

Presented at the 2008  
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by  
Salvador Avila

## CHANGING CONDITIONS

**“Moreover, the majority do not request government assistance.  
One, because they don’t speak English.  
Two, because they are afraid of being deported.  
And, three, because they don’t even know how to get access to these  
services.”**

- Jorge Ramos in *The Other Face of America: Chronicles of the Immigrant Shaping Our Future*.
1. Do you know the cultural characteristics of Spanish-speakers?
  2. Do your peers know the cultural characteristics of Spanish-speakers?
  3. How do we earn a living when everyone is sharing ideas and information?
  4. How do you create public value in the Spanish-speaking community?
  5. Is becoming a Spanish-speaking serving institution a paradigm shift?
  6. How does the profession fix the disproportionate number of Latino and Spanish-speaking librarians with the communities we are currently serving?
  7. Is learning something new such as serving Spanish-speakers taking a toll on you?
  8. Should the profession reframe our service approach or should we continue diligently offering what has served us well?
  9. What lies ahead with the Spanish-speaking community? Does this scenario scare you?

**“No man would listen to you talk if he didn’t know his turn was next.”  
– Ed Howe**

## CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Region:	Spanish – Speaking Countries						
	Latin America					Europe	Africa
	North America	Central America	South America	Caribbean			
Country:	Mexico	Costa Rica El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Nicaragua Panamá	Argentina Bolivia Chile Colombia Ecuador Paraguay Perú Uruguay Venezuela	Cuba Dominican Republic Puerto Rico		Spain	Equatorial Guinea

GENERAL COMMUNICATION TENDENCIES	
American	Latin American
Direct	Indirect
Assertive	Passive
Straightforward	Non-confrontational
Deference to Self	Accommodating

INDIVIDUAL vs. COLLECTIVIST CHARACTERISTICS	
American (individualist)	Latin America (Collectivist)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interests of the individual prevail over interests of the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial support of family is important and expected</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are taught to be independent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sense of belonging is intense yet limited to family and friends</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals tend to take care of themselves rather than relying on groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People who are not family or close friends are often mistrusted</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work goals include personal time, freedom and challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interaction at work is important and expected</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals see themselves as somewhat independent of the organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees tend to be dependent on the organization</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are managed as individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships prevail over tasks</li> </ul>

Beliefs, Values and Attitudes	
Beliefs	Values and Attitudes
What my friends buy is good for me	Collectivism, the group is more important than the individual
Stay with a brand you know rather than switching around	Loyalty, fear of the unknown, risk avoidance
Please children by buying them what they want	Being a good mother, giving kids what she did not have growing up, compensating for a past of poverty
Live for today because tomorrow is uncertain	My life is in God's hand, fatalism, little control over the environment

## REFRAMING OUR APPROACH

**"I skate to where the puck is going to be, not to where it has been."  
– Wayne Gretsky**

TRANSLATION OR TRANSCREATION



BIBLIOTECA OR LIBRARY



## REFRAMING OUR APPROACH (cont)

SPANISH OR ENGLISH OR BILINGUAL?



FUTURE OF LIBRARY SERVICES TO SPANISH SPEAKERS



A



B

## CONVENTIONAL WISDOM OR COMMON SENSE – HOW ABOUT NEITHER!

**“Most do not listen with intent to understand.  
They listen with intent to reply”**

- Stephen Covey in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

1. Are you and/or library system staff making people feel comfortable so that they may reveal most of their cultural and personality characteristics?
2. Are your services, signs, and literature “reader centered” or “authored centered?”
3. When you are communicating with the Spanish-speaking community are you interested or interesting? Who does most of the talking? Are they being heard?
4. Research on communication reveals that 55% is done by body language; 38% is tone of voice; and 7% is choice of words. Where do you spend most of your energy on? Will the Spanish-speaking community say that your library is inviting with its non-verbal cues? [Hint: Spanish language signage]
5. Many peers of yours are asking themselves why should we change or offer library services to Spanish-speakers as they are either not interested or there is nothing in it for them. How do you respond?
6. How do you determine what is a need among the Spanish-speaking community? Do you believe that transportation is an issue for them? What if I were to tell you that transportation is the least of their worries!



## FURTHER READING

2007 National Survey of Latinos: As Illegal Immigration Issue Heats Up, Hispanics Feel a Chill. Pew Hispanic Center. 2007. <http://pewhispanic.org/>

- Asked to choose among four possible causes of discrimination against Hispanics, nearly half (46%) of all respondents say language is the biggest cause; 22% say immigration status; 16% say income and education; and 11% say skin color.
- Roughly half of all Hispanic report that the increased public attention to immigration issues has negatively impacted their lives in one or more specific ways. Some 12% say they have had more trouble getting or keeping a job; 15% say they have had more trouble finding or keeping housing; 19% say they have been asked to produce documents to prove their immigration status more often than in the past; 22% say they are less likely to use government services; and 24% say they are less likely to travel abroad.

Milam, Danielle Patrick. Public Library Services to New Americans: Speeding Transition to Learning, Work and Life in the U.S. Urban Libraries Council. 2003. <http://www.urbanlibraries.org/>

- Identifying newcomers. Public libraries are becoming savvy at learning where New American population are residing and working in their service areas.
- Connecting New Americans to key community resources. Libraries, both alone and with community partners, are developing many services that meet specific needs of new immigrants, such as English language instruction, civics education, job search and business start-up assistance, literacy support for families, technology training, and homework help for youth.

Serving Non-English Speakers in the U.S. Public Libraries: 2007 Analysis of Library Demographics, Services and Programs. American Library Association. 2008. <http://www.ala.org/ala/olos/nonenglishspeakers/>

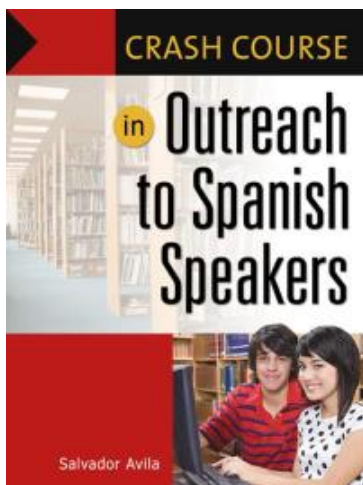
- Spanish is far and away the most supported non-English language in public libraries. Seventy-eight percent of libraries reported Spanish as the priority #1 language to which they develop services and programs.
- Knowledge of the services offered by the library was the second most frequent barrier to their participation.

Tornatzky, Louis G., et.al. College Knowledge: What Latino Parents Need To Know And Why They Don't Know It. Tomas Rivera Policy Institute. 2002. <http://www.trpi.org/index.html>

- Academic achievement and exposure to an intellectually-challenging curriculum in high school, coupled with an informed strategy for gaining college admission, is the best way to offset the deleterious effects of Low-SES on postsecondary enrollment.
- Parental involvement in a child's educational choices is known to influence academic achievement and enrollment of Latinos in postsecondary education.

# Crash Course in Outreach to Spanish Speakers

By Salvador Avila



Providing services to Spanish speakers is both an honor and a challenge. Before public institutions venture into reaching out to the Spanish speaking community, they need to become familiar with their cultural competency so that their decisions and initiatives are not at risk.

SALVADOR AVILA is a Branch Manger in the Las Vegas – Clark County Library District, NV.

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