

Alire, Camila and Ayala, Jacqueline. "Serving Latino Communities: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians"; Second Edition. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2007. 229 p. \$59.95. (ISBN 13: 978-1-55570-606-7)

This how-to manual lives up to its name, encompassing nearly all aspects of serving Latino communities. The authors skillfully balance diverse methods, give advice and gently keep the human face of Latinos while looking at their economic, political and social potential.

We are encouraged to investigate and analyze demographic statistics in order to consider the entire community, rather than segments of it, so as to avoid neglecting an age or language group. Included are methods to approach the 2000 census and the 2005 American Community Survey (ACS). The goal is to know what the populations are like in order to know their needs and wants.

Next, if needed, we build a case for the changes required, even if we have to use pragmatic approaches. We are encouraged to start programs and enhance collections, choosing realistically available programs over those that must be postponed until funding is available or until they can be realistically integrated. "Some action is better than no action."

Reaching out, hiring staff and seeking volunteers from targeted communities is cited as essential. The effort should include staff, board members, friends, the community at large and volunteers, though library staff is advised that if "professional and paraprofessional staffs are represented by unions, be careful about how you use your volunteers."

The book reminds us that one of the most important tenets of libraries is to provide access to information to all people, a reminder that leaves us questioning what can be accomplished if the humanity of some people is denigrated.

"It is our purpose in this chapter," the authors note, "to provide a framework to help you defend your position." Why when building a case for servicing Latinos should there be an assumption that we are on the defensive? (p. 17)

Can we validate services to Latinos now because "they can no longer be ignored" after the 2000 census? If we failed earlier to equitably provide services, when is the time to correct this wrong? Is the need to develop outreach "to raise the status of the

underserved Latino community from information-poor to information-rich” (p. 16) condescending and generalizing? Is the Latino community information-poor or information-deprived?

Other matters open to question included a comparison of new Latino arrivals with military personnel and their newly relocated families, and what seemed a generalization of the larger immigrant experience. The quote, “Latino culture is a lens through which the hardships and contradictions of our long journey from Latin America and the Caribbean ought to be pondered” (p. 1, Stavans, 1995: 190) raised the question of how the authors considered civilian refugees and migrants overall in terms of experiences, wants and needs.

Is it true that one dynamic that has made the immigration of Latinos an issue (p. 15) that they are choosing to live outside the states of California, Florida, New York and Texas? Are Latinos in the listed states living happily ever after, or do they experience the racism that “occurs when the values, customs, behaviors, and attitudes of one group are so fixed that the institution becomes intolerant of any group different from itself.” (p. 18) wherever they live?

The authors respectfully acknowledge other libraries’ work and the published literature around the subject. Each chapter starts with a summary of the main idea and ends with a summary of suggested actions. The book is rich with statistics, lists of publishers and distributors, accredited library schools, bibliographies, sample questionnaires, Spanish words and phrases, bilingual flyers, American Library Association documents and links to Web sites of professional resources and conferences. All are provided with explanations of how to use and evaluate them.

This highly organized and nurturing book takes us through needed steps to reach our goals of inclusiveness and competency. And perhaps most usefully, if you remove the word “Latino” from the text, you may use the book to work with any group of people new to your community.

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