

# Let Book Joy Begin @ Your Library®!

## Ten Years of El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros

Ten years ago, in 1996, poet and children's book author, Pat Mora began celebrating "book joy" by founding a children's book and reading day, El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros or Children's Day/Book Day. Día is modeled on National Children's Day Celebrations in Mexico held since 1925 when it was launched in conjunction with a World Conference for the Well-Being of Children. Mora wove in the reading connection in establishing Un Día, one day, to assist families in building the habit of daily reading and love for books among children. Mora identified April 30, the last day of National Poetry Month, for Día celebrations, although, in reality, every day is a day to celebrate children's reading!

their families, "The library is waiting for you."

Below are some sources to explore the possibilities of Día and take the first step in planning your own event.

### Background on Día and Planning an Event

- The Texas State Library and Archives Commission online resource at (<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/projects/ninos/contents.html>) includes a list of suggested activities, a bibliography of Spanish/English books, copy-ready bookmarks, background on papel picado or Mexican cut paper, and even song lyrics for Día written by Mora.

Education's Reading Rockets program. Reading Rockets develops resources for Spanish-speaking families and educators to help support young readers. The Día portion of the Web site provides activity sheets such as puzzles in printable pdf files; advice on planning basic, intermediate, and advanced Día events; and bilingual riddles and tongue twisters.

- Día recently found a national home at the Association of Library Services for Children (ALSC), one of 11 divisions of the American Library Association (ALA). ALSC support for Día is also made possible through a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Día's National Advisory Committee (NAC), chaired by Latino Children's Literacy Consultant, Oralia Garza de Cortes, now meets in conjunction with ALA meetings or conferences.

The ALSC Web site houses extensive content about Día linked through the ALA Web site at ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)). Here you will find a brochure in English and Spanish with background about Día as well as an annotated bibliography of 25 recommended books for children with indicated age level. The booklist, compiled with the assistance of ALSC's Quicklists Consulting Committee, includes Mora's own award-winning title, *Tomas and the Library Lady*. In addition to the booklist, the site includes advice for parents on how to encourage family reading and work with library staff.

The ALSC Web site lists a calendar of planned Día events, providing many programming ideas, a 10th anniversary press kit, and a Día fact sheet. The bilingual press kit includes broadcast quality public service announcements that can be downloaded, print text of scripts that libraries can use at local media opportunities, and camera-ready publicity materials such as a logo and a banner. ALA has developed Día products—bookmarks and posters—available for purchase through its store.

- Check to see if funding is available in your state to kick-off your planning.

"Día is a day when we say to children and their families, 'The library is waiting for you.'"

While many communities identify with a day celebrating Spanish-English language reading for children, Día acknowledges and supports all languages spoken in children's homes. In fact, one of Mora's goals is to have El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros translated into all languages spoken in the United States. Pat Mora believes that "If we are not doing multicultural literacy, we are not doing our job." Día supports Mora's belief that "There's not only a global

society outside of the United States, but also one within the United States." By honoring languages of the home, Mora acknowledges that Día is a day when we say to children and



By Loriene Roy

- The W. K. Kellogg Foundation provided the Texas Library Association with funding to develop a tool kit on Día with the assistance of a 13 member ad hoc committee (<http://www.texasDia.org/toolkit.html>). The toolkit provides useful advice in planning an annual Día celebration and an activities booklet. Especially useful is the guidance on planning and delivering bilingual English and Spanish storytime. The toolkit provides instructions on incorporating activities such as making cascarones (egg shell filled confetti), animal puppets, and finger plays for both elementary and middle school children plus ideas for involving teens. There is excellent background on how to incorporate storytelling, reading aloud, booktalking, readers' theater, and planning author visits.
- Colorin Colorado (<http://colorincolorado.org/day.html>) is sponsored by the U.S. Department of

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The Texas Library Association has offered \$300 grants to public or school libraries organizing Día. Florida Department of State, State Library, and Archives of Florida promoted Día events by awarding \$500 mini-grants to public libraries to encourage their programming. The Minnesota Chapter of REFORMA has also recently offered \$200 grants for Día.

### The Growing Network of Día Partners

Día has garnered strong support from Latino/Latina librarians and organizations involved in children’s literacy and Hispanic culture and advocacy. REFORMA: the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking officially endorsed Día in February 1997, and since then it has provided support and news about Día on its Web site and in its newsletter. REFORMA has expanded the profile of Día and its national presence through an annual award, the REFORMA Estela and Raul Mora Award, that recognizes the REFORMA chapter, school, or library that best exemplifies el Día. Winners receive a plaque and \$1,000. The Austin (Texas) Public Library was the first recipient of the Mora Award in 2000. Other winners have been El Paso Public Library (2001), Oregon’s Multnomah County Library (2002), Corvallis-Benton County Public Library (2003), Providence Rhode Island Public Library (2004), and a statewide chapter of REFORMA, REFORMA de Utah (2005).

In addition to receiving an official endorsement from REFORMA, Día has also been endorsed by the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and MANA, the nonprofit National Latina Organization. The National Latino Children’s Institute (NLCI) hosts a register of official Día sites. The Senate of the United States has sponsored resolutions designating April 30th “Día de los Niños: Celebrating Young Americans.” In 2005, the governors of Ohio, Oregon, and Utah

officially proclaimed April 30th as a day of celebrating Día in their states.

### What Can You Do to Celebrate Día at Your Library?

Día gained national momentum because of its flexible approach: it is planned and celebrated at the community level. While many resources exist, each library community can plan a Día that reflects the needs of its local families and children. All Día events reflect Mora’s philosophy that “the heart of the work is promoting book joy.” Local governments in over 20 cities, including Las Vegas and San Antonio, have passed formal resolutions honoring Día.

Over the past nine years, over 30,000 people have attended Día events hosted by the El Paso Public Library where children and their families have received over 50,000 new books. Libraries close to the United States-Mexico border can coordinate bi-national events.

Libraries organizing Día events are recognized for their outreach efforts. In the eight years that the Austin (Texas) Public Library (APL) has sponsored Día, APL has received the Hotho Award for model family literacy outreach, the Highsmith Award for community collaboration, the Mora Award, and contributed to the library’s receiving ALA/School Library Journal and the



Annual Día events in libraries range from in-house book displays and advertisements to full blown festivals with music, activities, and book giveaways. Most Día events include expressions of Latino culture such as plays, parades, puppet shows, bilingual musical performances, and arts and crafts activities including making pop-up books, piñatas, kites, and paper flowers. Some celebrations feature prizes and competitions such as bookmark design competitions, Read-a-thons, Spanish Spelling Bees, and poetry slams. In April 2006, a play based on Pat Moras’s *Tomas and the Library Lady* premiered at the Maricopa Library District in Arizona.

Gale Group’s “Giant Steps” Award. APL worked with 40 community sponsors to organize its four-hour 2006 Día festival that featured bilingual storytelling, live music, dance performances, hands-on activities, appearances by PBS book-related characters such as Arthur, Maya and Miguel, and Clifford the Big Red Dog, as well as food and book gifts.

As a member of Día’s National Board, I have had the privilege of observing the development of Día into a national celebration. My own personal connection with Día is to assist tribal communities in participating in Día and creating their interpretations of children’s bilingual reading. We are just starting to explore

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the role that Native communities can play in celebrating Native language revitalization through Día. The one reported Día event featuring an indigenous language was a teen poetry reading sponsored by the Farmington (New Mexico) Public Library that invited children to read poems in Navajo or Spanish.

As a professor in a graduate school of library and information science, I can invite students to test and demonstrate efforts to advance library services to underserved populations. My students and I collaborate on a service-learning program called “If I Can Read, I Can Do Anything.” “If I Can” has evolved to a national reading club for Native students. We currently collaborate with 25 libraries in nine states that serve Native students. We have hosted several events to support Día. We sponsored password protected online chats with children at one or more of our project sites. Using groupware software, we were able to designate a time during which students and their classroom teachers could enter a safe, limited access chat area to discuss reading and tell stories online. We chose to focus on sharing scary stories, a popular topic at these schools whose students come from cultures with strong storytelling traditions. Educators then downloaded the discussion and their students further developed these story drafts into polished stories.

In April 2005, my graduate students sponsored a second event to celebrate indigenous reading and culture through an online event called A Gathering of Readers. Students developed a content Web site (<http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~gathread>) and invited schools serving indigenous children around the world to contribute information about their culture and reading-supportive activities. Graduate students created pathfinders or guided bibliographies to introduce the cultures of students attending participating schools. Results indicated that indigenous children and the schools they serve are willing to participate in efforts to promote reading if their staff receives ample support and information well in advance of planned events.

Libraries across the United States are organizing and delivering Día events that are drawing thousands of children and their families to their facilities. Investigate these and other resources and let the reading celebration begin @ your library®! ■

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