

Pat's History of El Día de los niños/El Día de los libros, April 30th, and of the Mora Award

In March, 1996, while being interviewed for a public radio program at the University of Arizona in Tucson, I learned about the annual Mexican tradition of celebrating **April 30th** as **El día del niño, the Day of the Child**. The tradition evolved from the first "World Conference for the Well-being of **Children**" held in Geneva, Switzerland in August 1925. Various countries chose dates for celebrating children and childhood and passed the "Geneva Declaration Protecting Children."

As a mom, I knew that children often ask, "Why do we have Mother's Day and Father's Day and not Children's Day?" As a reader, I wanted (and want) to foster "**bookjoy**." Ah, ha, I thought. What if we link a celebration of children with **literacy**, an issue central to the well-being of children. Latino faculty and staff at the University of Arizona supported the concept of this annual celebration of **El Día de los niños/El Día de los libros, Children's Day/Book Day**. Members of the Tucson Chapter of **REFORMA**, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, presented the concept to the local chapter with the hope of initiating planning for April 30th, 1997. MANA del Norte, a women's group in Santa Fe, NM, a chapter of MANA, a national Latina network, also quickly expressed its willingness to help as did **Veronica Myers at the El Paso Public Library**.

Texas librarian and independent scholar, **Oralia Garza de Cortés**, then chair of REFORMA's children's committee, added her enthusiasm, knowledge and ideas and began to share information about the concept with REFORMA members nationally through the

REFORMA newsletter. She also shared the information with the new National Latino Children's Institute (NLCI, then the National Latino Children's Agenda). A year of intense planning by various organizations began in numerous cities.

In February, 1997, **REFORMA** voted to endorse the family literacy initiative of celebrating April 30th as El Día de los niños/El Día de los libros (**Día**) throughout the United States and Puerto Rico during the Mid-winter meetings of the American Library Association held in Washington, D. C. Through its newsletter and web site, this organization has been a leader in this effort.

On April 30, 1997, the first annual El Día de los niños/El Día de los libros, was celebrated. New Mexico's governor issued a proclamation and Santa Fe's mayor read her proclamation at Larragoite Elementary School at a reading by student writers . Events were also held in cities including Tucson, El Paso, and Austin.

The goals of this observance from its inception have included a daily commitment to:

- 1) honor children and childhood,**
- 2) promote literacy, the importance of linking *all* children to books, languages and cultures**
- 3) honor home languages and cultures, and thus promoting bilingual and multilingual literacy in this multicultural nation,
and global understanding through reading**
- 4) involve parents as valued members of the literacy team**
- 5) promote library collection development that reflects our plurality.**

In July, 1997, MANA, a National Latina Organization, then led by then President and CEO Elisa Sanchez, passed a resolution endorsing

El día de los niños/El día de los libros at the annual conference in Washington, DC.

The National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE), led by then President, **Dr. Josefina Tinajero**, a university administrator and professor of Bilingual Education at UT El Paso, also endorsed the observance and goals.

In 1998, **Jeanette Larson**, then Director of the Library Development Division at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, and her staff produced a Día information booklet with implementation suggestions including a sample book mark. This information was also placed on the TSLAC web site.

In Summer 1998, thanks to the support of **Dr. Dan Moore**, a planning grant for a national dissemination campaign to ensure the long-term annual observance of Día was awarded to the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) by the **W.K. Kellogg Foundation**. Planning meetings were held in August at NABE headquarters in Washington D.C.

On April 30, 1999, more schools and libraries joined the celebration.

In 2000, the first annual **Estela and Raúl Mora Award**, coordinated by REFORMA and donated by the Mora children, was awarded to the **Austin Public Library** thanks to the commitment of librarian **Elva Garza**. The Mora's six grandchildren provide the plaque. Visit the web sites of the subsequent winners listed in this section.

In 2001, **Dr. Malore Brown**, Executive Director of **Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)**, a division of the **American Library Association (ALA)**, agreed to support Día and applied for grant funding, from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, again thanks to the support of Dr. Dan Moore. ALSC promoted the Día concept by

producing both a tip sheet for librarians on launching a Día event and a brochure for parents.

In 2002, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation funded 1) ALSC's publication of the Día brochure in Spanish; 2) El Pueblo, the most prominent advocacy group for Latinos in NC in Raleigh, N.C. to initiate a state-wide celebration in North Carolina, and 3) the **Texas Library Association (TLA)**, **Pat Smith, Executive Director**, to create a state-wide model that would include a web site, tool kit, book marks, etc.

In 2003, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded a grant to the University of Arizona School of Information Resources and Library Science. The grant enabled the university to host a meeting of a **Día National Advisory Committee**, to sponsor a meeting at the American Library Association (ALA) annual conference in Orlando, Florida, to support Día celebrations in Tucson, and to produce various public relations materials.

The 2004 ALSC again applied for W.K. Kellogg Foundation funding to assist in becoming Día's official home.

In **2005**, thanks to the efforts of **Dr. R. Joseph Rodriguez**, a steady Día supporter, the **National Council of Teachers (NCTE)** passed a resolution to promote Día and became a Día partner.

Also, exciting news! The Association for Library Service to Children (**ALSC**) offered to become **Día's national home**. Many thanks to the ALSC Board and Staff, and to devoted Reforma members for supporting this decision. Visit www.ala.org/dia to discover how Día is growing and evolving. Do thank our partners listed on the ALSC web site and join this important family literacy initiative.

In 2006, **Diane Foote** became the ALSC Executive Director. She's ably assisted by Program Officer **Linda Mays** who has

enthusiastically promoted Día from the beginning of ALSC's involvement with Día.

April 30th 2006: Día's Tenth Anniversary!

In January, 2007, ALSC announced that **Target** is the official 2007 Día national sponsor providing bilingual brochures to requesting libraries and mini-grants to certain Día 2007 Super Site libraries that include book funds and Día materials.

Gracias, gracias. I want to express my deep thanks to those mentioned in the pages above, and to **Rose Treviño, Loriene Roy, Carol Brey-Casino, Sara Howrey, Mark Smith, Kathy Toon, Teresa Mlawer, Adriana Dominquez, Patsy Aldana, Judy O'Malley, Ruth Tobar, Jason Low, Marina Tristan, Ellen Fader, Kathleen T. Horning, Junko Yokota, Nancy Hinkel, and Adrienne Waintraub**, to the past and current Día National Advisory Committees (NACs), to the dedicated **Reforma** members who serve as judges for the Mora Award, to **ALA** and **ALSC** Board and Staff, and to the countless **librarians, parents and teachers**, who make the Día concept a reality. Thanks again to my friend, **Dan Moore**, for believing in my dream.

Every day is El día de los niños/El día de los libros, and on April 30th, and we honor children and celebrate a year of promoting bookjoy, linking **all children** to books, languages and cultures. Día is now celebrated across the country. I like to think of families, schools, museums, community organizations, book stores and libraries planning and enjoying their Día celebrations. **Literacy strengthens democracy.**

This family literacy initiative needs sponsors, big and small. Día is a commitment and belongs to all who believe in its ideals. It

belongs to no one publisher, author, organization or corporation. We welcome all who value children and building community through books to **join us where you live. Foster Día: Grow the Día Idea.**