



Nominee: David Lopez
Santa Ana Public Library
Santa Ana, California

Nominator: Sarah Rafael Garcia

1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award.

I have known Librarian David Lopez since 2009. He initially approached me to offer his librarian skills and resources available at the Santa Ana Public Library to assist in youth writing workshops that I provided for free over the summer to underserved youth in Santa Ana, California through my non-profit Barrio Writers. Since then, he has proven his commitment to his community by reaching out when a special event or educational program is available at his library. His dedication to build bridges from the library to local underserved residents is a valuable contribution to creating pipelines to higher education and positive community engagement. He is not only a valuable information professional, but an admirable community member, volunteering many times with the community's youth and representing his home through his own work as a writer and professional. He is born and raised in Santa Ana, where he works, and is a true example of how higher education and a love for one's community can create opportunities for giving back. He is a testament to what hard work and passion can become while making a positive impact in his own community.

2. Please list a few ways in which the nominee has helped you and made your experience.

Librarian David Lopez changed my initial perspective of a library. At what I once believed was solely a place to check out books, I now describe as a community resource that houses a teen space, access to higher education, countless events promoting literacy for all ages and a safe place that serves as an outlet for those who face difficult challenges due to socio-economic issues or language barriers.

David has been instrumental in helping me collaborate with the library to offer special programming that reaches youth and elderly through community based workshops at the Santa Ana Public Library and the Garfield Community Center, which is an extension of the main library.

He worked as a volunteer with Barrio Writers for four years, always bringing his knowledge of the community and resources to the table. He led various workshops on creative non-fiction, poetry, community writing, as well as provided snacks,

transportation to and from enriching field trips, and served as a mentor for at-risk youth. He has helped organize and facilitate several public readings as well as participated as a host and reader with renowned poet, Lorna Dee Cervantes.

3. How has the librarian made a difference in the community? Please be specific.

David is more than just a Technology Librarian. Although his work could be associated with the new shift of libraries, David is a traditional in how he works with people. He uses his knowledge of technological practices to engage the community through computer labs, tutorials, social media, and the dissemination of information through videos he produces of community events and promotions. He is an instrumental part in how the primarily Spanish-speaking population of Santa Ana, CA is receiving bilingual information by way of the library.

David's friendly demeanor and goal to provide a safe space attracts local residents of all ages and backgrounds to seek him out at both locations. Many times I have witnessed how his empathy with non-English speakers has driven him to give the best quality service he can provide. He understands the community because he too comes from immigrant parents and his understanding of the library as a place for discovering makes him an exceptional librarian in many ways. Not only does he provide support within the walls of the library and community center, but he also engages with the community through social media pages for the library and his column "Life in the Golden City" in the Orange County Register. His work and writings promote community engagement, arts, bi-lingual literacy, small businesses, and cultural pride throughout Santa Ana and demonstrate his passion for his home and its residents. He has helped organize and promote various events, such as the library's award-winning Día de los Niños events, Summer Reading and Math Mania programs, film festivals, and several social media campaigns.

In addition to his work within the community, David is a rising leader in the library profession through his involvement with REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-speaking. As President of the Orange County Chapter, David has focused on the recruitment of current and recent MLIS students. His goals are for the organization to have more visibility in Southern California and to promote the profession and its mission within the Latino community. With his leadership, the Orange County Chapter of REFORMA has been present at Orange County's largest Día de los Muertos celebration "Noche de Altares" where they have constructed altars in memory of Latino literary figures, musicians, and librarians. His willingness to contribute to the library field has also granted him the role of Public Relations Committee Chair for the national organization where he is in charge of official press releases, social media networks, communications with partnering organizations, and partial monitoring of the organization's website.

He is also part of the steering committee for the 5th REFORMA National Conference that will take place in San Diego, CA in 2015. His devotion to REFORMA is proof that David is hungry for change and is willing to do everything he can to see it.

4. How has the library, and the nominee, improved the quality of your life?

Since childhood, the library has been a safe space and literary outlet in my life. But it wasn't until I met David that I found it to be a soapbox to advocate for underserved youth and families and a life-changing steppingstone for the community. David has become a valuable resource in my life; he offers community engagement through reading and writing resources and an advocate for cultural pride through literary resources. His knowledge and support have allowed me to become a better writing instructor and community member while helping me offer free writing workshops to the community—specifically underserved youth and families.

It is David who I credit with my inspiration to further my higher education and pursue my passion for writing. Although I too was raised in Santa Ana, at the moment I reside in Austin, Texas. I'm completing my last year in a Masters in Fine Arts in Creative Writing program while also maintaining my ties to the Santa Ana community through annual visits and support. David is an information provider on and off the clock, as he is my go-to person for news about the community, new resources for the Barrio Writers youth program and keeps me connected to the home I love.

5. How does the nominee make the library a better place?

Librarian David's presence, skills and dedication enhance the library's ability to engage with the community. He has worked in public libraries for nine years and school libraries for three years. In 2005 he started as a Clerk at the circulation desk working with the Spanish-speaking community at the Santa Ana Public Library, eventually he moved to being a tutor, helping families and at-risk youth with homework, projects, and developing literacy skills. In 2009, he started creating curriculum through library programs and led youth computer workshops that graduated over a hundred students. In 2010 he established and led youth creative writing workshops that helped young library patrons to explore creativity through writing exercises and started volunteering with Barrio Writers as a lead Writing Advisor.

From 2010 through 2013, David was employed as a School Librarian with the Santa Ana Unified School District and was a liaison for public library services. He ensured that over 500 new public library cards were issued to students who had never visited the public library before. He helped raise school literacy levels by implementing three years of Accelerated Reader programming and worked with school Parent Teacher Organization to sponsor incentives for high achievers. During this time he also created a school-wide appreciation for books and reading through his passion for working with children and educators.

During this time he also became an Assistant Librarian at the Santa Ana Public Library and began focusing on bridging the digital divide within the Latino/Spanish-speaking community by implementing the agency's social media networks, creating bilingual video programming for the city's cable channel (CTV3).

In this position, David served as a mentor to over 60 at-risk youth in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant project in the Santa Ana Public Library's Digital Media

program and guided them in the completion of over 50 youth-produced videos, which included 2 award-winning Teen Video Challenges.

Along the way, Librarian David presented at the 4th REFORMA National Conference (Denver, CO) and the American Library Association Conference (Anaheim, CA) on the importance of raising bilingual library professionals and advocates in one's own community as part of the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant "From Seeds to Trees."

In 2014, David became the first librarian in Santa Ana to run a community center when he was asked to help open and operate the Garfield Community Center (GCC). Since the center's doors opened to the community, he has implemented library programming at GCC, issued over 200 new library cards, established a very sought after tutoring program, and served as a liaison between the school district and the Library/Parks agency. His efforts at the Garfield Community Center and his work at the Santa Ana Public Library earned him the "Outstanding Service Award for the month of August 2014" from the City of Santa Ana.

David has served as a liaison between the Public Library and the Santa Ana community by consistently attending community events and programs, off-the-clock, and bringing back valuable information to the library as well as always promoting library services and programming wherever he goes. It is through him and what he represents that invites community members of all backgrounds and establishes a safe place to seek higher education, face societal struggles and embrace cultural pride. He is a first generation university graduate who holds two degrees: a Masters in Fine Arts in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts from the University of California, Riverside and a Master's in Library & Information Science from San José State University. Additionally, his creative writing has been featured in Brooklyn & Boyle and Connotation Press. Most recently, his poetry is forthcoming publication in Joto: An anthology of Queer Xicano & Chicano Poetry and his screenplay "The 41" has been nominated for the "Best International Screenwriting" award at the 2014 Oaxaca FilmFest.

Librarian David Lopez is bilingual, a first generation Mexican-American born and raised in Santa Ana and a member of the LGBTQ community. Through his perseverance to serve as a local librarian, library attendees experience his sincere kindness, community empowerment and discover a new role model in their lives.