Librarian attends Latin America’s largest book fair

A CSUB librarian attended the largest book fair in the Spanish-speaking world, after being selected by the American Librarian Association for a program that helped fund his trip. Curt Asher, who buys the library’s Spanish language books, was awarded an ALA scholarship to attend the Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara.

The book fair, which ran from November 27 through December 3 in Mexico’s second largest city, drew about 17,000 publishing industry professionals, writers, and librarians, and showcased millions of Spanish language books.

“It was a great experience to take part in the book fair,” Curt said. “Guadalajara is a wonderful city. The event was huge and overwhelming but very well organized. I am really grateful to the American Library Association for providing me with this opportunity.”

The American librarians who attended the book fair represented every region of the United States. Many public librarians make the journey annually to restock their libraries with titles for their Spanish-speaking patrons. Academic librarians like Curt search for materials that support the Spanish language.
New Book Collection popular with students

One of our most popular collections is the New Book Collection, located along the western wall of the December Reading Room. Each week Rod Hersberger, University Library Dean, and Sarah Fay Philips, Outreach Librarian, select items from our newly acquired books to be displayed for browsing.

The books rotate back into the Main Collection on the upper floors of the library after a few months on display. The collection has even been used as the site of CSUB President Horace Mitchell’s media address.

The New Book Collection represents some of the more accessible books over a range of topics. We currently have books in the New Book Collection on:

- Dorothea Lange’s photography
- Critical analysis of Harry Potter
- Methods for teaching students with autism
- Margaret Atwood’s latest novel
- Understanding digital culture
- The role of nutrition in health and disease
- Fundamentalist Islam
- Female athletes
- How the Beatles destroyed Rock and Roll

Make sure to check out the New Book Collection next time you’re in the library. You will surely find a book of interest to sit down and peruse in the December Reading Room or to check out and take home with you.

Library hosts literary speakers

A writer and a linguist spoke in the December Reading Room during the winter quarter. The programs were sponsored by Stiern Library, Associated Students, the English Department, and Sigma Tau Delta.

Novelist Alex Espinoza read in the December Room on February 10th as part of the California Writer’s Series. Espinosa was born in Tijuana, Mexico, but moved to Los Angeles at the age of two. He studied creative writing at the University of California, Irvine and teaches at CSU Fresno. His first novel, The Visitation, is a dark and poetic story of life in the Central Valley. Haslam is one of the state’s most evocative writers and a moving speaker. Lectures in Language and Linguistics series on Jan. 21.

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The inaugural conference for the University’s fledgling Public History Institute took an academic look at the region’s history and provided a forum for a country music superstar to reflect on his Oildale roots.

The conference, Oildale and Beyond: Interpreting the Region Through Words, Images, and Music, was led by Professor Miriam Raub Vivian and Dean Ed Sasaki. Vivian headed the organizing committee and was responsible for pulling the event together. The library, represented by librarian Curt Asher, was a co-sponsor of the event. Tom Rockwell, a musician and co-owner of Trout’s night club in Oildale, provided much of the support and equipment that made the event a success.

“The work of many individuals made this event possible, and its success has demonstrated not only the value of the university supporting the exploration of local history and providing a forum for its discussion, but also the wonderful results possible when campus and community collaborate on a project,” Dr. Vivian said.

Singer and songwriter Merle Haggard and author Gerald Haslam were guests of honor at the conference. Both are natives of Oildale. Gerald Haslam’s novels and histories tell the story of life in the Central Valley. Haslam is one of the state’s most evocative writers and a moving speaker. Haggard is one of the most commercially successful and artistically innovative country musicians in history. Known as the poet of the common man, Haggard rose from poverty and a rough adolescence in Oildale, which landed him in San Quentin, to international acclaim. Haggard was interviewed on stage by Bakersfield Californian editor and columnist Robert Price.

Haggard brought fellow musician Marty Stuart with him, so both men offered their take on the music and its history and played some songs. Haggard and Haslam both talked about the shaping influence Oildale had on their lives.

Scholars and students presented research on a variety of topics at the November 7 conference, including the rise of the KKK in Kern County, the construction of the U-2 spyplane in Oildale, Basque immigration, POW camps for German soldiers in Kern County, and local architecture.

Much of the conference focused on the Bakersfield Sound, a musical style rooted in the experience of the Okie migrants that rose from the honkytonks in Oildale and revolutionized country music.

Dr. Vivian and Dr. Sasaki, who were already shepherding the development of CSUB’s Public History Institute, instituted the long process of launching an Oildale-themed academic conference in conjunction with the Oildale Centennial celebration. Dr. Vivian and Librarian Curt Asher are currently seeking funding for the institute, which is envisioned as a historical resource that connects the community and university.

The New Book Collection

Curriculum at the universities where they work.

In addition to the book professionals, there were thousands of people who simply came to browse and buy books for their personal use. Schools took students on day trips to the event.

“It was heartening to see the interest in reading and books there,” Curt said.

Internationally renowned Mexican authors like Carlos Fuentes and Emilio Pacheco, Venezuelan poet Rafael Cardenas and Turkish Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk attended the book fair, speaking in capacity-filled auditoriums.

Librarians at the book fair have a unique opportunity to locate books from small presses and from countries that normally are not well represented in the US book market, while also perusing titles from large international publishers.

“Book fairs are important places to shop for books but they also offer opportunities to meet other librarians, publishing professionals, and writers and build professional relationships that benefit CSUB,” Curt said.

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