Colorado Latinos and Information:
Key Informant Interviews with Latino Organizations

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Table of Contents

Introduction and Background……..3

Methodology……..4

Summary of Participating Organizations……..5

Common Themes……8

Specific Themes……10

Notable Findings and Suggestions for Ask Colorado…..……..13

Acknowledgments……..14

Additional Organizations for Future Interviews……..15

Appendix 1- Key Informant Interview Questions……16

Introduction and Background

Libraries are credited with change in people's lives. Traditionally they are places of refuge, sources of entertainment and improvement, intellectual and emotional treasure houses.

Modern technology, including the Internet, is credited with revolutionary change. It can extend personal freedom, explode access to information, level the playing fields in economy and education.

The Colorado State Library (CSL) and its Ask Colorado virtual reference service wanted to discover how one major demographic group, Latinos, utilizes libraries and the Internet. Latinos are a significant percentage of Colorado's population, and their numbers are escalating tremendously. As a subscriber to the Library Bill of Rights, supporting equal access for all to library services, CSL needed feedback from the Latino community in order to suggest refinements in libraries statewide.

This report, based on key informant interviews with seven leaders of Latino organizations in the Denver metro area conducted in the spring of 2007, is part of a project to assess the online information needs of this ethnic group and their use of the Internet and libraries. In addition, these interviews helped determine the Latino community's knowledge and use of Ask Colorado.

Ask Colorado is an online collaborative reference service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in English and Spanish. It is coordinated by the Colorado State Library and participating libraries throughout the state. The free service is funded through grants provided by the Colorado State Library under the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) along with funds and staffing from local libraries in Colorado.

Although the English version of this reference service has been successful, the Spanish version has been under-utilized. To investigate this trend and respond to the information needs of the Spanish-speaking population in Colorado, Kris Johnson, Ask Colorado Coordinator, and Bonnie McCune, Colorado State Library Community Programs Coordinator, initiated the project of which the key informant interviews comprise the second part. The following report summarizes the process and results of those interviews.

(AskColorado, Colorado libraries' 24/7 virtual reference service, may be found at *www.askcolorado.org)*

Methodology: Rational and Approach

The first part of this project, completed in February, 2007, was a literature review of secondary-source research to obtain an overall view of current and historical studies on Spanish-speaker's information-seeking behaviors. These findings were summarized in an annotated bibliography (see Library Research Service, Field Initiated Studies, *www.lrs.org/field.php*). To supplement this research and assess the needs of the local Colorado Latino community, the second part of the project involved the development of an interview questionnaire to be used with "key informants"; people who are leaders, decision-makers and networked in the local Latino community. The objective of these interviews was to gain insight into specific information needs of this population as well as transmit information about Ask Colorado Spanish services if appropriate.

Questions used in the interviews were written and compiled with the help of Bonnie McCune and Kris Johnson and from examples of similar qualitative needs assessment studies. The questions were further refined with assistance of Nicolle Steffen from the Library Research Service (LRS) of the Colorado State Library to ensure they were open-ended yet specific enough to elicit the desired information. The original set of 11 questions was scaled down to six including one with two parts. (See Appendix 1)

The list of Latino organizations was gathered with the help of Bonnie McCune. Other contacts were identified using information available in the public domain (telephone directories, websites and pamphlets). Some of the search terms and headings I used included "Latino", "Latina", "Hispanic organizations" and "Denver". An original list of 21 Latino organizations was reduced down to 15 and prioritized for scheduling. Electronic and print media organizations were put at the top of the list followed by educational, non-profit and advocacy groups. Additional contacts were suggested by key informants during the interviews.

Key informants were contacted by phone, voice messaging and one participant was e-mailed the interview questionnaire. Making contact with some key informants proved to be a challenge, particularly with Spanish television, radio and newspaper organizations. Several attempts were made to arrange interviews with news directors, publishers and/or editors of Entravision television, KBNO radio and La Voz and El Seminario newspapers. Unfortunately, we were unable to schedule interviews within the time frame of the project. This is an area that may deserve additional study. Of the 14 key informants contacted, seven agreed to face-to-face interviews.

Interviews were informal and conducted at each organization. Responses to questions were written in the form of notes and none were tape recorded. Interviews lasted between 20-45 minutes. Each participant agreed to have his name and responses used in this report. Each participant was given at least one "Guide to Services" folder with information, bookmarks and fact sheets on Ask Colorado in Spanish and English.

Summary of Participating Organizations

Key Informant Sample Description (N=7)	
Type of Organization	N
Advocacy- Non Profit	2
Business- Non Profit	1
Education- Non Profit	2
Women's (Latina) Non-Profit	2
Total	7

The first question asked participants to briefly describe their organization and who it serves. The following summarizes each organization's answer in the order they were interviewed.

1. Latina Initiative
   1536 Wynkoop Street Suite 4B
   Denver, CO 80202
   303-572-0013
   Dusti Gurule, Executive Director
   dusti@latinainitiative.org

Latina Initiative is a grassroots organization that began in 2002 to organize, educate and solidify the political potential of Colorado's Latina population. They advocate civic and community participation through "Get Out the Vote" campaigns, conferences and programs on political and policy issues. They serve all Latinas throughout Colorado and build partnerships via e-mail lists, postal mail, door-to-door and phone communication.

2. Latin American Education Foundation
   561 Santa Fe Drive
   Denver, CO 80204
   303-446-0541
   Jim Chavez, Executive Director
   jchavez@laef.org

Founded in 1949, LAEF is one of the oldest non-profits in the Denver area providing access to higher education to Colorado Hispanic students through scholarships. More than 5000 scholarships have been awarded. With support from community organizations and collaborative partnerships with corporations, foundations and educational institutions, LAEF communicates with high school students and their families through handbooks, college nights and festivals educating them on the process of acquiring scholarships and financial aid for higher education.

3. Rights for All People
   1212 Mariposa Street, Suite5
   Denver, CO 80204

303-893-3500
Lisa Duran, Executive Director
lisa@rap-dpt.org
Pilar Carrillo, Internal Organizer
pilar@rap-dp.org

Immigrant rights is the focus of this broad-based advocacy organization. They inform the community on policy changes that affect the immigrant community and provide social, legal and community information to immigrants.

4. Latin American Research and Service Agency
309 West 1st Avenue
Denver, CO 80223
303-722-5150 x 101
Polly Baca, President and CEO
pollybaca@larasa.org

Founded in the early 1960s, this organization seeks to lead and influence change to improve the lives of Latino's and the Latino community. They utilize social action research methods and cultural outreach. LARASA identifies needs and develops programs and strategies primarily in the areas of education, health, public policy and capacity building.

5. BUENO Center for Multicultural Education
247 UCB
Boulder, CO 80309
303-492-5419
Lorenzo Aragon, Ph.D. Associate Director
lorenso.aragon@colorado.edu

Founded in 1976 BUENO is part of the School of Education at the University of Colorado-Boulder. They promote social justice, diversity, equitable education and cultural pluralism through research and training programs funded by grants from the US. Department of Education and private and state funding. They collaborate with the School of Education and the Colorado Department of Education to offer graduate and undergraduate programs offering degrees in bilingual and ESL education as well as training and research opportunities.

6. Boulder County Latina Women's League
c/o YWCA
2222 14th Street
Boulder, CO 80302
303-443-0419 x150
Carmen Faucette, volunteer
bclwl@yahoo.com

Founded in 1998, BCLWL serves Latinas in Boulder County to empower women and girls to help themselves. They award college scholarships to area high school girls and

encourage families to support the girls' higher education. BCLWL promotes educational, cultural and professional advancement through conferences, fundraisers and programs.

7. Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
   Bernard Valdez Hispanic Heritage Center
   924 West Colfax Avenue Suite201
   Denver, CO 80204
   303-534-7783
   Erika Reyes, Director, Programs and Education Foundation
   ereyes@dhc.com

DHCC began in 1978 as Denver's first Hispanic business community organization. It is a membership organization of 1400 small businesses owners, corporate representatives, community leaders and association members representing various professions from the Hispanic business community. Members join for networking opportunities, educational and training development.

Common Themes

Based on the key informant interviews, a number of common themes emerged. Some themes reiterate the findings of previous research on Latinos' use, access and knowledge of information resources. The interviews also provided unique insights that assist in the evaluation and use of online library services to Spanish speakers.

☛ **Finding information:**

- While some interviewees listed radio or TV and others listed the web, ***all*** interviewees listed face-to face or word-of-mouth as a way they communicate with their constituents and a primary way for their constituents to find the information they need.

☛ **Socio-economic status and education affects information access and use:**

- When asked how constituents find the information they need and how likely they would use the Internet/library, most interviewees noted that this depended on the income and education level of constituents. Higher income and greater amounts of education generally mean increased use of the Internet and library.

"Those most likely to use the Internet or libraries would be those who are active, stable; have a steady job, home, family, children. Those newer immigrants who do not have this stability would probably not have the resources or knowledge of getting information from these sources." – Lisa Duran, Rights for All People

"Traditional members and small business owners use the Internet a lot. Non-traditional or immigrant new business owners are increasing in number but are much less likely to use or have access to the Internet. Those who use computers and libraries back home (Mexico) have a higher income status." – Erika Reyes, DHCC

"We contacted those in lower income communities door-to-door or by phone for the 2004 and 2006 elections. These communities, particularly if they are new to the country, get information from community centers, neighborhood newspapers and service agencies. They often have no access to technology. Income and education level play a big role in use and access. Students and professional women are most likely use e-mail and websites." – Dusti Gurlue, Latina Initiative

"It depends on the information needed, literacy level. I believe the highest percentage of Latinos first get their information from the radio, then TV, then the web, newspapers and then the library. Poor, disadvantaged and at-risk kids get information at LARASA learning centers, which provide free online curriculum designed to help at-risk kids in grades 6-12." – Polly Baca, LARASA

☛ **Online services used by constituents and interviewees:**

- All interviewees use e-mail to communicate with members of their organization and constituents, if their constituents have Internet access.
- All interviewees listed that constituents, with Internet access, use their organization's website.

☛ **Knowledge of the Colorado State Library and Ask Colorado:**

- Five out of seven interviewees have never heard of Ask Colorado. Polly Baca of LARASA thought she may have heard of it and Lisa Duran of Rights for All People thought she recognized the Ask Colorado logo from seeing it on a computer at the Denver Public Library and associated it with them, but neither knew what Ask Colorado was.

☛ **Potential use of Ask Colorado by interviewees and constituents:**

- Six out of seven interviewees responded positively when asked if they thought their constituents would use the Ask Colorado Service.

"Yes, if they have access to the Internet. It could be used both internally by staff and externally by students, teacher, and researchers. Can it be linked to our website?" – Lorenzo Aragon, BUENO

"I think bilingual students, Spanish as a first language, would be interested." – Dusti Gurule, Latina Initiative

"Yes, those whose first language is Spanish and kids would use it more probably." – Lisa Duran, Rights for All People

"Yes, if they knew it was available. It might provide quicker information and answers." – Erika Reyes, DHCC

"Yes! Can I get more folders? They would be great to hand out to classes at Learning Centers and parent education at bilingual ESL classes." – Polly Baca, LARASA

"People may use the service if they know about the resource. Colorado State Library should get a booth at the LaRaza Youth Festival or give Ask Colorado information out at other events with students." – Jim Chavez, LAEF

Specific Themes

☛ **Trust in librarians and use of public libraries and the Internet:**

- Interviewees had differing views on Latinos' use of libraries and librarians to find information. While some said immigrants avoided public libraries, other described how they use them. While some see Latinos' use of libraries and the Internet increasing, other see libraries to be an intimidating place and/or a place not likely to be used for information and/or computers.

"Students at-risk use online curriculum. I see online use by students increasing. Many do not have computers at home so they use them at libraries." – Polly Baca, LARASA

"I believe there is a 50% increase in immigrants using libraries." – Lisa Duran, Rights for All People

"Families use the library computers for e-mail; search Yahoo, Google to look up information on politics, legal questions, political system and laws and children use for homework." – Pilar Carrillo, Rights for All People

"I believe it's highly unlikely that they would use either the Internet or the library. I don't feel students would use it. They wouldn't take the time because they would watch TV or play video games. Especially if they had to go to a public library to access a computer, they probably wouldn't take the time." – Jim Chavez, LAEF

"Non-traditional members, immigrant families without computers and who do not speak English well might use this resource in libraries, but the young women I mentor are less likely to go to the library because they do not feel comfortable. There is a trust element with libraries and using information online. Immigrants come from an environment where they don't trust government, and (they) feel the same way here." – Erika Reyes, DHCC

"…these communities (low-income) get information from sources (community and neighborhood centers) that are trustworthy." – Dusti Gurule, Latina Initiative

"…libraries must continue to do more to make library experience more comfortable, meaningful and welcoming to immigrants, non-English speakers. They should have traditional Mexican storytelling in Spanish and English. It is important for children to associate the library with a positive learning, fun environment. Spanish-speakers must feel a sense of trust initially with face-to face contact when seeking reference information from a reference librarian. Then once trained on a virtual reference service by these librarians, they will feel the online source is trustworthy and safe." – Carmen Faucette, Boulder County Latina Women's League

☛ **Using new technologies:**

- Although all interviewees said constituents accessed their website, one noted the difficulty constituents had in using their (DHCC) site and their online newsletter.

"Many members say they went online to find information especially from the DHCC website but could not find what they needed, so a lot of communication is on the phone and in person. . .For programs people are contacted via telephone, and we send out a weekly online newsletter, but this is not read as much as we would like." – Erika Reyes, DHCC

- Another interviewee indicated constituents' proficiency with the web

Lorenso Aragaon Ph.D., from BUENO Center for Multicultural Education believes his constituents use the Internet, "All the time….a tech specialist counts the hits from our website." (This may reflect the higher education level of this group's constituents.)

☛ **List of specific online services used by interviewees and their constituents:**

Latin American Education Foundation
- www.laef.org

Latin American Research and Service Agency
- www.larasa.org
- Research websites for kids/youth violence, gangs, statistics
- Proposal writing
- Communication/e-mail
- Education websites, BBC,NPR, PBS
- Foundation/grant research websites

Latina Initiative
- www.latinainitiative.org
- Search Internet for advocacy training, lobby legislation
- Online dictionaries
- Wikipedia
- Reference Desk
- Legislative awareness websites- Colorado general assembly, Vote Smart

Boulder County Latina Women's League
- www.latinawomensleague.com
- Websites for scholarship information
- Google and other search engines

BUENO Center for Multicultural Education
- www.colorado.edu/education/BUENO/
- Bilingual Research Journal

- Lessons online
- CU School of Education website

Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

- www.dhcc.com
- Small business administration website
- City and county of Denver business resources website

Rights for All People

- www.rap-dpt.org
- Homework research
- Political and legal websites
- Yahoo
- Google

Notable Findings and Suggestions for Ask Colorado

Although the majority of key informants had no knowledge of the Colorado State Library or the virtual reference service Ask Colorado, all interviewees were very excited to hear about the service. They also believed it would be of great value and would be used as long as their constituents had access to the Internet. I believe the Ask Colorado coordinator and participating libraries can use the insights of these key informants and their important position within the Latino community as a way to better promote, evaluate and increase the use of this online resource.

Below I have listed some of the possibilities to consider:

- Interviews build rapport with each interviewee. Discussions focused on working to improve the lives of their constituents through information, knowledge and education. All organizations were receptive to receiving additional information about Ask Colorado. Some interviewees pulled out their cell phones and "Smartphone" devices to offer phone numbers of other contacts within the Latino community who would be interested in Ask Colorado. Therefore, future contact should be made to offer additional packets of information or discuss ways of letting their constituents know about this service. Continue to make contact with organizations listed at the end of this report.

- Every organization participates in some kind of fundraising, conference, awards ceremony or educational programming. Several interviewees offered to pass out Ask Colorado information at these events or thought Ask Colorado should have a booth. This would be a wonderful way to promote the service. Some of the events include:
    - -La Raza Youth Festival
    - -BUENO High School Equivalency Programs
    - -BCLWL Building Bridges In Education Conference
    - - New American School ESL Classes
    - -LARASA Learning Centers
    - -Hispanic Chamber Educational Foundation-Circle of Latina Leadership

- There remains a need for information literacy and computer education. Key Informants are steering their constituents to their websites. Low-income and disadvantaged Latinos know about the Internet, and their use is increasing; but training needs to take place. Some organizations have training totally online (LARASA). Ask Colorado would be ideal reference/research resource for these students/classes.

- Trust with libraries, librarians and using the Internet is a huge issue especially with immigrants. One key informant suggested trying to connect Ask Colorado with people or services their constituents already felt were trustworthy, e.g. friendly librarian who speaks Spanish telling them about it and showing them how to use it or seeing the Ask Colorado logo at the service desk at the local library.

- The current negative political climate toward immigrants as well as controversy surrounding immigration issues has kept some Latino immigrants offline and out of libraries.

- Simple marketing and communication efforts to promote the service, especially in Spanish, could be implemented. Each organization reaches or is associated with hundreds of people through its organization from corporations, foundations, boards, members, students and teachers. This is a huge population to tap into. For example, Coors Brewing Company supports many of these non-profit organizations and has an Hispanic employee group; what sorts of activities are they involved in and would they find this valuable?

- Although time-consuming to implement, word-of-mouth is a major method to reach this community. Many member receive much of the information they want or need in this manner. I hope my face-to-face communication initiated each organization to begin talking about Ask Colorado to others. During many of the interviews, key informants immediately thought of a person or group of people they knew who could use this service. What other types of face-to-face communication could be initiated?

Acknowledgments

Finally, I would like to thank key informants for taking the time out of their busy schedules to participate in this project. Their insights will be invaluable to improving library services to Spanish-speakers.

I would also like to thank Bonnie McCune and Kris Johnson at the Colorado State Library for their mentorship and support of graduate library student service learning projects.

Addendum

- AskColorado, Colorado libraries' 24/7 virtual reference service, may be found at *www.askcolorado.org)*
- Diversity/Special Populations resources may be found at *www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarydiversity.htm*

Additional Organizations for Future Interviews

El Centro
Colorado State University
Ft. Collins, CO 80523
Lupe Salazar- Executive Director
970-491-1476

El Semanario
P.O. Box 460428
Denver, CO 80246
303-672-0800

Entravision
777 Grant Street
Denver, CO 80203
Kathy Berumen
303-318-6201

KBNO Radio
600 Grant St. Suite 600
Denver, CO 80203
Mike Ferrufino
303-3229-1541

La Raza Youth Leadership, Inc.
P.O. Box 8571
Denver, CO 80201
303-556-6730
Victor Vialpando- Chair

La Voz Newspaper
4785 Tejon Street Suite 202
Denver, CO 80247
Wanda Padilla – Publisher
303-936-8556

New American School
Thornton, CO 80229
303-917-0859
Dominic DeFelice

United Mexican American Students
University of Colorado
P.O. Box 207 U.M.C. Room 187
Boulder, CO 80309
Jared Maestas
303-492-6571

Appendix 1

Colorado State Library- Ask Colorado Spanish Services
Information Interview Questions for Latino Community Leaders/Organizations

1. Can you tell me about your organization/agency and who it serves?

2. Do you have any personal insight into how your constituents find the information they need? (e.g. family, friends, church, T.V. radio, library, Internet)

3. How likely or unlikely would it be for your constituents to use the Internet /library?

4. Can you list any online services that your constituents use?

5. Have you heard of Ask Colorado?
   a. If yes, do feel it is a valuable service? In what ways?

   b. If no, (briefly describe Ask Colorado Service), do you think your constituents may have heard of Ask Colorado?
   Do you think they would use it?

6. May we contact you later to let you know more about this service?