Building the Spanish Juvenile Fiction Collection at the University of Alberta's HT Coutts Education Library

By Denis Lacroix

ABSTRACT: This article describes why and how the University of Alberta Libraries built a Spanish language children's literature collection. Selection criteria, findability, visibility, and assessment are addressed in the context of this collection. Practical information is provided to help librarians build similar collections and promote them.

Introduction

Building a collection of Spanish language juvenile fiction books at the University of Alberta (UA) responds to a need in the student and faculty population. To date, the collection, mostly located at the HT Coutts Education & Physical Education Library, was not developed systematically, yet its size is comparable to the Edmonton Public Library's and is larger than the number of titles at other Canadian academic institutions. The importance of providing access to Spanish juvenile fiction is reflected in Statistics Canada's numbers that indicate that Edmonton's Spanish speakers comprise 1.6% of the city's total population, which is slightly higher than the national average of 1.2%. Combined with the fact that the number of UA Faculty of Education students majoring in Spanish are comparable from year to year to the number of students majoring in French (University of Alberta) and given the growing interest in juvenile fiction at the university level, it is evident that striving to build a strong collection to respond to these needs is necessary.

Literature Review

There is a growing body of literature on developing children's fiction collections in academic libraries; however, information about non-English collections is more difficult to find. Nonetheless, a few articles were found on language specific collections as well as broader studies on multicultural children's literature. The importance of foreign language children's literature collections in academic libraries, it seems, relates either to foreign language learners, pre-service teachers, or faculty. Armstrong (61) lists six major points supporting the inclusion of children's literature as a language learning tool for university students. As for pre-service teachers and education faculty, access to children's literature from around the world in non-English languages is, according to Thornton and Shipman, of "primary importance"(Thornton 47). Similarly, other authors, like Bay and Williams, point out that future librarians also "benefit greatly"(Shipman 177) from access to such collections.

Thornton remarks that having a children's literature collection holds little value if the titles are difficult to find. She recommends including award titles won by books in the collection as part

of the MARC record in field number 586. Shipman echoes this strategy and adds that other enhancements can be made to catalogue records by including "Lexile scores, [and] information related to the Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts literacy programs"(182). This assumes that a variety of reading levels will be collected, which is one criterion Armstrong (63) notes as necessary for students to progress in their reading abilities and maintain interest. When a children's literature collection is thematic in nature, it may be possible or even desirable to apply specially designed subject headings and classification systems when describing and organizing the titles. Bingham gives the example of the University of British Columbia's Xwi7xwa Library which uses the Brian Deer classification system for its Aboriginal collections. In the case of the University of Washington, Bingham says that adding a public note to each title in the children's literature collection is sufficient in bringing together the collection through the library's catalogue.

An important aspect of visibility is the promotion of the children's literature collection. Besides the findability of titles in the library catalogue, Thornton and Shipman also recommend highlighting the children's literature collection in subject guides and through book displays. Embedding the subject guides in relevant course curriculum and sharing them with professors and students across disciplines will ensure that patrons know about the collection. Similarly, Thornton (50) recommends that book displays be timely and situated in highly visible areas.

Assessment of the collection should also factor in the collection development of a children's literature collection. Usage statistics, according to Shipman (184-185), can be applied to book circulation, but also to subject guide views. When analyzing the usage of only award-winning titles, Shipman notes that the circulation statistics in his library's situation ranged from 63.6% to 90% for all 33 titles acquired over the year. As for subject guides, presenting the online guide during instruction sessions increased usage from 12 hits per month to 68. Shipman adds that the subject guide contains "lists of the award books purchased on approval"(185), which accounted for almost half of the monthly hits.

Selection criteria vary according to the needs of the reading community and in the case of academic libraries this can be composed of pre-service teachers (Thornton 47; Bay 3), Education faculty (Bay 2), second language learners (Armstrong 60), and researchers in general (Bingham). Armstrong (63) and Bay (2) recommend consulting with faculty experts in children's literature who can suggest titles to add to the collection. Most of the literature on developing children's collections in academic libraries, including the previous authors as well as Shipman, recommend using book awards as a criterion for selection. Retrospective acquisitions made for filling gaps will have different selection processes than on-going regular collection development like consulting annotated bibliographies as Armstrong (63-67) suggests, book lists (Williams 71), other reference books (Bay 3), and of course the patrons themselves.

Developing juvenile collections on an ongoing basis requires, according to Shipman and Thornton, approval plans or automatic acquisition plans. Thornton mentions using YBP

Library Service and acquiring titles based on awards won and global criteria in making selections, but an important caveat addressed by this article is the fact that vendors may not always include all the awards for children's books, especially for those published outside of North America. Therefore, a comprehensive collection development plan should include a strategy for acquiring global children's literature that falls outside the approval plan. This will require working closely with vendors and patrons, and using various lists and reference tools to identify and select titles.

Project Impetus

When Professor Marisa Bortolussi approached the Spanish language and literature subject librarian, Denis Lacroix, in June 2015 with the request to build a core collection of contemporary Spanish children's literature, there had never been a concerted effort to build a non-official language collection. Therefore, Lacroix, who works at the Humanities and Social Sciences Library decided to collaborate with the UA's HT Coutts Education & Physical Education library in order to build a children's literature collection in Spanish of recent valuable titles, in order to offer sufficient resources to support classroom learning for Professor Bortolussi and students of her course, Spanish 326 Hispanic Children's Literature. Furthermore, as Denis Lacroix began working with the HT Coutts Education librarians, he noted that Faculty of Education students would also find it useful to have access to the collection during their teaching practicums in the, at least, seven Edmonton elementary schools that teach Spanish.

Project Directives

In consultation with Katherine Koch, head of the HT Coutts Library, it was determined that there would be a two-pronged approach to developing the collection. The first involved determining the gaps in the collection based on specific parameters, which were set up to build a collection of high quality prize winning juvenile literature written originally in Spanish either in Spain or Latin America. Besides finding relevant titles absent from the library shelves, it was also necessary to look forward to future publications and ensure that forthcoming publications by significant children's writers and prize-winning authors as well as other important works were purchased.

The HT Coutts Library assigned the review of any gaps in its existing Spanish juvenile collection to a Master of Library and Information Studies student, Adrian Castillo, who was working there on a temporary basis. Denis Lacroix worked closely with Adrian to set up the search parameters for building the collection retrospectively. The UAL's primary book vendor, Proquest-Coutts, was helpful in determining Spanish books that have received starred reviews, and in the future the vendor is planning to cover award winners in the titles sent to the UAL. In 2015, according to Proquest, there were 7 books that received starred reviews and fit the Spanish juvenile fiction focus. The vendor identified an additional 30 books from the previous 10 years. All of the books were originally published in Spanish. The first challenge was identifying Latin American prize-winning authors and works beyond Proquest's starred reviews. Identifying such works published in the United States and Canada is very

easy thanks to Global Books in Print, but Latin America does not have a one-stop shop model, so identifying works from this region proved very time-consuming. Some of the awards considered were the Pura Belpré Award, the Américas Award, the Premio Iberoamericano SM de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil, Spain's children's literature prizes El Barco de Vapor y Juvenil Gran Angular and the extensive Premio Lazarillo, and the international Hans Christian Andersen Award with its two prize-winning Spanish speaking writers. Other prizes were listed on the Escritores.org website, but the vast majority of the prize winners were from Spain and were acquired selectively. Although the project included Spain, it was necessary to make an effort for a balanced representation of Latin American titles, which proved to be more challenging given the dearth of Latin American children's literature awards, or at least lists of award winners.

The approval plan for Ibero-American juvenile fiction was set up within the existing Ibero-american literature and history approval plan, excluding Brazil and Portugal, that the UAL has with the Latin American Bookstore/Libros Latinos. The plan includes works published in Spanish or as Spanish-English bilingual editions. The geographical area is limited to Latin America and Spain, and the format only targets picture books, K-12 graphic novels and comics/cartoons, and juvenile novels. A smaller budget was dedicated to purchasing on approval through Proquest-Coutts all Canadian juvenile publications in Spanish and titles published in the United States that have starred reviews in Proquest- Coutts. One of the Canadian publishers with children's literature in Spanish included in the plan is Groundwood Books.

Spanish Juvenile Fiction at the UAL
The HT Coutts Library has at least 412 Spanish juvenile fiction titles, which is somewhat lower than the 729 Spanish juvenile fiction titles available at the Edmonton Public Library (EPL). However, 304 titles at EPL are Spanish translations whereas only 73 fall into this category within the UAL's curriculum materials. Collecting titles originally published in Spanish is an essential aspect of this collection endeavour. Nationally, the Spanish juvenile fiction collections at the UAL are faring very well in comparison with other Canadian university libraries according to numbers found in the WorldCat database.

As far as collection statistics go, the HT Coutts Education Library catalogued 21 juvenile fiction titles in 2015 and 2016, 86% of which entered the library system since July 2015. Between 2013 and June 2015, the Coutts Education Library had only added 2 titles to the library catalogue. Since 2003, the Coutts Education Library's Spanish juvenile collection titles circulated on average 2.8 times each, which suggests that there is demand for this material.

The HT Coutts Library hosted a book exhibit in the fall of 2016 highlighting the Spanish Juvenile Fiction collection available to its pre-service teachers and patrons. Around 20 books were selected and arranged into 4 thematic categories: prize-winning titles, Native American topics, famous artists, and food. A poster was designed especially for the exhibit to promote it on site and through the HT Coutts Library's Facebook and Twitter social media accounts.

During the exhibit, patrons commented that it was "wonderful" that the library is collecting children's books in Spanish, which reminded other patrons of childhood memories or provided them with a different perspective on social issues, like migration. Book displays are one of the three strategies Thornton recommends to promote a children's literature collection.

Promoting children's literature titles, according to Elaine Thornton (50), involves including award information in the MARC record, which the UAL includes in field number 586. In fact, three out of the four titles selected as part of the Coutts Library book display had information in the award field. Similarly, it is equally important for patrons who are searching for juvenile fiction to know the target audience age (Shipman 182), which is also included in the MARC record in field number 521. All of this information is searchable in the library catalogue and helps patrons find and select the titles they need.

Furthermore, promotion of the collection also took place in relevant university courses. In particular, students in the Spanish to English translation course, Spanish 405, were encouraged to choose to translate a title from the children's literature collection that had not been translated before. The subject librarian provided students with instruction and help in identifying titles in the collection by presenting to the class and creating an information sheet linked on the Spanish language and literature online subject guide. Promotion of the collection, as Shipman notes (185), to students and faculty through courses and an online guide is an effective way of encouraging usage.

Conclusion

Most of the Spanish juvenile fiction of UAL is located at the HT Coutts Education & Physical Educatino Library, which supports the curriculum enhancement needs of Education students and is centrally located for Spanish students to use. The collection is quite rich and, thanks to the two approval plans, is being developed continuously. Care must be taken to ensure a balanced representation of Latin American and Iberian authors. A guide for finding juvenile fiction at the UAL along with a brief titles of note exists online to facilitate finding and accessing the collection. Promotion of the collection through book displays/exhibits, social media, course assignments, and subject librarian outreach to faculty and students are essential in ensuring the viability and vitality of this resource for the University of Alberta community.
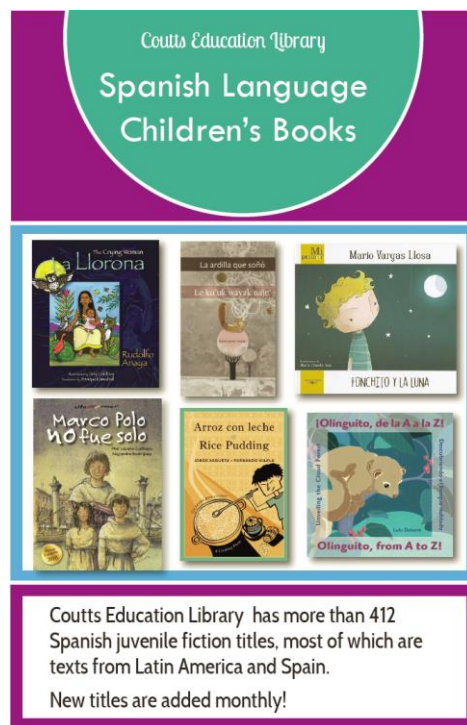
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