UA Librarians Honored as 'Movers & Shakers'

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Three University of Arizona graduates — two of whom now work at the University — are among a group of librarians that have been recognized for going beyond the traditional realm of librarianship by doing innovative work that is advancing the field.

Annabelle V. Núñez and Sol Gómez were recognized as "Movers & Shakers" in a special March edition of the Library Journal. Jennifer Schember, a 1998 UA graduate who now works for the Clark County Library District in Nevada, also was recognized. All three are graduates of the UA's School of Information Resources and Library Science, known as SIRLS.

The Library Journal, a major publication in the industry, named the three as among 50 emerging leaders in the United States and Canada — including library advocates, community builders, 2.0 gurus, innovators, marketers, mentors, and problem solvers transforming libraries.

Núñez and Gómez participated in SIRLS' Knowledge River program, which teaches librarians about meeting the educational needs of Hispanic and American Indian communities.

Núñez, a 2003 graduate, is now a College of Public Health liaison librarian, while Gómez, who graduated in 2004, is branch manager of the Sam Lena Public Library and has taught computer courses in Spanish and helped other librarians to more often rely on resources in Spanish. He also is the Knowledge River program's interim co-coordinator for student support.

Núñez, an assistant librarian, said it was a "great honor" to be recognized for her work at the Arizona Health Sciences Library.

Her work involves helping medical and health professionals, community members and other librarians provide better information to the people they serve, particularly people of color and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Creating campus and community partnerships and improving bilingual and electronic resources are her areas of expertise.

Whether helping a group put on a health fair, supporting a graduate in research or aiding a health care professional who is looking for particular information to help a patient, Núñez stays busy.

"It's been about getting people to understand that a library is about more than just books," she said. "We’re really starting to see that happen."
It’s not just the digitizing of library collections, but also figuring out how to use library resources to help people become informed and engaged. For instance, the UA’s College of Pharmacy has for a few years relied on library liaisons who, like Núñez, are assigned to particular libraries.

Núñez said the library also began to look at librarians with skills sets, noting that she already had a sense for public health and a strong background in community building when she was hired nearly four years ago.

Such skills are necessary to figure out ways to “reach out to our constituencies on their terms,” Núñez said. “I’m just trying to do more collaborative work and pay attention to what people are doing and how information resources play a role in their work.”

Gómez said that being a librarian affords him many chances for working with the community, especially with youth and Spanish speakers.

"I never realized how much I would love this job," he said, adding that he’s worked with colleagues to offer computer courses in Spanish and English and to improve access to general education diploma classes. And, increasingly, the library system offers programs on computer literacy and health literacy, among other support services.

"We provide the books and the information, but it's not just about books," he said.

"Public librarians believe the library is for everyone. We have something for everyone," Gómez said. "It allows people to be part of this community, city, state or country."

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