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ALA American Library Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 16, 2008

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New campaign seeks to bridge “opportunity gap” for Latinos by promoting library use

Chicago, IL—To directly address the “opportunity gap” experienced by Latinos across the country in accessing information about health, finance, home ownership and more, a new campaign is being launched to encourage Latinos to connect with their local librarians and access the free materials and resources available through their libraries.

In partnership with Univision Radio, the nation’s leading Spanish-language radio group, the American Library Association (ALA) has developed the campaign in response to data showing that Latinos are less likely than other groups to use their local libraries. The American Library Association has reported that only half of Latinos (49 percent) used their library in 2006, lower than the 63 percent for whites and 64 percent for African Americans.

The new *en tu biblioteca* (“at your library”) campaign will communicate how libraries create opportunities for Latino adults and their children by providing trusted help from librarians and free public access to wide-ranging information about health, entrepreneurship and small business management, education and early literacy, finances, travel, law and citizenship, language and culture.

“More than any other free public resource, libraries represent the possibility of opportunity for everyone by providing equal access to information, knowledge and resources,” said ALA President Jim Rettig. “Since one in four of us living in the United States in 2050 will be Latino, it’s imperative that we let Latinos of all ages know about the opportunities their local libraries offer.”

Starting in September, Univision Radio will air the new public service announcements intensively in nine of the top Latino media markets (including New York, Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles, San

Antonio, Austin and San Francisco), in addition to encouraging its stations nationwide to air the radio ads.

“If you’re looking for free access to information on a wide range of subjects, there’s no better person to turn to than your librarian,” said Gary Stone, President and Chief Operating Officer, Univision Radio. “And we’re pleased to bring that message to the millions of listeners across the country who tune in to Univision Radio everyday.”

According to ALA, libraries not only improve school readiness and educational performance for our children; they also build the skills of our workforce and contribute to engaged and enlightened communities. Even in the face of a continually expanding universe on the Internet, 1.8 billion visitors checked out nearly 2 billion items from their public, school and university libraries in 2006.

“As a board member of the American Library Association and as a Latino, it is exciting to be a part of this campaign to empower Latino families,” added Mario M. Gonzalez, ALA Board Director. “It is so important to build awareness among the Latino community that libraries offer access not just to books or the Internet but to librarians who are ready to help them identify the resources and materials they need to build a successful future.”

In developing the new campaign, ALA has engaged Metropolitan Group, a strategic and creative consulting agency that helps its clients build a just and sustainable world. Metropolitan Group has created and implemented strategic communication, resource development, multicultural communication and organizational development programs for numerous library clients across the country.

This project is part of The Campaign for America’s Libraries, ALA’s public awareness campaign about the value of libraries and librarians. For more information on the Campaign, visit www.ala.org/@yourlibrary or www.entubiblioteca.org. The Campaign is made possible in part by ALA's Library Champions, ALA's highest level of corporate members, who support public awareness on behalf of America's libraries.

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