# Building community across languages

## The Hispanic Research Center and its relaunched Bilingual Press celebrate 40 years with a commitment to increase accessibility

By Megan Neely, ASU News
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Many universities across the United States house a publishing press, however, few offer services in a second language.

A new commitment at Arizona State University is hoping to change that.

The Bilingual Press | Editorial Bilingüe, housed in the university's Hispanic Research Center, was founded in New York in 1973 by one of the center's former directors, Gary Keller, to give Latino and Chicano authors a larger platform to share their work.

The press moved to ASU when Keller joined the faculty in 1986, celebrating 40 years of impact at ASU this year. Since its founding, the press has published hundreds of English, Spanish and multilingual editions of fiction, poetry, art catalogues and academic writing.

"When Keller was originally starting the press, it was about creating a space for writers when mainstream publishing was not interested in Chicano or Latino fiction, poetry, art or even research," said Anita Huizar-Hernández, associate director of the center and the current publisher and managing editor of the press. "More than 50 years later, we still face enduring challenges with mainstream publishers who are not interested in a plurality of Latino voices."

### 2026 Humanities Week

Find out more about the Bilingual Press | Editorial Bilingüe and the Hispanic Research Center through upcoming events, including Poetry and Picnic, during Humanities Week taking place Oct. 26–30.

Before Keller passed away in 2020, the press' last published book was in 2018. As time went on with no activity, the center had to decide how they wanted to relaunch the press and the legacy that comes with it. When evaluating the needs this press could continue to fulfill, the center saw a gap between how many titles were published in only English or Spanish. A small percentage had been produced in both languages.

From there, a new commitment was made to stay true to the press' namesake and have everything be truly bilingual.

“We are intentionally bilingual in all our communication, from the books we publish to the social media accounts we run and the emails we send. We believe that a full commitment to bilingualism is worth the extra effort because it allows us to build community across languages,” Huizar-Hernández said.

In the past, the press focused on academic monographs and edited volumes alongside creative writing. Going forward, Huizar-Hernández wanted to focus more deeply on novels, poetry and open-access scholarship to cover those gaps within more mainstream publishing companies.

The relaunched Bilingual Press | Editorial Bilingüe will publish four books a year in different categories, ranging from chapbooks in collaboration with CantoMundo to children’s books, an entirely new venture for the press.

For the children’s books series, the press is working with the ASU Art Museum on a book that will introduce young readers to Chicano and Latino art held in both the museum and the Hispanic Research Center’s art collections.

The press is also working with two ASU professors, Vanessa Fonseca-Chávez and Christy Spackman, on another children’s book based on their research on the connection between scents and belonging in the Sonoran Desert.

With the help of staff and student interns, the center has been working to not only maintain the publishing side of the press, but also archive and document the last 50 years of materials and history to share with more people in the future, including the first publications distributed through the press.

“At this point, in addition to publishing new work, we’re also preserving this amazing literary legacy for readers of all kinds to continue to access and build on the decades of impact that the press has had," Huizar-Hernández said.

## Creating job opportunities for students

Student interns are a newer feature of the press, with the press’ current cohort including four undergraduate students and two graduate students.

“It's an opportunity for students to have a marquee project that's helpful to the press and also helpful to them in terms of creating a portfolio that can advance their professional goals,” Huizar-Hernández said.

The students come from across the university to help with different tasks. One comes from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication with video experience, hoping to update the press’ portfolio of curated interviews and oral histories focused on the art of translation. Another student used to be a K–12 teacher but has since returned to the classroom to obtain her doctorate. She’s currently helping with the launch of the upcoming children’s book series.

A large portion of their current work stems from scanning books and digitizing photos to not only record the press’ collection, but to increase access to the materials beyond Tempe city limits. ASU Online student Sofia Diaz-Ojeda, who is an English major, has been working on the press’ backend logging and digital efforts.

“I work on Excel spreadsheets, conduct research for the press and work on designs for an Instagram series that I’m tasked with,” Diaz-Ojeda said.

Diaz-Ojeda has a background in publishing through previous work experiences, and was also drawn to the internship because of her cultural background.

“That was more of a reason for me to apply for Bilingual Press, because while it is a press for Latino voices with a focus on Chicano writers, it felt affirming for me to to be a part of that collective as an Argentine emigrant, a writer born two continents away in Río de la Plata. My identity and interests synergize so well with my place in the press, and it makes me feel seen,” she said.

Among the more valuable skills she’s gained from this experience are the ability to work on her editing capabilities, designing materials and compiling information. She says it’s helped her not only with another internship she participates in, but also with her career goals.

“It's helping me figure out what I want to do later in life once I graduate from college. I want to work with a publishing house or any organization that helps support marginalized communities in one way or another.”

## Celebrating 40 years of impact

This year, the Hispanic Research Center, which houses the Bilingual Press, is celebrating its 40th anniversary. The center is a universitywide, interdisciplinary research unit that began its work in 1986 (founded in 1985) and is administratively housed within The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The center conducts research on a broad range of topics related to Latino and Hispanic populations.

As part of the celebrations, the center held a public block party on Oct. 1, as well as an invitation-only event on Oct. 15 that featured actor, comedian and arts advocate Cheech Marin.

*This story originally appeared on ASU News.*

# Main image



The Bilingual Press | Editorial Bilingüe frequently sells and distributes books at events across all of ASU's campuses. The press, which has given Latino and Chicano authors a larger platform to share their work for 40 years has relaunched and will branch out to publish a range of titles — from chapbooks to children's books. Photo courtesy of Meghan Finnerty

## Text image(s)

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The first issue of The Bilingual Review/La revista bilingüe, the academic journal that eventually grew into the Bilingual Press | Editorial Bilingüe. Photo courtesy of the Hispanic Research Cente.

## Gallery



International relations student Sofia Suarez (right) and political science and global studies student Ashley Pereira pose at the photo booth during the Hispanic Research Center’s 40th anniversary celebration held the San Tan Ford Club in Tempe on Oct. 15.



Anita Huízar-Hernández, associate professor in the School of International Letters and Cultures, speaks during the Hispanic Research Center 40th anniversary celebration at the San Tan Ford Club in Tempe on Oct. 15.



Comedian and actor Cheech Marin speaks on a panel during the Hispanic Research Center 40th anniversary celebration at the San Tan Ford Club in Tempe on Oct. 15.



Comedian and actor Cheech Marin speaks on a panel during the Hispanic Research Center 40th anniversary celebration at the San Tan Ford Club in Tempe on Oct. 15.



The audience smiles while Cheech Marin speaks on a panel during the Hispanic Research Center’s 40th anniversary celebration at the San Tan Ford Club in Tempe on Oct. 15.