

BibliObservatory Episode 1: English Transcript

March 20, 2019

Ivette: Welcome to BibliObservatory, a new series of the South Carolina State Library's podcast, Library voices SC. I am Ivette Villarreal, BibliObservatory hostess.

Caroline: And I'm Caroline Smith, the Inclusive Services Consultant at the South Carolina State Library. This is a special transmission from Columbia, South Carolina to explore the universe of books and stories that people treasure from their childhood and how those stories defined the lives of people touched by them. Today we'll talk about the BibliObservatory project and what to expect from future episodes.

So, Ivette, can you tell me why you chose the name BibliObservatory?

Ivette: Well it was a result of putting together two concepts that emanate a sense of wonder and inspiration and wisdom. I was inspired by these two concepts: first the fascination for the universe since I was a child. I had this fascination for stargazing, night sky watching, and outer space. The appreciation for the magnificence of the universe. And nowadays thanks to science human beings are able to study and appreciate even more the Universe. However, this is still a mystery.

The second inspiration, the second part of inspiration came from the great Nicaraguan poets, **Rubén Darío**, who is one of the most important Spanish language poets in history. I found in a children's book a poem entitled the book. Just like that. And I can kind of quote some verses. The book is a telescope. The book condenses and closes all that is great in Earth and what's beautiful in the sky. Those are fragments of that poem. And one day, I think they came together those concepts of the universe And with the poem and it matched perfectly, BibliObservatory.

Caroline: Yeah, the whole idea of using books to explore the universe.

Ivette: Yes. And also I found interesting and important that once you engage and admiring the universe you kind of get out of planet Earth. You are a witness of the universe and from that point of view I think things can look different to you.

Caroline: So we're going to look at books that have expanded people's worldviews and have made meaningful impacts on their life.

Ivette: And if you think of it from a different perspective, when you're facing the universe, you are not just a human being, you are part of something greater. But also you discover your uniqueness and how diverse you are in one sense and in many senses.

Caroline: In the poem you shared was originally are betting in Spanish right? Do you have the Spanish translation of that first?

Ivette: Yes. I do have the poem with me. El Libro: El libro es el telescopio. Que en sí condensa y encierra / lo que hay de grande en la tierra, lo que hay de hermoso en el cielo.

Caroline: Alright! So, how did you get interested in creating a podcast, and what inspired you?

Ivette: BibliObservatory was designed as a multimedia platform to promote and improve children's and teens literacy by engaging in active listening and mindful conversation. Radio broadcasting was the natural option in my head because it focuses on active listening, but when I found difficulties to make it work in terms of logistics, recording time, and how to incorporate the different segments of the program, I received a great advice from one of the BibliObservatory committee members who suggested it was the way to go. So she was right and I decided to switch from a radio broadcast platform to go more for the podcast. And what inspired me to move with this project was the necessity to support our teens and our children and engaging in reading, and critical thinking, especially in our time when they are bombarded by so much media and this will provide a space for them to carefully listen word by word and appreciate silence. That's something that we are lacking in our busy days, in our contemporary time.

Caroline: And there's so many advantages to listening to stories as well as reading them in printed form.

Ivette: Yeah, we hear so often about children struggling with reading, with properly developing vocabulary, and when you hear somebody you can learn from them. But also that can take you to some other places to keep learning. And that will eventually take you to the books. Not every child is lucky to have books accessible to them.

In South Carolina, we have a lot of children in the rural areas and we are fortunate to have such a wonderful library system in place, but it's a struggle. Some children are lucky to have parents and elders or caregivers who take the time to talk to them, and they can obtain some stories from these people that take their mind to wondering, developing images in their mind. But not everybody has that opportunity. So BibliObservatory is a space for that. It's a space for the community, for everybody, to share their story through a podcast. And eventually we can have this in other places.

Caroline: And as far as the format of the podcast, today it's myself and Ivette here, but we do hope to bring in other guests to talk about their own perspectives and share their stories. Ivette, what did you have in mind for future episodes.

Ivette: Well, like we were just mentioning, BibliObservatory audience is the general public. It's intended for all ages and it's also the way to offer a great tool and resource for teachers, parents, caregivers, anybody who dedicates efforts to improve literacy but also who advocates for children and teens. That's something really nice to have for them available. We aspire to include Bibliographies, additional information, and community resources linked to our podcast episodes.

For instance, you can check the books that we are talking about. You can have more information about the people who have been here with us. And you can continue the conversation in your community!

Caroline: Sounds great! Personally, my own motivation for being a part of this project as a co-host is that my focus is on equity, diversity, and inclusion in libraries. And we do know that for some people it is very easy to go to the library and pick out a book and read it, and other people have a variety of barriers, whether it's language or culture or they weren't read to at home, or don't feel comfortable reading to their own children, whatever that may be. So this is part of my effort to increase the focus on diversity and inclusion, and bringing in more diverse perspectives as far as the types of stories that we promote in our libraries.

Ivette: Childhood is such a beautiful stage in the life of us. And it really opens our minds when we hear the experiences of people at that particular time. They have an effect and they have an abundant

experience in that time of childhood that's related in life later on. And that would be a great opportunity to bring this to the community, and see how we really are touched by the stories we're told at that particular time. And it would be fascinating to hear what the children and teens of our time have to say about that.

Caroline: Ivette, you had an interesting story from your own childhood that was more of an oral story, is that right? Would you like to share that too?

I had the fortune to have a father that was a great storyteller. And he transmitted to me the stories he heard when he was a little boy in the country in Venezuela. He was born in a rural area nearby coffee plantations. And at that time there was no TV. No, really the media we have these days. So it was part of the daily routine to talk to your relatives, your neighbors, and establish a closer connection with the people around you. And he had these fascinating stories about Uncle Tiger and Uncle Rabbit and Uncle Turtle, and those were traditional stories from his homeland.

I spent a great amount of time with him over the weekends, in the hammock, just listening to those stories. Some of them were the same, but he told them in a different way, and it seemed new every time.

Caroline: And you have a book in front of you here. Is that related to the stories that he told you?

Ivette: Yes. Later on, I found a book. I was aware of this book, but I didn't have the chance to look at it and read it. But it was later on, now when I am a grownup that I had the chance to take the time and sit down and read *Tío Tigre* and *Tío Conejo*, which means Uncle Tiger and Uncle Rabbit. And they are oral stories from Venezuela. Traditional stories.

I was amazed, because I found in them the same vocabulary, the same expressions, that my father used to tell me when he narrated these stories to me. They are from the same area, in the sense that Rafael Rivero Oramas, who wrote these stories, also was a storyteller and he did radio broadcasting too. But they reflected my father's time, or the time when my father was a child. And it was a beautiful surprise to find that. And now that my father is not around, and Rafael Rivero Oramas either, it's wonderful to read these stories and find that treasure.

Caroline: It's amazing, and I'm glad that he put the work in to preserve that. And I just think that those oral histories make it much more accessible because with our immigrant population in South Carolina, a lot of the people moving up here may not have the background of reading and checking out books in their libraries, but they still may have stories that are impactful and that's a big part of literacy as well.

Ivette: Yes.

Caroline: Thank you for sharing your story, Ivette. Can you tell us what can we expect from future episodes of this podcast?

Ivette: A universe of anecdotes Personal stories about those books and oral stories that changed or influenced people in amazing positive ways. Join us and stay tuned...

Caroline: Thank you for being with us today, and thank you to our listeners. You can find BibliObservatory on Podbean, Stitcher, and Tune In Radio or add us on your favorite podcast app. Our podcast website address is libraryvoices.podbean.com.

We love hearing from our listeners so send us your comments and suggestions for future episodes.

Ivette: Bibliobservatory is a collaborative literacy initiative to connect our communities and children with the joy of listening, reading and writing those memories from childhood that changed our lives.

Thanks for listening!