

# I Love My Librarian!

Award

Adilene Estrada-Huerta  
Bilingual Outreach Youth Services Librarian  
Sacramento Public Library  
Sacramento, California

**Nominated by:** Donna Zick

Sacramento got really lucky. Just over two years ago, Adilene Estrada-Huerta brought her impressive array of skills to Sacramento Public Library and since then has continuously demonstrated the impact that one librarian can have to improve library services and, more importantly, the lives touched by those services. As the first Bilingual Outreach Youth Services Librarian at Sacramento Public Library, Adilene has elevated Spanish language services, materials, and programming and sought innovative ways to connect with and support the Spanish speaking community. Equal parts creative, technologically savvy, keenly knowledgeable of cultural trends, a generous mentor, evaluator and analyst, and community convener, Adilene has raised up not just Spanish language services, but also helped so many others throughout this library system to be impactful with their work. She shows up each day for families and co-workers, ready to bring to reality the best promises of excellent library services.

Adilene sets high standards for innovative, quality, and high impact youth and family programming that is a model for youth services throughout this library system. She is constantly searching for ways to make programs and services a better experience for library users and she and her programs are beloved by families who often travel across the county to enjoy the experience. Most importantly, Adilene's work is grounded in the goal of developing community connections. Her programs are intentionally designed to connect families to each other and to strengthen their relationship to the library. She regularly utilizes community engagement methods learned through the Harwood Conversation approach to listen to what families hope for and need and then utilizes this information to assess and improve services. This works because she is authentically engaged and connects well with all ages and through all formats. Adilene is always challenging herself to try new ways to engage the community and to bring them experiences that go above and beyond what they might expect from a library. Her programs are joyful and fun and filled with elements that surprise and engage participants. Each April, for example, Adilene creates an engaging El día de los niños traveling program that is offered throughout the month and moves around the 100 square miles of Sacramento County. This interactive bilingual experience features songs, activities, special guests, and book giveaways that both affirm the Spanish language and Latinx culture while also welcoming non-Spanish speaking participants to enjoy the fun. Her programs always have extra details that make them exceptional and promote the joy of

reading and sharing language. She projects lyrics on a screen to help families to fully participate, brings in costumed book characters, such as Elephant and Piggie, to dance along to Spanish language music and pose for family pictures, and even made it possible for children to meet a real llama after reading the book, *Maria had a little llama/María tenía una llamita*. Her advocacy even brought beloved bilingual children's singer and author José-Luis Orozco to Sacramento for a series of live concerts. Hundreds of families participate in these fun events and they always leave with free books and the opportunity to have a memorable family bonding experience.

The same commitment to quality support for youth and families goes into the weekly programming that she provides at various library branches. Adilene delivers exceptional bilingual storytimes at multiple library locations throughout the week that introduce traditional songs, teach vocabulary through movement, and support participation and community building. She also manages a weekly Tele-Cuento story that allows families to call and hear a recording of a Spanish language picture book. Her talent, however, is not limited to early childhood programming. She also created a popular Spanish language Tween Book Club that engages youth ages 9-12 to read and discuss a chapter of a book each week while also enjoying other activities with art or special guests, such as meeting tweens from a local roller derby club. Providing Spanish language programming for this age group helps to build or affirm Spanish language skills at a point when English is increasingly the dominant language in these tweens' lives.

Adilene's vast range of skills and commitment to quality programming have been most recently impactful during the challenges caused by COVID-19. As the pandemic forced a shut down of in-person library services in March, Adilene led the library team to quickly pivot and offer youth programming in a virtual environment. She devised methods to go beyond streaming programs over social media platforms, but also applied her extensive technical knowledge to bring a polished, professional look to the programs even when staff were filming from home. Ever mindful of the need to offer a high quality and inclusive program, Adilene innovated ways to stream the programming through open source broadcast software so that lyric slides, engaging graphics and animated gifs, and live producer support could be part of the program. This not only allows for more supportive visuals, but also makes it possible for the library's live storytimes on Facebook to be interactive, as librarians can be prompted by a producer to be responsive to suggestions from the live audience, such as including different animals in a song based on what is typed into the chat window. She has also kept accessibility as a priority, adding closed captioning to pre-recorded videos and figuring out how to link the videos for the library's Virtual Sensory Storytime so that a viewer with autism can more easily find similar Sensory Storytime videos that appeal to them. She also innovated how to broadcast across multiple social media platforms to help teens find and participate in a monthly virtual Teen Anime Trivia challenge which is offered simultaneously over Facebook and Instagram. She regularly assesses the data and reach on each virtual platform and is constantly exploring new ways to maximize the potential impact. It is hard to overstate how important her contribution has been to bring the library's programs into a virtual environment and to help the institution remain consistently available to youth and families during this pandemic.

Adilene has pursued multiple strategies to increase Sacramento Public Library's capacity to serve the Spanish speaking community. This includes doing constant person to person outreach efforts as well as

working to expand what a library user will find in the library's catalog. One of her many outreach efforts included setting up a partnership with the local Mexican Consulate to provide support and guidance to families as they sought consulate services. Each week she brought in a pop-up early learning space and gave away Spanish language children's books while providing individual consultations with families on how to connect with the library. Her community outreach efforts have continued throughout the COVID-19 shut downs and have included conducting media briefings and overviews with community partners about the library's virtual services and doing virtual visits with families at schools and preschools. Consistently a strong advocate for language collections and communities, Adilene has also been a key proponent to expand the materials offered through the library's collection and she advocated to take on an additional role of selector for Chinese, Russian and Spanish language collections. As such, Adilene has generously provided expertise to the Collection Services Department to refresh and develop Sacramento Public Library's World Language collection. These collections have flourished as Addie has used her strong relationships with Sacramento's diverse community to obtain input useful to the development of these collections that are now more relevant and engaging. She also led the creation of new Leemos Juntos storytime kits, which are designed to make it easy for parents and caregivers to find Spanish language picture books that are great to share with young children. These themed storytime kits are available to check out with a library card and contain six to eight Spanish language picture books that are great for reading aloud with toddlers and preschoolers. The kits also include a tip sheet with early learning ideas and storytime songs and rhymes that are also demonstrated in videos produced by her on the Library's YouTube channel. She also led the creation of Leemos Juntos con su bebé kits which offer four different kits for check out containing Spanish language board books with an early learning tip sheet.

While her capacity to create a positive impact on her own is substantial, Adilene is also an exceptional leader in the library community. She extends her work and expertise through focused efforts to provide mentorship and training that serve to build up systems of support for other library staff and the community. A common strategy is for Adilene to create a high-quality initiative and then immediately look for ways to help other people learn how to join her to expand the impact. After launching a series of successful bilingual storytimes, for example, she created a model for bilingual storytime that pairs the language skills of non-librarian staff with the storytime skills of youth services librarians. This model overcomes a common challenge in library systems who want to offer storytimes in languages other than English but do not have librarians who speak those languages. Together the pair presents the books, songs, and rhymes in two languages. Additionally, the language skills of the non-librarian staff member also help to support the essential connections with families that happens as a part of these programs. After creating a training on this with more than 20 Sacramento Public Library staff members, Adilene dramatically expanded the availability of the Library's bilingual storytimes in both Spanish and Russian. She continues to support and coach the non-librarian staff involved in offering these programs and has been dedicated to increasing their skills and confidence. Since then, she has also helped to train staff in other California library systems on bilingual storytime and also worked with InfoPeople, a non-profit library training consortium, to create a free webinar, Now You're Speaking My Language: Creating a Successful Bilingual Storytime, which is available online to library staff throughout the country. She also presented a workshop at the California Library Association conference on how to offer bilingual

programming. Adilene put together a similar structure of support once Sacramento Public Library launched virtual programming due to COVID-19. She analyzed the key elements of success and then developed a virtual storytime training for all youth services staff to increase the number of people able to help with the programs. Additionally, after figuring out how to create professional virtual programming, she taught a team of librarians to help her do the production and video editing while also sharing her knowledge and tips with other library systems.

Beyond her smart approach to building programming capacity, Adilene's mentoring and support has also focused on providing individual support to Spanish speaking library staff who are not librarians to grow their skills and expertise. She has been a generous and valued mentor to numerous staff members and has been an inspiration for some to consider pursuing library school, a vital contribution to the growth of the library field. In October 2020, she was one of four people invited to serve on a panel for the national American Library Services to Children Institute to offer support to Black, Indigenous and People of Color library staff who provide services to children. Adilene has also been actively working to build up regional systems of support for staff and community members. Upon learning that the Sacramento Valley Chapter of Reforma, the National Association to promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish speaking, had disbanded, she researched its background with past members and led the restoration of the group where she currently serves as President. She is also an active participant in Sacramento Public Library's Community Languages and Cultures Committee that works to assess and improve library services for underserved communities, including people who have newly arrived in the country as well as individuals who speak English as a second language.

Ultimately, the remarkable nature of Adilene's work is best considered through its impact on numerous, individual lives. It is reflected in the tween who realizes they can enjoy a graphic novel in Spanish, in the parent who grows their pride and commitment to sharing their home language with their child at storytime, and in the co-worker who begins to imagine a growing role for themselves in the library profession. Adilene is dedicated to expanding awareness in the Spanish speaking community that library services exist to support them and has been a committed guide to help families learn how to access those services. Her efforts as a librarian affirm the significant and life-changing impact of libraries and she has accomplished all of this with great humor, enthusiasm, compassion, and delightfully purple hair. Adilene Estrada-Huerta represents my greatest hope for what a librarian can be and is an outstanding example of why communities love their librarians.