

Identity search spawns cyber magazine

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Alicia Rascon thought something was missing from her favorite teenage reading materials. Those glossy magazines so popular with young women Rascon's age didn't reflect her life, she said.

"I remember reading magazines like 'Sassy,' and 'Seventeen,' and thinking I didn't look like anyone in them," Rascon, 27, said.

For Rascon and her college classmate Laura Donnelly, creating a publication for Latina teens in search of reading material that reflected their bicultural and bilingual lives was a way to satisfy a class requirement and fill a media void. The two women co-founded "**Latinitas** Magazine," an online bilingual publication for Hispanic teenage girls, while students in an ethnic media class at the University of Texas at Austin five years ago.

Rascon, a Mexican-American who grew up in El Paso, and Donnelly, a non-Latina who grew up in New York City, spent several months coming up with a business plan and designing the Web site before launching the classroom project of "**Latinitas** Magazine," in May 2002.

"Right away it seemed to be bigger than a class project," Donnelly, 35, said. The publication, which is strictly Web-based and funded through grants and donations, originally had material written by Hispanic adult women who volunteered their services. As the publication took off, young readers were asked to contribute their works, including photos, poems and essays.

The magazine is published in two forms " one for preteen girls and another for teenagers " and in English and Spanish versions.

One of the magazine's goals, its founders said, is to empower young Latinas by helping them see their own worth. The two have expanded the magazine to include a community outreach program for young Latinas with the help of volunteer mentors from colleges in Austin, where the magazine is produced.

"We've created a cyber community where young talented Latinas can read about each other and not feel so alone," Rascon said. "We want this to be a vehicle where a young Latinas can **express** their voice and culture."
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What: Non-profit online bilingual magazine for Hispanic teens and pre-teen girls that features work by young Latinas.

Origins: Founded by two University of Texas at Austin journalism students in 2002, '**Latinitas** Magazine,' started as a class media project. It publishes two online versions, in two languages, and has an outreach program for young Latinas.

Where: Based in Austin and staffed mostly by volunteers, the magazine is strictly Web-based and features material from many of its young readers.

Online: To read both versions log on to www.latinitasmagazine.com

Latinitas Magazine

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