Librarian's Toolkit for

Responding Effectively

To Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

Many librarians across the United States are struggling to provide or continue to provide adequate library service to Latinos and other immigrants in the face of anti-immigrant sentiment that serves to dehumanize and criminalize family members and workers who seek a better life for themselves and their loved ones in the United States. REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, strives to be at the forefront of the effort to educate the general public about the communities we serve and to advocate for and seek to protect Latinos' rights to decent library service. As librarians and library workers, we pride ourselves on access to relevant information.

In that vein, we offer these materials for use by library administrators, staff, and all other interested parties in an effort to enlighten, inform, and expand their knowledge of immigrants and their rights to free public library access. The American Library Association Council joined REFORMA in June 2005 in approving the RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS TO FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY ACCESS. Furthermore, in April 2006, REFORMA passed a resolution opposing H.R. 4437 (the Sensenbrenner Bill) due to its deleterious effect on the entire Latino community: RESOLUTION OPPOSING SENSENBRENNER BILL (H.R. 4437). As an affiliate

association of the [American Library Association](#), we reaffirm concepts from the Library Bill of Rights here: …"that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of **all people** [emphasis added] of the community the library serves."

…"V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views."

Recommendations to Enable, Encourage, and Increase Access to the Library by the Latino Community

- Make your priority to serve the community regardless of individuals' legal status
- Promote your library as a welcoming place where revealing or explaining one's legal status is neither expected or required
- Accept alternative forms of identification such as:
  - Matrícula Consular (Mexico)
  - Photo ID & proof of current local address
  - Other forms of address verification including utility bills, printed checks, rent receipts, or other post-marked official mail
- Ensure that all library staff, both professionals and paraprofessionals, receive cultural competency training that includes current immigrant issues

- Hire staff who speak the language(s) of your immigrant communities
- Promote your library as a source of accurate information on all aspects and perspectives of the immigration issue, both currently and historically.
- Act as advocates for the education of undocumented immigrants about their human rights

In short, libraries should be working to expand access to their materials and services by accepting alternative forms of identification such as the Matricula Consular issued by the Mexican Consulate.

Reformistas reported the following policy details and sentiments in recent posts to the REFORMANet listserv:

- "…the County of Los Angeles Public Library … used to send out postcards … We would 1) fill out the postcard with the potential patron's contact information, 2) I think we charged them for the postcard stamp, and 3) mail the postcard. They would receive it and then come back with another form of ID, such as a passport, out of state ID, etc."

- "…what I really like about that system is that it allows staff to emphasize to patrons that we want to be able to send you mail and make sure you receive it. This can take emphasis away from "where are you from" and put it on "where can we contact you"-- which just seems so much more friendly."

- "…First of all, this is not an immigrant, illegal immigrant issue. As a library, we don't care about your immigrant status.

- We just to need to make sure that you prove who you are (photo id) and that we can contact you (proof of address). Those items can be anything - passport, Matricula Consular, etc. For women who do not have anything "official" in their name, those postcards are great. Since we usually accepted anything with name and address and they could usually provide mail from family, postcards from the library were an option in rare cases when they were needed and probably not a big expense." Potential library patrons "not only included immigrants (illegal or legal) but others who might not have the documents more restrictive libraries require – children, teens, non-drivers, etc."

- [One public library in Minnesota] "has a policy that requires a picture ID and verification of address to get a library card. We prefer a state driver's license as the picture ID, but I have taken driver's licenses from other states, from Mexico, Matricula IDs, and more. The verification of address can be … a printed check, lease form, any kind of bill, and even a piece of mail as long as it is postmarked and has the person's name with address on it. We prefer something formal, but there's some leeway there for personal judgement.

- The schools issue picture IDs for middle school and high school students here, so we accept student IDs for those who don't have a driver's license yet."

- [A number of other public libraries in Minnesota] "have very similar policies … If a potential patron does not have a picture ID … we require only a letter delivered by the postal service to their address. If they do not have such a letter, a local ESL teacher has been willing to mail a post card to her students in order to verify mailing address. Our local police department, business community and school system also sponsored a visit from the new Mexican Consulate office in the Metro area so people would have a

convenient opportunity to come and get a [Matrícula] ID issued by the Mexican government."

- "…an increasing number of libraries do not require that users explain their legal status when registering for library cards. For example, Queens Library, [does] not ask for any user's legal status. The important thing is to serve the community no matter their legal status."

Best Practices for Issuing Library Cards to the Latino Community

Library staff may accept the following forms of identification & proof of residency:

LISTS OF ACCEPTABLE DOCUMENTS

List A: Documents that Establish Identity and Place of Residency • Valid state-issued driver's license • Valid state-issued ID card	OR	List B: Documents that Establish Identity • Passport from any country • Matrícula Consular • Employment ID with name & photo	AND	List C: Documents that Establish Place of Residency • Utility bill with address on it • Lease agreement • Printed checks • Any POST-MARKED piece of business or personal mail

"One thing to remember is that just because we have a law doesn't mean it's the right thing to do. Historically we have had many laws (Jim Crow, etc.) that have legislated the wrong thing. Protests and demonstrations are the way these "bad" laws get changed.This is the response we should be giving to those who are saying they aren't against immigrants, they're just against them breaking the law. We should remember that except for Native Americans, we are a nation of immigrants."

For current information on the immigration debate, please see Capitol Spotlight: http://www.c-span.org/capitolspotlight/index.asp for daily updates on the work of the Senate Judiciary Committee. As well as the National Council of La Raza's Immigration Debate page at http://www.nclr.org/section//immigration_debate/.

For additional resources on immigrant communities and serving them, please click on the following link:

http://www.reforma.org/ToolkitPartII.htm

or the PDF version:

http://www.reforma.org/ToolkitPartII.pdf

Comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send them to Robin Imperial: rimperia@cumberland.lib.nc.us