



**Usted y Su Biblioteca (You and Your Library):
an Information Literacy Program for Adult ESL
Students**

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Meeting:

94 — *The importance of information literacy for multicultural populations: needs, strategies, programs, and the role of libraries* — Information Literacy Section with Library Services to Multicultural Populations and the Special Interest Group on Indigenous Matters

Abstract:

There is a fundamental belief that democratic societies depend on informed citizens. It has been written that the “public library, free and open to all, is the essential keeper and provider of ... knowledge.” (Wiebel, 2007, p. 5). However, in cities where the majority of the people lack basic literacy and language skills, knowledge becomes elusive. The city of Santa Ana, California, is predominantly Hispanic (76% - U.S. Census 2000) and 79.6% of the total population speaks another language other than English at home (U.S. Census 2000). Barely half of the population over the age of 25 has completed high school (43.2% - U.S. Census 2000) compared with 76.8% in the state of California. The knowledge and services available to the Hispanic population in Santa Ana is unattainable due to language barriers, low educational attainment, and the absence of information literacy skills. The You and Your Library workshops have been developed to address this need in Santa Ana’s immigrant community.

Introduction

Knowledge empowers, but for many people knowledge is elusive, unattainable, and intimidating. This is true for many immigrant populations who have not discovered the power of libraries. Libraries provide the links that empower people. Libraries bring societies in contact with information and resources that help generate knowledge.

According to the March 2011 Current Population Survey, since January 2000, 13.1 million immigrants (legal and illegal) settled in the United States. (Camarota, 2010, p. 1) Moreover, according to the 2010 Census, “the nation’s Latino population, which was 35.3

million in 2000, grew 43% over the decade” (Passel, Cohn, Hugo & M, 2011) Many of our immigrant populations never had or only had minimal contact with libraries. They do not realize the many services and resources that are there, free, for them to use. They lack information regarding the library as a community institution and as a place where their information needs may be met.

Thus, information literacy is crucial for our adult immigrant population in their quest to understand the culture of their new country and to develop into informed members of their new community. Our immigrant population needs to become information literate, as defined by the American Library Association in 1989. To be information literate you “...must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” (Leininger, 2008)

Building an Information Literate Society

Public libraries exist to serve society. Our role as librarians is continuously evolving, as society and its needs change. With the rapid advances in technology and the nonstop influx of information, we must now, more than ever, reach out and become information educators, specifically to those lacking the knowledge that will help them improve their lives.

It is not enough to transform our libraries into multi-cultural places of learning, but we must leave our comfort zone and take the library to those who most need its services. To build a learning society, we must reach out and invite in. This is what we did with the You and Your Library workshops at the Santa Ana Public Library.

Working with Partners.

According to a study completed in Spring 2007 by the American Library Association Office for Research and Statistics, libraries reported that the most successful library programs and services developed for non-English speakers were English as a second language (ESL) programs. With this in mind, the Santa Ana Public Library, together with the ESL program instructors from local education institutions in Santa Ana, joined forces to expose ESL students to the library as a continuing education center in their lives. ESL teachers determine at which point in their class curriculum, the You and Your Library workshop fits in. They contact the library, as needed. The adult ESL teachers and our library staff sustain the program.

The first step in implementing such a program in our community was to convince ESL educators of the need and mutual benefits of the program. By contacting the Santa Ana coordinator of ESL education, I was able to attend one of their faculty meetings in December 2010 and presented the program.

Because the majority of the population in Santa Ana is Hispanic, I focused on this segment of the community to illustrate the need for information literacy in their classes. I concentrated on the fact that:

- Only 27% of Hispanics in Santa Ana have library cards. This information came from our circulation records.
- The majority of the city’s population (71%) has a need for ESL classes as they speak another language, other than English, at home. Thus, Santa Ana’s ESL

programs fill a need in our city.

In other words:

- There is a great need for ESL education in Santa Ana
- There is a great need for Hispanics to get acquainted with their library and its ESL resources.



The solution:

We can work together to improve English language literacy in Santa Ana.



04/14/2009

The Program

The objectives of the You and Your Library workshops are to:

1. Familiarize the Santa Ana ESL community with the library
2. Provide ESL students with the opportunity to acquire library cards for them and their families
3. Provide ESL students with additional resources that would help them expand and improve their English language skills

The program is divided into two modules:

- The first session is given in the students' classroom, where basic information about the library and its resources is provided and questions are answered. At this time, library card applications are completed.
- The second session, scheduled for two weeks later, takes place at the library. Here students are given a tour of the library, are able to try out the electronic catalog, are provided their new library card, and have an opportunity to check out materials.

You and Your Library Workshop



The workshop is designed to provide a basic understanding about the library, as well as, information on how books are organized and how to search for them. Students receive a handout of the presentation that contains a glossary of library terminology. The workshop is available in English and Spanish.

We begin each class with the three major objectives of the workshop and a general discussion of what constitutes a library. In the Spanish workshop, we make the distinction between 'librería', which usually refers to a bookstore, and 'biblioteca', which is the term for a library.

TODAY, we will

- ☐ Learn about the many services and resources available at the Santa Ana Public Library
- ☐ Answer your questions about the library
- ☐ Teach you how to look for information at the library

What is a library?



- A library is an information and community center that offers resources and services to its users.

Throughout the workshop, we distribute brochures and flyers to the students, relevant to the subject presented. For example, when we discuss library locations and hours of operation, we distribute flyers with this information.

Where are the public libraries located in Santa Ana?

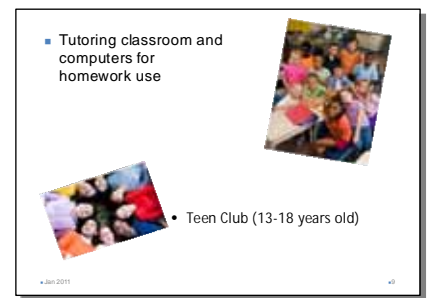
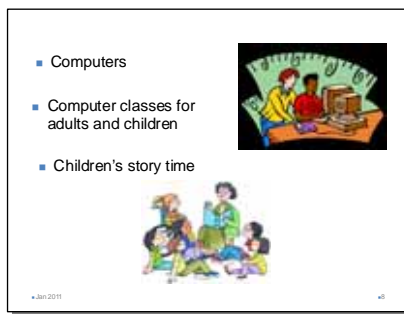


<p>Main Library 26 Civic Center Drive (corner of Ross and Civic Center) (714) 647-5250</p>	<p>Newhope Library 122 N. Newhope Street (corner of 1st Street and Newhope) (714) 547-6992</p>
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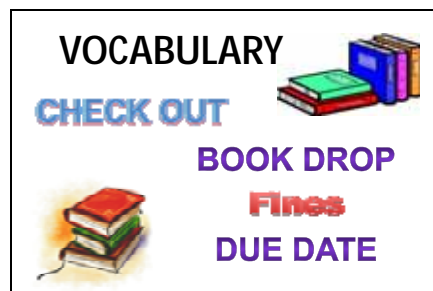
LIBRARY HOURS

<p>MAIN LIBRARY Monday - Thursday 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM Friday – Saturday 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM</p>	<p>Newhope Library Monday – Thursday 2:00 PM – 7:00 PM Friday – Closed Saturday 12:00 PM – 7:00 PM</p>
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We continue the presentation with an overview of the services available at the library. This is a great opportunity to promote current and future programs and activities, as well as, the various collections in the library, such as ESL material, medical books, and so forth. We emphasize the concept of the library as a place for personal and intellectual development for the whole family.



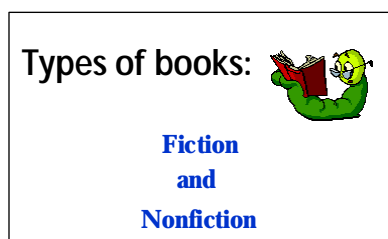
Next, we review the most frequently asked questions about the library, with emphasis on how to obtain a library card, what happens when items are lost or damaged, what are fines, etc. Students are encouraged to ask questions, which they usually do at this point. We discuss issues, such as unattended children at the library, what to do when they see someone damaging library property, and what to do with the books that they have pulled from the shelves, but will not be checking out. During this time, we distribute the library fines and renewal procedure flyers.



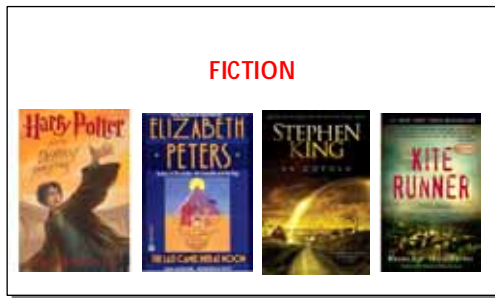
Library vocabulary deserves attention and the last page of the students' handout is a glossary of common library terminology. Students read selected words with their definitions. This is a very important exercise, as non-English speakers may be unfamiliar with library terms. It is also an opportunity for the ESL teacher to explain how a word such as 'fine' could mean *well*, as well as, a *penalty*.

Every so often, I incorporate a simple quiz to review the previously covered material. These are generally true and false statements, which the whole class answers together. These quizzes serve to encourage students to pay attention, provide an opportunity for discussion, and help them remember the information. The first quiz reviews general library procedures.

After discussing the library, as a place, we enter into the information literacy portion of the workshop. At this time, we review the types of books in the library collections, book classifications, and the library catalog.



We begin with the two major book types: fiction and nonfiction. These terms, I have found, are unknown to most students and, once we point out the difference, looking for books in the library becomes much easier for them.



Once students understand the two types of books, we continue our discussion with the way each type is classified in our library. We begin with the fiction books:

- In alphabetical order, according to the author's last name.

FICTION ALLENDE FICTION BRONTE FICTION SPARKS FICTION VARGAS

Followed by non-fiction:

In numerical order, according to their subject.

- Each subject has a number. For example:

000 Generalities
 100 Philosophy and Psychology
 200 Religion
 300 Social Sciences
 400 Languages
 500 Natural Sciences and Mathematics
 600 Applied Sciences
 700 Art, Fine Art, and Decorative Arts
 800 Literature and Rhetoric
 900 Geography and History

NONFICTION

004.682 WIL 220.3 BRO 641.5 GUN 973.921 KAL

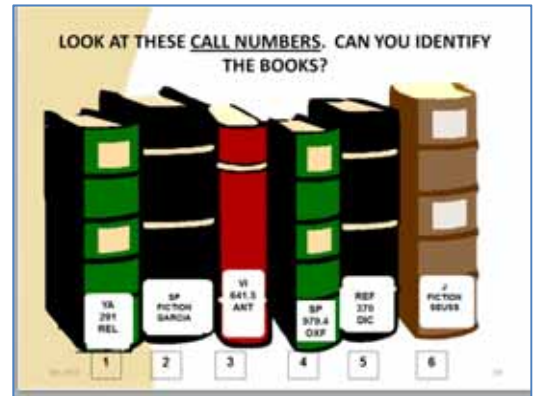
At this moment, we introduce the 'call number' – what it is, what it does, and where it is found on the books. We associate the call number with a person's address, that is, the call number is to the book as a home address is to a person. They both help to find the location of either a person in the city or of a book in the library.

And...what about those initials before the numbers?

I continue by explaining that at our library call numbers provide more than the location of a book. The call numbers also help to determine whether the book is in another language, if it is appropriate for adults, teens, or children, or if the book is fiction or non-fiction.

At the end of this segment, I give them another quiz, followed by a call number identification game. Here students get the opportunity to identify different books by call numbers and determine whether the book is fiction or nonfiction, age appropriate, whether it is a Biography or Reference book, and the language in which the book is written.

Once students understand the call number system, they are ready to become familiar with the electronic catalog. Since there are no computers available for hands-on instruction in the ESL classroom, we walk the students through a simulated search and teach them how to interpret the results. During the tour at the library, we allocate time to perform some searches using the electronic catalog.



Finally, the students receive a library card application. With a copy of the application projected on the screen, students work with the presenter as they complete their application. In instances where there are students who already have library cards, we ask them to assist those who are applying for the first time. We encourage the students to apply for library cards for their children and their spouses/partners.

The first part of the program ends with information on the date for the tour of the library, which generally follows two weeks after the classroom session. The ESL teachers are responsible for bringing their students to the library on the designated date and time.

Conclusion:

Immigration was and continues to be a major element in the development of the American nation. The immigrant experience encompasses many aspects of the human condition, such as, acculturation, family and school life, language, identity, experiences of discrimination, self-esteem, ambitions, and achievements. Information literacy workshops introduce immigrants to a place where cultural and social differences co-exist; where free resources are available to help them improve personally and economically.

From the inception of the program on December 2010 up to March 2011, Hispanic adult library cardholders have increased from by approximately 4,000. While not all 4,000 new library adult cardholders were the results of the workshops, we feel confident that a great number of them were. I have also noticed former adult ESL workshop students bringing their friends to the library and sharing with them the benefits of membership. An outcome of the workshops has been a further increase in library cards for youths and teens.

You and Your Library helps not only ESL students of different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, but also their families and friends. These workshops are connecting them with the Santa Ana Public Library, their Library. Information literacy is a win-win venture for the library, ESL educators, and the people in our community.

References

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