astor Early Childhood Center.

Readers are leaders during the Neary Elementary School's Reading Adventure at the Haverstraw King's Daughters Public Library.

- **The Haverstraw King's Daughters Public Library** (Rockland County), serving a population of 29,148, partnered with the Gerald F. Neary Elementary School (87-percent Spanish speaking) to create the Neary Reading Adventure. Children from first and second grade are chosen to read at the library every month. These children are awarded "Readers are Leaders" certificates from the school principal.

- **The Howland Public Library** (Dutchess County), serving a population of 25,938, is actively searching for a bilingual adult services librarian and hires bilingual staff whenever possible. The library purchases popular novels in Spanish.

- **The James Prendergast Library Association** (Chautauqua County), serving a population of 31,730, held a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month in October 2007, offering children's face painting and craft making that included bead bracelets, decorated masks, and Coqui Frog (a traditional Puerto Rican symbol) finger puppets.

- **The Kent Public Library** (Putnam County), serving a population of 14,009, organized once-a-week ESL classes for adults.

- **The Kinderhook Memorial Library** (Columbia County), serving a population of 7,035, conducted a focus group and found that connecting with the Spanish-speaking population is more than offering programs for the population. The director is developing a group of volunteers who will offer ESL literacy tutoring.

- **The Marlboro Free Library** (Ulster County), serving a population of 11,634, posts bilingual signage for services and events in the library.

- **The Mattituck-Laurel Library** (Suffolk County), serving a population of 5,770, started an English conversation group as a direct result of the Spanish Language Outreach program. Led by a former teacher and a Literacy Suffolk volunteer, the group has had excellent attendance and is 90 percent Spanish speaking.

- **The Mid-Hudson Library System** (Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Putnam, part of Ulster Counties), serving a population of 627,046, reports an increase in the size of their member libraries' Spanish-language collections to include popular novels and children's easy readers.

- **The Patterson Library** (Putnam County), serving a population of 5,232, designed a bilingual story time for children and their parents. The library has also organized ESL classes as a direct result of the Spanish Language Outreach Program.

- **The Plattekill Public Library** (Ulster County) offers Homework Help in Spanish and English, translates flyers and library announcements into Spanish, is expanding the library's Spanish collections and is offering several more new services for Spanish speakers.

Correctional Facilities in the Mid-Hudson Library System have reported the following:

- The Library Director at the **Fishkill Correctional Facility** reports the hiring of paid bilingual inmate workers during the library's regular hours and bilingual volunteers in the evenings. The library is now seen as a friendly place for Spanish speakers. The director quips, the library "is the only escape I can offer."

- The Library Director at the **Greene Correctional Facility** has hired two bilingual clerks since participation in the Spanish Language Outreach Program training; the library reports that the circulation of Spanish-language materials has increased from the previous year.

APPENDIX

NEW YORK STATE PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS AND TRAINERS

Brooklyn Public Library
System SLO Coordinators: Sharron Lahey, Mary Graham
System Trainers: Roxana Benavides, Brooklyn Public Library
Leyvan Jones, Brooklyn Public Library
Website: http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/

Buffalo and Erie County Public Library
System SLO Coordinator: Ann Kling
System Trainer: Kathy Goodrich, Niagara Branch Library
Website: http://www.buffalolib.org/

Mid-Hudson Library System
System SLO Coordinator: Joshua Cohen
System Trainers: Rebekkah Smith Aldrich and Merribeth Advocate
Website: http://midhudson.org/

Mid-York Library System
System SLO Coordinator: Ann Harris
System Trainer: Cira Foster, Utica Public Library
Website: http://www.midyork.org/

Monroe County Library System
System SLO Coordinators: Paula Smith and Jeff Baker
Trainer: Kimberly Iraci, Pioneer Library System
Website: http://www2.libraryweb.org/

Nassau Library System
System SLO Coordinator: Mary Beth Beidl
System Trainer: Elizabeth Olesh
Website: http://www.nassaulibrary.org/

The New York Public Library
System SLO Coordinator: Gary Wasdin
System Trainers: Brigid Cahalan, Mid-Manhattan Branch
Hector Horta, Soundview Branch
Website: http://www.nypl.org/

Nioga Library System
System SLO Coordinator: Tom Binderman
System Trainer: Dianne Ludwig
Website: http://www.nioga.org/

Onondaga County Public Library
System SLO Coordinator: Joyce Latham
System Trainer: Janet Park, Mundy Branch
Website: http://www.onlib.org/

Pioneer Library System
System SLO Coordinator: Jennifer Morris
System Trainer: Kimberly Iraci
Website: http://www.pls-net.org/

Ramapo-Catskill Library System
System SLO Coordinator: Leslie Riley
System Trainers: Joanne Lugo, Newburgh Free Library; Leslie Riley
Website: http://www.rcls.org/

Suffolk Cooperative Library System
System SLO Coordinator: Diane Eidelman
System Trainer: Jean Kaleda, Patchogue-Medford Library
Website: http://www.suffolk.lib.ny.us/

New York State Library
Division of Library Development
Cultural Education Center
Albany, NY 12230