

Brief History of Día: El Día de los niños, El Día de los libros/ Children's Day, Book Day

April **2016** is Día's **20th** anniversary. In 1996, while being interviewed for a public radio program at the University of Arizona in Tucson, I first learned about the annual Mexican tradition of celebrating April 30th as El día del niño, the Day of the Child. This tradition evolved from the first "World Conference for the Well-being of Children" held in Geneva, Switzerland in August 1925 at which various countries passed the "Geneva Declaration Protecting Children."

As a mom I knew that children often ask, "Why do we have Mother's Day and Father's Day and not Children's Day?" As a reader, I wanted (and want) to foster **bookjoy**. Ah ha, I thought. What if we link a celebration of children with literacy, an issue central to the well-being of children? That day, Latino faculty and staff at the University of Arizona enthusiastically supported the concept of annual Día celebrations. Members of the Tucson Chapter of **REFORMA**, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, presented the concept to the local chapter with the hope of initiating planning for April 30th, 1997.

Texas librarian and independent scholar, Oralia Garza de Cortés, then chair of REFORMA's children's committee, added her enthusiasm, knowledge and ideas and began to share information about the concept with REFORMA members nationally. A year of intense planning by various organizations began in numerous cities.

In February, 1997, REFORMA, my first organizational partner, voted to endorse Día as a family literacy initiative and of promoting Día throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. REFORMA has been a leader in this effort.

On April 30, 1997, the first annual Día celebrations were held in cities including Tucson, El Paso, and Austin.

The goals of this observance from its inception have included a daily commitment to:

1. honor children and childhood,
2. promote literacy, the importance of linking *all* children to books, languages and cultures
3. honor home languages and cultures, and thus promoting bilingual and multilingual literacy in this multicultural nation,
 - i. and global understanding through reading
4. involve parents as valued members of the literacy team
5. promote library collection development that reflects our plurality.

In 1998, librarian Jeanette Larson, then Director of the Library Development Division at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, and her staff produced a Día information booklet with implementation suggestions including a sample book mark. That summer my friend, Dr. Dan Moore of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, provided a planning grant for meetings in D.C. Annually, more libraries and schools began to plan April Día celebrations.

In 2000, the first annual **Estela and Raúl Mora Award**, for an exemplary Día celebration was awarded to the Austin Public Library. For a complete list of Mora Award winners, visit

In 2001, the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), began receiving Día support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, again thanks to the support from Dr. Moore. In 2004, ALSC became Día's national home.

Literacy strengthens democracy. For those of us committed to sharing **bookjoy**, every day is Día, an opportunity to honor children

and link them to books, languages and cultures. April Día celebrations are now held annually across the country.

Foster Día in your community: Grow the Día Idea.