

# First LitCrawl Los Angeles a Big Success

By Wendy Werris | Oct 24, 2013



Left, Gerda Govine Ituarte reads at JET Studios in North Hollywood during LitCrawl L.A. Photo by Rosalind Helfand

An estimated 2,000 devotees from the Los Angeles literary community were out in force on the evening of Wednesday, October 23, in North Hollywood, Calif., for the first annual LitCrawl 2013 Los Angeles: NoHo. The event is now a participant in the national Litquake Foundation series.

Held in the burgeoning NoHo arts district in the San Fernando Valley, the organizers of LitCrawl scheduled 23 events in 12 locations around the business hub of North Hollywood. Literary salons,

workshops, and periodicals such as *Tongue and Groove*, *Black Clock*, *GETLIT – Words Ignite*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The (In)Visible Memoirs Project*, and *The Rumpus* featured readings in venues as varied as pizza parlors, bars, theatres, and a hair salon. Round 1 of the Crawl ran from 6:00 – 7:00 pm; Round 2 from 7:30 – 8:30 pm. A sold-out after-party and fundraiser for LitCrawl L.A. began at 9:00 pm at The Hesby restaurant, where over 200 people mingled and listened to a live jazz band.

Conrad Romo, founder of *Tongue and Groove* and a regular on the local literary scene, first had the idea for LitQuake L.A. over a year ago. Together with Rosalind Helfand, who programmed the West Hollywood Book Festival for 10 years, and Sally Shore of the New Short Fiction Series, the team created the kind of event that Los Angeles seems to be eager to participate in. “It was really exciting,” said Romo. “I’m encouraged because there were so many new faces at the various events, and we attracted people of all ages who want to be part of the L.A. literary community.” The organizers were able to engage over 40 volunteers to help with the undertaking, many of whom were stationed in front of the venues and on street corners, passing out LitQuake L.A. brochures and inviting people to attend.

Helfand said that the NoHo city council was instrumental in getting businesses to offer their locations that evening. “The Los Angeles Poet Society, UCLA Extension writers program, and Poets & Writers were also incredibly helpful to us,” said Helfand. Using the same model as other LitCrawls, the NoHo group found authors looking for exposure to their books to be sponsors along with PEN Center USA, the Pasadena Arts Council and other organizations.

The one glitch in the event was the weeknight rush hour traffic in Los Angeles, always a challenge but particularly so on the night of LitQuake L.A. Many people arrived late or turned around and went home, unable to get to North Hollywood. “I wanted it to either start later or be held on the weekend,” said Romo, “but the business owners wouldn’t go for that. Next year we’ll play hardball with NoHo and make the event more convenient for people.”

Still, nothing could dampen Shore’s enthusiasm for the first LitQuake L.A. “The literary fairies spread a lot of pixie dust on us to make it a success,” she said. “Our publicity campaign and our mailing lists were really effective. People here have been craving something like this for a long time, something truly inclusive of the fullness of our literary community.”