



Where minds meet.

**Appendix A: Spanish Language Outreach
Program**
Report on Round 2 Focus Groups
December 2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2005, WebJunction submitted a proposal to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation outlining a plan for conducting focus groups designed to help measure the impact of the Spanish Language Outreach Program on the Spanish-speaking community. The focus groups utilized unused funding from the Pilot grant. Three rounds of focus groups were planned, including states from the pilot, Round 1 and Round 2. Reports from the Pilot and Round 1 can be found at WebJunction on SLO's "[Overview and Reports](#)" page.

This report covers the final round of focus groups (Round 2). In September and October 2007, WebJunction conducted three focus groups in Arkansas, Arizona and New York. The primary goal of the focus groups was to determine whether or not community members had noticed any differences in their local library following library staff participation in a SLO workshop. In the focus groups, community members were asked to note changes in library services in the past six months. Additionally, focus group participants were asked to suggest ways for the library to successfully reach out to the Spanish-speaking community, their suggestions for relevant programs and services and to describe barriers to using the library for Spanish speakers.

Key Findings

The following represent the key findings of the Round 2 focus groups on the impact of the SLO workshops at the community level (see "Assessing the Impact of Outreach Efforts" for detailed findings for each of the three locations):

- In one out of three libraries the focus group participants noticed changes in the library that were a direct result of the SLO workshops. In two of the three locations, outreach to Spanish speakers was already well-established, so it was difficult for focus group participants to identify "new" changes in outreach, programs and services even though locations were chosen where library staff had undertaken new efforts.
- Overall this round's participants noticed more programs and services for Spanish speakers and outreach efforts without prompting, noting a lot of "more this" and "better that" according to our moderators. This may be due to Round 2 having the strongest curriculum, benefiting from improvements made on the basis of prior focus groups, interviews with trainers and assessments from trainers, coordinators and workshop participants.
- In all three Round 2 focus group locations, participants validated that the outreach strategies recommended in the SLO curriculum are optimal. The outreach strategies recommended by focus group participants mirror the SLO curriculum, especially that the best avenues for reaching Spanish speakers are those that focus on community and connectedness.

Participants shared their recommendations on how to successfully engage Spanish speakers with public libraries and these suggestions align with the recommended strategies, programs and services from the SLO workshops. Looking at the findings from all three rounds of focus groups for the SLO program, a coherent set of suggestions emerges:

- Generally, programs and services need to be relevant to Spanish speakers' needs: up-to-date and high quality collections of Spanish-language books, DVDs and music, plenty of computers with available Spanish interfaces with ample timeslots and if possible, one-on-one help available in Spanish, classes in Spanish on computer basics including emailing, navigating the Internet and basic MS Office applications.
- Programs for children were always emphasized, including bilingual story times, and focus group participants across all rounds emphasized that they'd like to see programs to help their children preserve their language skills in Spanish.
- The timing of programs was also always emphasized – in order to meet the needs of many Spanish speakers, special attention needs to be paid to scheduling, and library staff should consider access to childcare (holding programs for adults concurrently with storytimes for kids) and access to public transportation, as well as accommodating long working hours.

Spanish speakers face common barriers to their use of the library: fear, especially for undocumented persons, language difficulties, or a simple lack of awareness of what a public library is and the services it offers. Many of the barriers named are addressed in the SLO program workshops, which recommend that library staff reconsider some library policies, including documentation required for a library card (and applications available in Spanish and English), public access computer time limits, re-vamping library signage, having more Spanish speakers on staff, or simply taking a look at the library through different eyes, evaluating how welcoming a library may be to those who have never used a public library.

A complete list of recommendations along with detailed findings from Round 2 focus groups on outreach strategies, suggestions and barriers can be found in the final section of this report, “Engaging Spanish Speakers in the Library.”

METHODOLOGY

Focus group locations for Round 2 were selected on the basis of library staff responses on the Spanish Language Outreach Program's post-assessment, sent to workshop participants five months after the workshops. In order to increase the chances that Spanish-speaking patrons would be able to notice changes in the libraries, locations were selected where library staff reported new outreach activities based on the workshops that might be noticeable to patrons: new signage, new classes or programs for Spanish speakers, new marketing efforts in the community or local Spanish-speaking media. We also arranged for the focus groups to be added on to regular library events like ESL

classes, computer classes, or storytimes, with the aim of recruiting participants who are regular library users.

While the focus group locations were chosen using the same methods as for Round 1, the locations selected for Round 2 were those with the richest set of reported outreach activities, and some of the highest-performing library staff, including a former president of REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. Round 2 also benefited from curriculum improvements since the last round (made on the basis of the prior focus groups, interviews with trainers and workshop evaluations and post-assessments from trainers, coordinators and workshop participants). SLO program staff modularized the curriculum, incorporating action steps with each step of the curriculum, and included more suggested outreach activities at different levels.

The findings in this report are subject to limitations. It is difficult to assess direct community impact of a program aimed at the training of library staff on cultural competencies and outreach strategies. Self-reported data are subject to recall bias. Patrons often do not notice changes in the library like signage, flyers for community events, radio advertising or new classes and programs. Where they do notice changes, those “changes” may not be new to the library, not based on the workshops, or not new within the program period.

Locations were selected on the basis of diversity of geography (Arkansas, Arizona and New York State) and to represent communities across a spectrum of immigration – from a wave of recent immigration (in Jonesboro, Arkansas) to established long-term immigrant and native Spanish-speaking communities (Yuma, Arizona, a border town with an established migrant population of over 50% (2000 Census figure for Yuma County) to Sunset Park in Brooklyn, with an established Dominican and Caribbean population, and a new influx of immigrants from Puebla, Mexico. WebJunction contacted library staff and explained the goals of the focus groups, and asked them to recruit participants, asking them specifically to try to add a focus group session onto an existing library service or class. The selection was made with the aim of finding Spanish speaking library patrons who would have the greatest chance of noticing recent changes in the library, hopefully those changes prompted or supported by library staff members’ attendance at WebJunction’s Spanish Language Outreach Project.

The focus groups lasted approximately two hours, and participants were served refreshments during the session and gift cards to local Target stores to thank them for their time. The Interview Guide was developed in English and Spanish, with input from WebJunction SLO staff and the SLO curriculum consultant (see final pages for Interview Guide).

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF OUTREACH EFFORTS

In this section are the detailed findings from each of the three focus groups, including a basic description of the focus group participants, the library’s outreach efforts, and what the participants may have noticed. In the first location, the Somerton Branch of the Yuma Public Library, the librarian attending the SLO workshop had implemented many activities suggested by the curriculum, and the focus group participants easily identified the changes, including that they noticed that she had attended a recent community festival to do library outreach. In the other locations, focus groups noticed and appreciated outreach efforts, but most of those efforts had already been in place prior to the SLO workshops.

Overall this round’s participants noticed more programs and services for Spanish speakers and outreach efforts without prompting, noting a lot of “more this” and “better that” according to our moderators. Round 2 benefited from curriculum improvements made on the basis of the prior focus groups, interviews with trainers and workshop evaluations and post-assessments from trainers, coordinators and workshop participants. For Round 2, SLO program staff modularized the curriculum, incorporating action steps with each step of the curriculum, and included more suggested outreach activities at different levels. Participants in all three locations particularly noticed outreach efforts out in the community, beyond the library’s walls – especially that library staff had been showing up at community events.

Arizona:

Location of Focus Group	Yuma, Arizona
Library Branch/System	Somerton Branch/ Yuma Public Library
Date/ Time of Focus Group	October 31, 2007, 1:30-3:30 pm
Number of participants	12
Moderator	Yolanda Cuesta, SLO Program Consultant Assisted by Emily Inlow-Hood, WebJunction
Description of Group	12 participants, all women, much of the discussion centered around women and kids, and services for kids in the library. Of the 12 participants, seven were born in Mexico, one in Chile, four in the US. Yuma/Somerton is a border town with a well-established Mexican-American Latino community.

Selected only on the basis of outreach activities conducted since the SLO workshops, the library where the Arizona focus group was conducted turned out to be exemplary. The library staff person who attended the SLO workshop had undertaken many outreach efforts since the workshop. The focus group participants were able to identify the new services and outreach efforts and were very appreciative, and even noticed that the librarian had been out in their community, doing outreach at a local community festival.

As a result of the SLO workshops, the library staff person had undertaken a number of new activities, including: Marketing, signage, staff development, offering library tours,

collection development or promotion of collection, translation of library materials, and library staff attended or hosted community events.

Focus group participants noticed significant, recent changes, including more programs for kids (in Spanish and English) and resources for kids in Spanish and English. One participant noted that the book displays are nice because they call attention to the books in Spanish and English. The library is participating in more community events, such as the Harvest Festival. Participants noticed that the library is offering more bilingual flyers, and does a better job than other service and government agencies in the area at putting flyers out in both languages. Later, the librarian confirmed that she learned strategies for making bilingual flyers at the SLO workshop.

In addition to the activities related to the SLO workshops, participants also noticed more computers, that the system to register for a computer is easier and faster, and more fair than it used to be, and one participant noted that she appreciates the Friends book sales because she can buy books in Spanish and English.

Arkansas:

Location of Focus Group	Jonesboro, Arkansas
Library Branch/System	Jonesboro Public Library/ Craigshhead County
Date/ Time of Focus Group	October 29, 2007, 6:00 – 7:30 pm
Number of participants	8
Moderator	Yolanda Cuesta, SLO Program Consultant Assisted by Emily Inlow-Hood, WebJunction
Description of Group	Six of eight participants were service providers, and while all participants spoke Spanish, about half spoke English as their first language. Two library staff attended. Focus group was conducted in Spanish, like all other focus groups.

Jonesboro, Arkansas has a small but rapidly-growing Hispanic community. Participants reported that in Jonesboro, there are more Hispanic families (participants referred to a “population explosion” around three years ago) and they have the perception that the library and other organizations have responded to this need with more services. The library staff person who attended the SLO workshop (responsible for outreach in her job description) is well-known in the community.

The Jonesboro Public Library staff person who attended the SLO workshop reported that since the SLO workshop, she has undertaken efforts in the areas of: Marketing, signage, new programs and classes, ESL classes, translation of library materials, library staff attended or hosted community events, and “I am working on making my Big Book (children’s books) collection bi-lingual by adding which ever language (English/Spanish) is needed.”

Focus group participants noticed a number of changes, including more efforts to integrate the Hispanic community into the library, more communication that Latinos are welcome

in the library, and a greater quantity of materials in Spanish. They also mentioned computer classes in Spanish. The outreach person for the library was mentioned several times as being visible in the community. Her presence at community events and the Hispanic center was noticed and appreciated.

A number of changes unrelated to the SLO workshop were noticed as well, including new computers. Before, internet access was slow and the machines were old. Participants were unable to confirm that the changes had occurred in the past six months' timeframe. An additional limitation to the findings of the Arkansas focus group is that the participants included library staff members, service providers and speakers of Spanish as a second language. In working with library staff to recruit local participants, recruiting the target audience has been an ongoing challenge for the focus groups study.

New York State:

Location of Focus Group	Brooklyn, NY
Library Branch/System	Sunset Park Branch / Brooklyn Public Library
Date/ Time of Focus Group	November 6, 2007, 1:30 – 3:30 pm
Number of participants	12
Moderator	Yolanda Cuesta, SLO Program Consultant Assisted by Emily Inlow-Hood, WebJunction
Description of Group	Mostly women and mothers. 10 women, 2 men, all Spanish speakers, 10 of whom were born in Mexico, most between 7 and 10 years resident in the US, except for one person born in Brooklyn and one person from Ecuador who has lived in the US for 33 years. Very experienced library users, with the person newest to the library having two years' experience with the library.

The participants in the focus group conducted at the Sunset Park branch in Brooklyn, NY were the most experienced library patrons the Rounds 1 and 2 focus groups have interviewed. The library is very valued in the lives of the focus group participants, and they said they go past branches that are closer to their homes to come to the Sunset Park branch because there are more employees who speak Spanish there.

The library staff person who attended the SLO workshop is also a past President of REFORMA. Since the workshop, she reports distributing flyers for services/classes in Spanish, advertising with the Spanish media and on the library's website, promoting services through organizations that serve Spanish speakers such as churches, schools, advocacy groups. The library offers classes for Spanish speakers on basic computer skills, Internet/searching the web for information, Word and/or other common applications, and open lab hours with a Spanish speaker available for help. The library also offers use of Spanish language databases and e-resources.

Changes noticed in the library included a number of programs and services that had been started before the SLO workshops, including programs for kids in Spanish, homework help in Spanish and computer classes in Spanish. They also noticed more employees

who speak Spanish. As in the other locations, participants noticed changes unrelated to the SLO workshops, including increased hours on Mondays and more people (patrons) in the library.

ENGAGING SPANISH SPEAKERS IN THE LIBRARY

As was found in the other rounds of focus groups, Round 2 focus group participants confirmed that the strategies taught in the SLO curriculum are very appropriate – that partnerships with trusted organizations within the Spanish-speaking community are one of the best ways to build reciprocal relationships for outreach with the library. The cultural competence taught in the SLO workshops is important, and an important part of serving Spanish speaking patrons well. Additionally, the strategies for outreach that are taught in the curriculum are right on target: putting the word out via Spanish-language media, especially radio, at Latino cultural centers, by celebrating Latino cultural events, and by trying to reach families with children, and by offering classes for adults at the same time as events for children.

Recommendations on What Spanish Speakers Want to See in the Library

As in prior rounds of focus groups, participants in all three Round 2 focus group locations, participants acknowledged the efforts of the library to reach out to the community and be helpful, and mentioned that they want to see continued and additional efforts to help Spanish speakers:

- Internet Access and Computers: more computer classes for people at all levels (not just the basics), more computers!
- More programs and services: more tutors for computer skills, homework help.
- Better collections: They appreciate the bilingual books but would like more. And parents would like to see more books to read to their kids, more “award-winning” books and more books and resources to learn English (like “Ingles sin barreras”).
- Library open hours need to consider the schedules of working people – not necessarily more hours, but more relevant hours.
- Help Spanish-speaking patrons overcome fear of being undocumented and the embarrassment and shame that comes with not speaking English well.
- Recruiting Latino library staff is especially helpful. In Brooklyn, one participant walks 20 blocks, past another library branch, to go this one because there are Spanish-speaking people at this one (Sunset Park).
- As in the other rounds of focus groups, parents are concerned that the next generation is “losing Spanish” (they can speak, but not read or write in it).
- Teach parents how to help their kids with their educational needs including early literacy skills.
- Understand that story times in English can help parents learn English.

New recommendations from this round of focus groups:

- Help parents regulate their kids time on the internet (fears around MySpace). Parents are getting left behind their kids in computer skills and can’t properly monitor their kids’ online activity.

- Parents want to be able to help their kids with their homework (lack of language skills, education, time and computer skills all affect this).
- In Yuma, someone said it would be really great if library could put out positive self-esteem messages where Latinos go, and address self-esteem in the community – for example, tell people “you’re never too old to learn to read” and “Yes you can improve your life and the library can help.”
- More and better physical space, including more quiet study areas, an area for kids with special needs, and a children’s area so they don’t disturb the adults. One participant said that the library is difficult because there are kids running around and making noise.
- Change the physical environment, make it more welcoming, visually appealing, culturally relevant.
- Offer low-cost or free classes for kids. Low-income Latinos cannot often afford these things for their kids: Art, Music, Sports, Dance, Math, etc.

Barriers to Spanish Speakers’ Use of the Library

The barriers to all three focus groups are similar to those cited by the previous rounds of focus groups – Spanish speakers need to overcome library open hours that often do not meet their schedules, a lack of a “culture of reading,” a lack of awareness of the library, and the fear of being undocumented and not speaking English well. In the last round, lack of transportation was mentioned often, but this issue did not surface during Round 2 focus groups.

Scheduling concerns:

- “Husbands don’t often use the library because of the long hours they work and the library is not open late enough to accommodate them.”
- Saturdays tend to be one of the few days off, so hours need to be available.
- Lack of child care can be a problem. In one group, participants recommended offering English classes in the mornings (9-2) for women, because that is when the majority of them have time to take the classes. One participant said that she was sad that she had to wait until her kids were gone to start learning English.

In Jonesboro and Brooklyn, participants reported and discussed their perception that Latinos don’t have “a culture of reading.” They also said that Latinos are too caught up in the day-to-day cycle of getting by to read for pleasure. This was often heard in Round 1 focus groups as well. This common perception among Latinos appears to have a more demoralizing than an energizing effect.

The participants all noted that the library offers classes and services available in Spanish, but that the community was not using them. Lack of awareness was a general theme from the groups. In the participants’ view, the Spanish speaking community often does not understand the importance and relevance of the library. One participant stated that the community “needs to learn about what the library is, “the idea of the library.”

Fear is also a barrier to using the library – the library is perceived as a governmental institution, and as such, undocumented residents feel afraid to access services. Being

asked for identification to check out books or use the computers can be daunting as well. Sometimes undocumented workers think that they don't have access to services, even when they do. Low English proficiency can also increase the intimidation factor for Spanish speaking library users.

Recommendations on Effective Outreach Strategies

In all three Round 2 focus group locations, participants validated that the outreach strategies recommended in the SLO curriculum are optimal. The outreach strategies recommended by focus group participants mirrored the SLO curriculum, especially that the best avenues for reaching Spanish speakers are those that focus on *connectedness* – reaching families through children by sending library flyers home from school or offering programs for kids in Spanish; reaching beyond the library to advertise programs and services, including attending Hispanic cultural celebrations, going to the stores and community centers where Spanish speakers go, creating partnerships with key Hispanic community and business groups, and utilizing Spanish language media, especially radio and newspapers.

As recommended in the SLO Program curriculum, participants confirmed that library staff need to reach out beyond simply marketing library services and programs at the library. To reach Spanish speakers, participants named marketing strategies including putting flyers and ads out in the Spanish-speaking community, such as in tiendas, grocery stores, churches, etc. They recommended focusing on how the library is relevant to Spanish speakers' needs, relating to the needs, not the library's services, which is a key element of the SLO curriculum. Generally, participants recommended doing MORE outreach, publishing flyers and the calendars in both English and Spanish, and using schools as a way to reach entire families.

Participants also recommended that a key part to bringing in and keeping Spanish speakers engaged is to focus on making the library more inviting once they get there:

- hire more Spanish speakers
- have more quiet spaces
- consider having a Wal-Mart style greeter who speaks Spanish
- Provide hands-on help with using the catalog and other services: One participant said when she first came to the library 3 years ago, a staff person just pointed to a computer when she asked where to find something)
- Have signs in Spanish

Sometimes the line between outreach and suggested programs and services blurred during the focus groups. In fact, it would appear that there is no difference for many library patrons. One participant said: "People will come for a program, but will then find the resources. If people come for a movie, then you can ask them, what do they need for their job, such as construction. You can show them what the library has on this."

Programs and services suggested included: bilingual storytime, and almost any activities for the kids, which will later attract adults, cultural events, Family Night, computer classes and classes in ESL. As in other rounds, participants would like to see more

computers, have more time on the computers, and more help with the computers – the public access computing aspect of the library is important and valued.

Better scheduling was also mentioned across all three locations, and it is recommended that library staff take into account long working hours and the needs of parents with children in when classes and programs are held.

WebJunction Spanish Language Outreach Program

Focus Group Discussion Guide

PART ONE - INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Who we are: Introduce yourselves (Yolanda & Emily), what you do with the program. Introduce the SLO program briefly (nationwide training for library staff on community building and outreach to Spanish speakers)

What we are trying to do (Objective of the Focus Group):

- Understand the impact of the SLO training program on people in local communities!
- Talk with Spanish speaking library patrons, especially those who are taking classes or participating in library programs, to understand what's working for them in the library.

Logistics

- Length of focus group – promise to end on time
- Confidentiality of participants – we are recording so that we can focus on the group right now, and then transcribe later to make sure we didn't miss anything. We won't share your information with ANYONE, and all reporting will be done as a group, or as "one participant felt..."
- Free to leave at any time – feel free to use the restrooms, etc – you're not trapped!
- There are no "wrong" answers; everyone's input on the topic is welcome, encouraged and will be listened to and incorporated. You don't have to be an expert or speak for your whole community – it is YOUR impressions and opinions that we're interested in)

Questions

1. Warm-up: Introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about you. Where were you born? How long have you lived here?
2. Priority question/spend the most time on this: Have you noticed any changes in the library's services for the Spanish-speaking community in the last few months? If so, how have the changes impacted you, your family, or your friends?
(look for publicity, signage, brochures, bilingual employees, collections, programs, computer classes, outreach activities—events, festivals, etc.)
3. In the last few weeks, have you needed help with a problem or questions about school or work or family? How did you find the help you needed? Who did you go to for help?
4. What problems did you have in finding the help you needed?
5. How do you find out about what's going on in your community?
(look for references to partner, library, local media)
6. If you or someone else in your family have used the public library, tell us about your use(s). If you haven't used the library, why don't you use it?
(follow-up for users: What did you particularly like about the library?)
7. What suggestions do you have about how the library can improve services for you and others in the Spanish-speaking community?

WebJunction Spanish Language Outreach Program
Guía de discusión para el grupo de enfoco

1. Conozcámonos mejor. Por favor díganos su nombre y cuéntenos algo sobre usted. Por ejemplo, ¿dónde nació? ¿Cuántos años tiene de vivir aquí?
2. ¿Ha notado usted algún cambio o diferencia en los servicios que la biblioteca rinde a la comunidad latina recientemente?
¿Cómo le han afectado estas diferencias ya sea a usted, a su familia o a sus amigos?
3. Estamos aquí para discutir como la biblioteca pública puede mejorar los servicios que le brinda a la comunidad latina. Para eso es necesario acertar las necesidades de la comunidad.
En los últimos dos o tres meses, ¿ha necesitado usted conseguir informes para ayudarle a resolver algún problema ya sea de la escuela, de su trabajo o para ayudarle a un miembro de su familia?
¿Dónde y cómo encontró la información que necesitaba? ¿Con quién consultó para conseguir la información que necesitaba para resolver su problema?
4. ¿Qué obstáculos surgieron al tratar de conseguir la información que necesitaba?
5. ¿Como se entera usted acerca de los eventos y acontecimientos en la comunidad?
6. Si usted o algún miembro de su familia ha usado la biblioteca pública, por favor cuéntenos sobre su experiencia.
¿Hay alguna razón por la cuál no ha usado la biblioteca?
7. ¿Que recomendaciones tiene usted para la biblioteca? ¿Cómo puede la biblioteca mejorar los servicios que le brinda a la comunidad latina?