

REFORMA DE FLORIDA

Noticias del mes/News of the month

Notes from the Editor

It's March. Time to march to apply for our Belpré Book Grant, to sign up for the Bill Morris Seminar, to nominate yourself for our upcoming election, and to register for the FLA Conference.

That's a lot of marching, so read our President's column to see why it was important for you to march to so many things.

We'd like to welcome our new Corporate Sponsor, MakeMake. Pages 2-4 explains their digital reading platform.

If you missed the recent AI Town Hall don't fret, as a summary is on pg. 4. AI training classes on various subjects and levels for Librarians serving Latino populations will soon be available, so stay tuned!

Latineando lists ideas for March events, while Bibliotele's films and documentaries celebrating women and justice adds to it.

There's lots to read, so enjoy!

Alma Ramos-McDermott,
Editor

President's column

by Lucia M. Gonzalez



In celebration of Women's History Month and International Women's Day (March 8), I invite you to join me in honoring the lifelong work of women in our profession whose contributions have shaped the history of library services to Latino communities and to librarianship as a whole. By leading the way, they served as role models and sources of

inspiration to generations past and present. I'd like to share the names of a few among the many Latina librarians who have profoundly influenced my vision and work - trailblazers in the profession: Pura Belpré, Lillian López, Elizabeth Martínez, Rose Treviño, Oralia Garza de Cortés, Dr. Kathleen de la Peña McCook, and Sandra Ríos Balderrama. Gracias!

This past month, REFORMA de Florida focused on highlighting AI and serving as a platform where we can learn about and explore its application to library services for Latino communities. As Latinx librarians serving Latinx communities, we must address and understand the applicability and ramifications of AI in our day-to-day work. The first event, organized in collaboration with Bibliotele, was a town hall meeting that drew over 250 registrants. Also in collaboration with Bibliotele, we are developing an AI training series that will address topics ranging from the most basic to the more complex aspects of AI. Stay tuned!

April 1 is the deadline to apply for this year's Belpré Book Grant. The grant consists of Latinx books for children and teens submitted by publishers to the 2026 Pura Belpré Award for their consideration. This is a wonderful opportunity for Florida librarians and organizations to enhance your collections or support community programs. You **do not** need to be a member of REFORMA de Florida to apply; just let us know how these books would help enrich your collection or support a special program for your community. To apply, email your proposal to the Pura Belpré Book Grant Committee. Don't wait until the last day - apply today!

President's column (continued)

Attention all Youth Services REFORMistas interested in serving on ALSC's YSA book evaluation committees, including the Pura Belpré Award! The ALSC [Bill Morris Seminar](#) is now accepting registration applications. I encourage REFORMA members to apply, as this training is classic preparation for book evaluation. The seminar is offered every other year and will be held in Buffalo, NY on Thursday, October 1, 2026.

Be on the lookout for information about the 2026 REFORMA de Florida Annual Elections! Soon, a call for nominations will go out to all members. Consider nominating yourself or someone you know.

Are you planning to attend the FLA Annual Conference in Orlando this coming May 12-15? If so, I look forward to seeing all of you at our Annual Membership meeting during the FLA Conference. Our in-person Membership Meeting will take place May 14 at 10 am. [Conference registration is now open.](#)

Muchas gracias and happy March!

Corporate Sponsor Spotlight: MakeMake

by Catalina Holguín, Founder and Director

Hello friends of REFORMA de Florida!

My name is Catalina Holguín, and I am the founder and director of [MakeMake](#), a digital reading platform with books for children and tweens in Spanish, specially designed for public libraries and schools. MakeMake was born 10 years ago in Colombia as a response to a growing need we saw in the libraries and schools of our country, where more and more computers and internet connections were arriving without any interesting proposals for how to integrate these devices into library services or the classroom. Since I am a literature graduate and worked for many years at the National Library of my country, I thought I could put that expertise to good use.

Today, ten years later, MakeMake has become a unique solution in Latin America, where technology is placed at the service of readers and book creators to form a vibrant reading community that impacts the lives of children and their families not only in Colombia and Latin America but also in the United States, where we have been working for six years.

Here are a couple of photos illustrating how MakeMake is used in libraries. Here we see some children in Gualmatán, Nariño, near the border of Colombia and Ecuador, reading a book together.



Here we see another group of children, this time in a Mobile Literacy Outreach bookmobile in rural Mendota, California, in Fresno County.



MakeMake (continued)

In addition to providing access to wonderful books originally written in Spanish from more than 90 different publishers in Latin America, we like to encourage deep connections with those books. That's why we have a [calendar of virtual events](#) throughout the year. I would especially like to invite you to this Professional Development event, presented in English by a wonderful Mexican American librarian named Sheridan Cazarez, whom I met a few years ago. Sheridan will be leading a short, one-hour workshop on how to start a Bilingual Storytime program in your library. [Pre-registration is available.](#)



Thank you for your attention. I hope we can connect in person, either at PLA Minneapolis in April or at ALA Chicago this June.

See you soon!
Catalina

Corporate Sponsor Spotlight: MakeMake

by Catalina Holguín, Founder and Director

Hola, amigos y amigas de REFORMA de Florida!

Les saluda Catalina Holguín, fundadora y directora de [MakeMake](#), una plataforma digital de lectura con libros para niños y adolescentes en español especialmente diseñada para bibliotecas públicas y colegios. MakeMake nació hace 10 años en Colombia como respuesta a una necesidad que veíamos crecer en las bibliotecas y colegios de nuestro país, a donde cada vez llegaban más computadores y más conexiones de internet, pero sin ninguna propuesta interesante de cómo integrar esos aparatos a los servicios de la biblioteca o al aula de clase. Dado que yo soy literata de formación y trabajé durante muchos años en la Biblioteca Nacional de mi país, pensé que podía darle buen uso a esa experticia.

Hoy, diez años después, MakeMake se ha convertido en una solución única en América Latina, donde la tecnología se pone al servicio de los lectores y de los creadores de libros para conformar una comunidad de lectura viva que impacte en la vida de los niños y sus familias no solo en Colombia y América Latina sino también en los Estados Unidos, en donde trabajamos hace 6 años.



Les dejó acá un par de fotos que ilustran el uso que se le da a MakeMake en las bibliotecas. Acá vemos unos chicos, en Gualmatán, Nariño, casi en la frontera de Colombia con Ecuador, leyendo un libro en de forma colectiva.

Acá vemos a otro grupo de chicos, esta vez en un bibliobús del Mobile Literacy Outreach in rural Mendota California, in Fresno County.



MakeMake (continued)

Además de dar acceso a libros maravillosos de más de 90 editoriales diferentes de América Latina, nos gusta incentivar conexiones profundas con esos libros. Por eso, tenemos [una agenda de eventos virtuales](#) todo el año. Especialmente, me gustaría invitarle a este evento de Desarrollo Profesional, dictado en inglés por un bibliotecario Americano Mexicano maravilloso que se llama Sheridan Cazarez a quien conocí hace unos años. Sheridan hará un pequeño taller de una hora sobre cómo iniciar un Bilingual Storytime en tu biblioteca. La [pre-inscripción está disponible](#).



Les agradezco su atención y espero que podamos conectar personalmente, ya sea en PLA Mineápolis en abril o en ALA Chicago este junio.

¡Hasta pronto!
Catalina

Summary of Online Town Hall: Human-Centered AI for Librarians serving Latino Populations

by Alma Ramos-McDermott

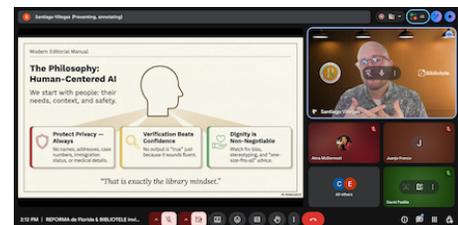


On February 12th, REFORMA de Florida made history when we held our very first AI Town Hall for Librarians serving Latino populations. Almost 250 librarians registered to hear Santiago Villegas, Co-founder of Bibliotele and Lead of the Innovation and AI unit at eLibro which trained over 7,000 librarians.

Santiago stressed a human-centered AI philosophy, prioritizing people, their needs, context, and safety. Before using AI, it's important to always protect the individual's privacy. A "Red, Yellow, Green" light system was practiced with audience members so we could decide if we would use AI on particular topics. Various scenarios were presented, and we gave our answers through emojis or in the chat deciding if we would definitely use AI (Green), use AI with caution for general information (Yellow), or run away screaming from AI (Red). Ways to optimize searches, pros and cons of various AI tools, and how to address copyright issues when using AI for library projects were some areas Santiago touched on during the Town Hall.



In summary, to follow a human-centered AI model, ask yourself two important questions before using AI: 1) *Could someone be harmed if the answer given was not correct?* 2) *Do I have to use personal details to get the answer you seek?* If you answered "yes" to either question, AI is not the way to go. It would be best to refer your patron to an expert rather than attempt to use AI to search for their answers.



REFORMA de Florida and Bibliotele will offer more courses on AI in the future, focusing on subjects important to librarians. Topics will range from an elementary course on *How to Use AI*, as well as courses on *Using AI for Collection Development*, *Fundamentals of AI for Academic Librarians*, *AI and Marketing your Library*, and much, much more.

Courses will be leveled, so those on a higher level of AI knowledge will feel challenged in their courses while those like me, who could only spell AI, won't feel overwhelmed in my courses. Stay tuned to our newsletter, social media, and website for more information.

UPDATE: 2026 Pura Belpré Book Donation Grant

Applications for the 2026 REFORMA de Florida Pura Belpré Book Donation Grant opened on **February 2nd**, Pura's birthday. **The deadline** for submitting proposals is still **April 1st** (seriously, for real, not a joke, etc. etc.) The Board wants to make sure these books wind up in the hands of children, so you do **NOT** need to be a member to apply for the grant.

Start writing your application to win a collection of Children and YA books, among titles submitted by publishers for consideration to the 2026 Pura Belpré Award Selection Committee, created by Latinx authors and illustrators portraying the Latino cultural experience in the lives of children. All Florida libraries and Organizations are encouraged to apply. Be sure to indicate on your application if you want to win Children **OR** Young Adult books. Information on how to apply is on our website.

You are invited!

Every month, the Executive Board of REdeFL holds a meeting to discuss chapter business, ways to encourage growth, and fine-tune our community involvement. The next Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday March 3rd at 8 pm EST**. A ZOOM link will be sent to members the day before the meeting, so check your email. We hope to see you there.

Latineando!

by David Hernandez Rivero

Saludos a todos los reformistas en este inicio de mes de marzo.



2026 is already moving fast. March is here.

March is a special month of awakening, reconnection, balance, and harmony. It's the end of the winter and the transition to spring. Among numerous cultures, and especially in Roman mythology, March is associated with Mars the Roman God of strength and fertility. This is an interesting image of dualism: strength and courage to overcome obstacles which at the same time represents fertility and renewal of life. Numerous other cultures also celebrate the Spring equinox with its symbolism of growth and life renewal. In Japanese culture, it's associated with Sakura the cherry tree that blossoms in Spring and symbolizes the impermanence of life as well as the beauty of renewal. In Ireland, the St. Patrick festivity is associated with the Shamrock plant (three-leaved) honoring faith and courage. The Spring Symbolism of renewal applies to libraries' constant revitalization as a place for community building. It leads us toward numerous ideas for library programs such as arts and crafts family parties, small dancing shows, or music concerts.

There are many other library themes associated with March such as International Women's Day. Biography displays of great women artists, scientists, politicians, and inventors are possible ideas. The more variety of women figures in diverse professional areas, and across the world, the more it will help highlight women's great contributions to human civilization.

Spring themes bring other ideas such as gardening classes and demonstrations. A recent initiative at my library created a seed library sponsored by the Sierra Youth Club. Our staff created an amazing display, and the initiative brought numerous people interested in this and similar initiatives.

Libraries celebrate March Madness Books. This is a great opportunity to involve patrons, particularly children who like basketball and sports, to get involved in the library by creating bracket-style tournaments and other similar events.

Latineando! (continued)

STEM activities are also associated with PI Day (3.14, or March 14). STEM programs, classes, and community events are popular in libraries. Numerous ideas include science workshops for children and adults, STEM fairs, book displays, author events, and much more. National Craft Day is also celebrated in March. Children love craft programs at the library or make and take.

With these wonderful events, initiatives, and spring renewal in the air, it's the best time to talk about marketing and promotion. Marketing your resources, programs, and services will help bring in new patrons and partners.

Depending on your library size and type, you might have a marketing department in charge of promotion. However, at the end, it's your outreach and marketing efforts that will make a difference. In large public library systems, marketing departments use different strategies in diverse media outlets such as online, social media, tv, newspapers ads, etc.

Partners, such as the Friends of the Library, can give you a great hand by using their social media presence to advertise your events and services. Other partners such as local organizations, schools, businesses, nonprofits, or community organizations might be handy. Schools often invite you for outreach during school orientations or science nights, etc. During those events you might use the opportunity to promote your future events. Organizations and community groups usually keep in contact with users via phone or social media. Local City Government's recreational departments, museums, and others partner with libraries to share promoting and advertising resources. Please use as many of these opportunities as possible.

Please use your own programs to advertise summer programs and future events. Keep into account how critical it is to establish communication with your patrons. Ask if they would like to get library information and updates. You can get email lists to email them events, calendars, library updates, etc.

I hope this time of weather transition brings the best of mood and professional creativity to all of you. Enjoy it and have fun at your library.



LO-QUE-LEO!

Welcome to the Book Sharing Corner

by Lucia M. Gonzalez



Adult Fiction en Español: I loved reading these!

El contrabando ejemplar (Exemplary Smuggling) by Pablo Maurette. Editorial Anagrama, 2025.

"*El contrabando ejemplar*" is a 2025 novel by Pablo Maurette, winner of the Herralde Prize, about an aspiring writer who plagiarizes his deceased mentor's unfinished book, which explores Argentina's history and identity through the lens of 17th-century smuggling, blending fiction, essay, and autofiction to question the nation's "original sin". I found the novel to be personal and informative as it delves into the complexities of Argentina's historical background and the shortcomings that overshadowed its national destiny and identity.

Las Bibliotecarias del Frente (Miss Morgan's Book Brigade) by Janet Skeslien Charles. Translated by Yolanda Casamayor. Editorial Navona, 2026.

This novel, originally written in English by Janet Skeslien Charles and flawlessly translated to Spanish by Yolanda Casamayor, is a story about solidarity and courage as much as it is a tribute to literature and libraries during the times of the Great War. The story is based on the life of librarian Jessie Carson, who leaves her work at the New York Public Library to join the American

Lo-que-leo (continued)

Committee for the Devastated Regions of France. During her time there, she established something the French have never seen - children's libraries, turned ambulances into bookmobiles, and trained the first French female librarians.

Favorite Children & Teen Books I've read this month

The Polar Bear and the Ballerina/El oso polar y la bailarina by Eric Velasquez. Published simultaneously in English and Spanish. Holiday House, 2025. (all ages)

This is a captivating wordless picture book by beloved Belpré Award-winning illustrator Eric Velasquez, conveying a beautiful and unlikely friendship between a ballerina and a polar bear. The story is told entirely through expressive illustrations, encouraging readers to interpret the emotions and events. Great for group sharing, one-on-one, or independently.

Vida: the Mouse, the Cat, and the Alebrije/Vida, los ratones, el gato y el alebrije by Duncan Tonatiuh. Published simultaneously in English and Spanish by Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2025. (ages 5 and up)

This is Duncan at his best! Duncan Tonatiuh created a captivating tale about how love, community, and imagination can defeat even the mightiest enemies. His pre-Columbian illustration style is playful, filled with texture, shadow, and color. The story is a fable reminiscent of Aesop's, and it also brings to mind Verna Aardema's *Who's in Rabbit's House?* Great for group sharing (in both languages) and/or one-on-one reading. Children will love exploring the illustrations independently.

XOLO by Donna Barbara Higuera. Illustrated by Mariana Ruiz Johnson. Published simultaneously in English and Spanish by Levine Querido, 2025.

Donna Barba Higuera's *XOLO* was a great surprise for me to read. After reading her Newbery Award-winning book *The Last Cuentista*, I was enthralled by this illustrated novel in which she retells the Aztec myth of creation from the point of view of the dog-headed god Xolotl as the most unlikely hero. The book blends mythology with contemporary emotion while exploring themes of courage and self-doubt. (ages 10 and up).

Florida panthers celebrate Past-President Maria Vega at their Celebration of Hispanic Heritage Series February 2nd

Photos by Mari Martinez-Serrano



Corporate Member Bibliotele
March Highlights: Voices that refuse to fade
Stories of women and justice that continue to resonate

by Javier Hidalgo

March connects several international observances that resonate deeply with libraries as spaces for culture, dialogue, and shared memory. It is a time to highlight stories that challenge injustice, celebrate creative expression, and confront histories that still demand recognition.

These films, series, documentaries, and theater works explore women's voices, diversity, poetry, and human rights across different cultural contexts. Together, they offer rich opportunities for public libraries to foster critical thinking, emotional connection, and inclusive programming.

 **Women, Voices, and Resistance**  ♀

Women have shaped social change across cultures and generations. Whether through intimate monologues, historical reconstruction, or lived experience, these works invite audiences to listen, reflect, and engage with the many ways women continue to challenge injustice and redefine their place in society.



Unrestrained (Desmedidas)

Theater Play · Mexico, 2023

This powerful theatrical piece brings together the voices of two women from different parts of Latin America through raw, unfiltered monologues. Exploring love, fear, desire, and daily struggle, *Unrestrained* offers an intimate look at the complexity of women's lived experiences and the emotional truths that shape identity and resistance.



A Regular Woman

Feature Film · Germany, 2019

Based on true events, this gripping drama follows a young woman of Kurdish-Turkish descent in Germany as she fights for autonomy in the face of family pressure and violence. The film sheds light on gender-based oppression and the high personal cost of challenging deeply rooted patriarchal norms.



Females: Women, Mining and Anguish (FéMinas: Mujer, minería y desgarró)

Documentary · España, 2024

Through firsthand accounts, this documentary recovers the largely forgotten stories of women who worked in Spanish coal mines during the 1970s. Blending testimony, landscape, and poetic narration, it explores labor, dignity, and memory under repression and industrial decline.



The Libertarians (Las libertarias)

Documentary Miniseries · Argentina, 2019

Across four episodes, this series traces the lives of anarchist and feminist activists who shaped labor struggles and radical thought in Argentina and Spain. Drawing on letters, archives, and testimonies, it connects historical demands for freedom, equality, and justice with contemporary debates on feminism and political memory.

 **Diversity, Memory, and Social Justice** 

Marking the International Day to Combat Islamophobia and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, these works explore how identities are shaped by social boundaries - and how empathy, friendship, and dialogue can challenge fear and stereotypes.

Voices that refuse to fade (continued)



The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Feature Film · United States / United Kingdom / Qatar, 2012

Set in the aftermath of September 11, this film follows a young Pakistani man as he navigates ambition, identity, and loyalty in a rapidly changing America. It offers a nuanced look at immigration, suspicion, and the fractures created by fear and misunderstanding in post-9/11 society.



Ernest & Célestine

Feature Film · France / Belgium / Luxembourg, 2012

Though often perceived as a children's film, this Oscar-nominated animated feature speaks powerfully to audiences of all ages. Through the unlikely friendship between a mouse and a bear, it delivers a gentle yet profound message about tolerance, prejudice, and the courage to defy social divisions.

 **Poetry, Art, and Creative Expression** ✨

In celebration of World Poetry Day, this selection highlights artists who turn words, images, and imagination into acts of resistance and self-expression - especially in times of social and political tension.



Dynamited Voice (Voz dinamitada)

Documentary · Peru, 2020

This film follows the life of José Valdivia Domínguez, a poet who has shared his work on the streets, buses, and in rural communities for decades. Through his journey, the documentary captures a moment in Peruvian history when poetry became a tool of popular expression and social resistance.



The Blood of the Moon (La sangre de la luna)

Documentary · Argentina, 2025

An evocative portrait of Uruguayan poet Marosa di Giorgio, this documentary immerses viewers in a dreamlike universe shaped by nature, desire, and imagination. Blending poetry and visual experimentation, it offers a rich exploration of artistic identity and female subjectivity.



Memory, Truth, and Human Rights

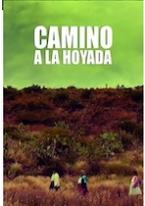
Observed on March 25, the International Day of Solidarity with Victims of Enforced Disappearances calls attention to unresolved violence and the long-lasting impact of political repression. The following works confront trauma, remembrance, and the pursuit of justice, providing space for personal stories that resonate with broader collective histories.



On the Other Side (Del otro lado)

Documentary · Colombia / Spain, 2022

In the aftermath of Colombia's peace accords, two brothers revisit their mother's kidnapping by the FARC. Guided by her captivity diary, the film explores grief, memory, and the difficult possibility of forgiveness in a post-conflict society.



The Path to La Hoyada (Camino a La Hoyada)

Documentary · Peru, 2014

Following families searching for the remains of loved ones who disappeared during Peru's internal armed conflict, this documentary exposes uninvestigated mass graves and ongoing struggles for justice. It stands as a testament to memory, dignity, and the fight against forgetting.

Voices that refuse to fade (continued)**Missing (Desaparecido)***Documentary · Peru, 2022*

This Macondo Award-winning documentary recounts the story of a young man kidnapped and tortured during Peru's political violence. Decades later, his testimony reveals the lasting psychological scars of enforced disappearance and the unresolved need for truth and accountability.

**Carla's Song***Feature Film · United Kingdom / Spain / Germany, 1996*

Nominated for a BAFTA Award, this powerful drama weaves a love story with the brutal realities of Nicaragua's civil conflict. Through personal loss and political awakening, the film explores exile, solidarity, and the human cost of war.


The Stage as Memory and Resistance

World Theatre Day celebrates the stage as a space where memory, imagination, and resistance come alive. This selection highlights works that reflect on theater itself—its power to confront history, give voice to silenced stories, and transform performance into an act of collective meaning.

**Anda jaleo***Theater Play · Argentina, 2014*

In this inventive tragicomedy, iconic female characters from Federico García Lorca's plays come together in a symbolic search for the poet's remains. Blending humor and grief, and performed by male actors, the play reflects on memory, absence, and the enduring power of theater to revisit unresolved histories.

**Persistence of the Memory (Persistencia de la memoria)***Documentary · Peru, 1998*

This documentary traces 25 years of the Yuyachkani theater group, weaving together performance excerpts, creative processes, and reflections on art as resistance. It offers a compelling portrait of collective creation and the role of theater in confronting social trauma and preserving memory.

**Laugh or Die***Feature Film · Finland / Sweden, 2018*

Set during the Finnish Civil War, this darkly ironic film tells the story of imprisoned actors forced to perform a comedy to save their lives. Through layers of performance and historical reconstruction, the film explores theater as survival, defiance, and the thin line between tragedy and laughter.

All these titles - and many more - are available on Bibliotele, supporting libraries in their cultural programming, community conversations, and seasonal outreach initiatives throughout March.

Corporate members of REFORMA de Florida

Corporate members are an important part of our chapter. We welcome *Bibliotele*, *Cinco Books*, *MakeMake*, *Penguin Random House*, *The Shelf Media*, and *Spanish Publishers* to our chapter!

What's happening?: Northern, Central, or Southern regions

What's happening in your library or region? Email your name, region, title, library name, a short summary of your event, and photos. Your news could help grow membership in your region, so we look forward to hearing from you.

Were you forwarded this newsletter but are not yet a member of the Florida chapter of REFORMA National?

To join, go to REFORMA National's Membership page and make sure REFORMA de Florida becomes your local chapter by checking "*Florida*." We'd love to have you as a member of our familia.

Is your membership [gasp!] expiring?! ***Are you a Member-at-large, and not a member of any chapter?***

If you're not sure if your membership is [gasp!] expiring, email us to learn your status. Hurry!! If you're a REFORMA National **Member-at-large** (you're not associated with any chapter), **join the REFORMA de Florida chapter**. Log into your membership account, and check "*Florida*" as your chapter. That's it! Once you check "*Florida*," you'll become a member of our familia. It's as easy as that!