

# Documenting Regional Latino Arts and Culture: Case Studies for a Collaborative, Community-Oriented Approach

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## ABSTRACT

Despite years of constructive discourse about documentation theory, the complex nature of identity, approaches to ethnicity, and the role of the archivist in light of postmodernism, the call for archivists to collect the documentary heritage of minorities and other historically marginalized groups remains largely unanswered. With the exception of a relatively few specialized institutions and dedicated programs, the identification and preservation of Latino archives are not keeping pace with the nation's fastest growing and increasingly geographically dispersed population. This paper presents two related initiatives, developed in dialogue over the past seven years. It outlines operational practices related to identification of collections in private hands, outreach, trust, and long-term relationships. The paper then provides a practical model and insights for overcoming the day-to-day challenges of identifying and preserving the documentary heritage of the Latino experience and challenges others to undertake such projects.

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## KEY WORDS

Community Engagement, Ethnic Archives, Latino Archives

Since the mid-1970s, archivists have attempted to realign professional theory and practice for identifying and preserving the archives of underrepresented groups and topics to represent better the American experience. Historian Howard Zinn famously ignited an ongoing discourse with his 1970 critique of the archival record in the United States and its bias toward the rich and powerful in society.<sup>1</sup> The archival profession's intellectual response to Zinn's critique began in earnest with F. Gerald Ham's 1975 seminal article, "The Archival Edge." Ham reminded the profession of its core purpose: "Our most important and intellectually demanding task as archivists is to make an informed selection of information that will provide the future with a representative record of human experience in our time." He then posed the zinger—"But why must we do it so badly?"—and urged archivists to step out to the edge and seek ways to do a better job.<sup>2</sup> The profession, in the United States and internationally, also took note that a shift in acquisition policies and collecting was needed to document better the history of immigrant and ethnic minorities, and a steady stream of literature appeared, beginning in the 1980s, that grappled with identity, ethnicity, and the role of the archivist.<sup>3</sup> Yet, more than forty years since Zinn's call for a more representative archives, the quest to document historically marginalized groups remains a critical challenge. This is particularly true in the case of Latino archives for which few case studies have appeared to provide practical models.

In this article, we examine the practices of two libraries that have implemented initiatives in dialogue to identify, collect, and preserve the archives of regional Latino arts and culture. The Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) established in 1969 at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Institute for Latino Studies (ILS) established in 1999 at the University of Notre Dame are each academic research centers established with missions for teaching, learning, and research. Central to each, from their founding, was a library and archives to build primary source collections to support new scholarship on the Latino experience. Each is a stand-alone library administered by the center, yet each shares the infrastructure of its university's library, taps into resources such as preservation expertise and technical services, and contributes catalog records. Both libraries are open to the public, but also serve the research and teaching activities of their respective universities by providing research consultations, undergraduate primary source bibliographic instruction, class presentation, work-study opportunities, and active collections building.

These case studies will put forth basic strategies, share lessons learned, and suggest best practices that may be adapted to other subtopics of Latino history and perhaps to document the experience of other ethnic populations, particularly manifestations of arts and culture. We will demonstrate how these initiatives provided support to the individuals and organizations—the creators of archival collections—and suggest that such investment of resources in a

community may be critical for the preservation of Latino history. Clearly, these case studies will not demonstrate how to document an entire ethnic group's history but rather, will use Latino arts and culture in regional contexts as a way to illustrate key issues.

## Background

The challenges of documenting cultural diversity remain marginally less today than decades ago. Shrinking funding streams make it difficult to argue for the labor intensive work required to research and identify individuals and organizations, gather input, and maintain networks and relationships. Establishing trust in the community, whether with individuals or community-based organizations, happens slowly over time and is difficult to measure. Negotiating between the different interests of stakeholders, including subject experts as well as records creators, is not always easy, but rather requires tact. While recent collaborative and participatory models of practice hold promise for guiding mainstream archival institutions in meaningful engagement with community-based archives, collaboration, at the heart of documentation work, is labor intensive with each manifestation requiring a uniquely tailored engagement.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of the U.S. Latino experience, never has the need for best practices for working with an ethnic community been more timely.<sup>5</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau, not only is American society becoming more diverse at an increasing rate, the Latino population is the fastest growing group in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, in the last decade, this growth has come from births more than from immigration. The Latino population has undergone unprecedented geographical expansion and now reaches far outside the southwestern states and traditional gateway cities of Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Miami. Latino history is being made in more places across the country and at a scale never before experienced. Mario Ramírez, writing on archiving Latino identity and community, aptly recommended that archivists “look towards the larger cross-section of cultural expressions, identities, and political and social commitments for documentation that more fully demonstrates the range of Latino/a identifications.”<sup>7</sup> Rabia Gibbs, in her recent *American Archivist* Perspective article, similarly recommended that to make diversity initiatives more authentic and meaningful, “we must set aside our assumptions, examine the diversity within diverse groups, and modify our objectives to incorporate the full range of perspectives available within these respective communities.”<sup>8</sup> In our own experiences, it has served us well to look beyond Latino identity to see the contributions of individuals and community-based organizations in the broader context of American culture and society.

Indeed, as Cristine Paschild suggested in her recent article, "Community Archives and the Limitations of Identity," the profession's continued emphasis on postmodernist theories of identity and subjectivity as the most pressing concerns for archivists' work with community archives limits our ability to implement "sound, sustainable policies and practices" that preserve a record of diversity.<sup>9</sup> Paschild concluded, "Rather than rehabilitating the terms, perhaps it is time to redirect the discussion on community archives. To do so is not to deny the influences of ongoing bias and inequalities; it is to open up the conversation from circling the cul-de-sac of who we are to looking more closely at what we are actually doing."<sup>10</sup> We believe that the Chicano Studies Research Center and the Institute for Latino Studies present examples of institutions that have successfully negotiated the curves of being simultaneously professional and engaged with the community to be documented. We suggest routes to move beyond the cul-de-sac and onto the highway toward "doing."

There are numerous studies examining documentation efforts for under-documented communities and subjects.<sup>11</sup> However, case studies that examine initiatives to document Latino communities are relatively few. In 1985, *The American Archivist* published the first, and it would seem, only, case study to examine the documentation of a Latino community.<sup>12</sup> In this study, Thomas H. Kreneck related his experience while at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center of the Houston Public Library of systematically collecting the archives of Houston's Mexican Americans. Kreneck's account emphasized the need to reach local leaders and build community networks, to establish trust, to be a resource for questions, and to plan public programming around collections as they are built. He emphasized that "the nature of Mexican American collections necessitates local effort."<sup>13</sup> In other words, the archives were almost exclusively in attics, closets, trunks, and file drawers.

Salvador Guereña's "Archives and Manuscripts: Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Chicano Collections" appeared in 1987 and examined the development of Mexican American collections primarily in the American Southwest and West. In 1990, Guereña followed up with the anthology *Latino Librarianship*, which included Cesar Caballero's "Developing Hispanic Archival Collections" on collecting in Arizona, California, and Texas, and Nélida Perez and Amilcar Tirado Avilies's article on the development of the library and archives at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, New York. These authors also emphasized the challenge that Latino archives remain primarily in private hands. To identify and preserve these archives, archivists need to develop trust and long-term relationships through deliberate, earnest, and ongoing community outreach, preservation workshops, and patience.<sup>14</sup>

In 2005, the authors of this case study each published writings on Latino archives. Tracy Grimm, then archivist and head, Julian Samora Library at the

University of Notre Dame, produced a research report with analysis and recommendations based upon a national survey of recent Latino art archives initiatives.<sup>15</sup> Chon Noriega, professor of Cinema and Media Studies, and director of the Chicano Studies Research Center at the University of California, Los Angeles, authored "Preservation Matters," an essay that articulated a case for scholarship's social responsibility and the CSRC's community-oriented effort to preserve Latino archives.<sup>16</sup>

## The Case Studies

Prior to 2005, CSRC and ILS had independently begun to identify and preserve Latino arts archives in private hands. Noriega, a scholar keenly aware of the lack of Latino representation in the art historical canon and the corresponding inaccessibility of primary source materials, became CSRC director in 2002. He began to address the preservation of Latino archives in California by hiring the center's first professional archivist, publishing a series of research reports, and hosting public meetings with the arts community. Grimm, an archivist with experience working with the New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program during the 1990s, joined ILS in 2000 and began a documentation planning initiative for Latino arts archives in the Midwest region.

In 2005, CSRC and ILS became collaborating partner institutions in a Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) multiyear, international effort to identify, digitize, and create a Web-based archives of critical writings by Latin American and Latino artists.<sup>17</sup> The MFAH's project allowed the centers to share research and insights on methodology and to proceed in dialogue with their previously independent efforts. In addition to leading a national effort to identify critical writings of Latino artists for the MFAH project, CSRC conducted a more comprehensive Latino art archives survey of the Los Angeles region (2004–2007) and launched an LGBT/Mujeres Initiative (2008–2012) to establish a unique community archiving program focused on race, gender, and sexuality. Similarly, the ILS managed the Midwest regional portion of the MFAH project's critical writings survey and initiated broader documentation survey work beginning with a pilot project in Chicago that led to the development of a Midwest regional survey and publications project—the Midwest Latino Arts Documentary Heritage Project (MidLAD).

Each center's activities reflected a documentation planning methodology adapted for Latino arts, with a strong focus on building mutually beneficial relationships and community networks. We will discuss the preliminary assessment and mapping work that was necessary to begin identifying key artists, arts organizations, and watershed events. From there we will discuss four areas of our work with the Latino arts community: collaborations, collections surveys,

collecting, and publication. In each discussion, we will give insights and examples from our experiences.

## Assessing the State of Latino Art Archives

Research by CSRC and others beginning in 2003 revealed the state of preservation and accessibility of Latino art archives. Overall, results warned of a history at risk. In one study, survey findings showed that nationally, Latino arts leaders clearly recognized a crisis in the preservation of their history and identified factors that make it difficult, if not impossible, to do as much as they would like toward that goal.<sup>18</sup> Other research clearly showed that very few index citations for Latino artists exist—their history remains to be written.<sup>19</sup> Collections in private hands are disappearing with the aging of the pioneers of the Chicano rights movement, while only a handful of archives are making a concerted effort to collect these materials.<sup>20</sup> Findings indicated that it is almost too late to find and collect primary sources from many Latino cultural organizations, artists, and arts leaders. Indeed, much stands to be lost—beyond art history, the arts often communicate and reflect political and social movements, particularly in the Latino community. Latino archives would contain significant materials about activism, civil rights, youth movements, human rights, and cultural identity—all significant tracts of U.S. social history for students of American studies, history, political science, and literature.<sup>21</sup> These archives have broad cross-disciplinary application.

## Mapping

Considering CSRC's research findings, the ILS sought a basic history of twentieth-century Latino arts activity in the Midwest to serve as a guide to locate collections. However, unlike the coasts and in the Southwest, no such source existed. In the Midwest, with the possible exception of Chicago, Latino arts and culture historically have been the marginalized of the marginalized. Even among art historians, it is not common knowledge that Latino artists have a long history across the Midwest. In fact, artists and organizations have been working in Detroit, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Minneapolis for much of the twentieth century.

Because so little has been written about midwestern Latino arts, it was critical for our archival initiative first to uncover a history of arts activity that would lead us to collections. Grimm partnered with colleague and doctoral candidate Olga Herrera, whose exhaustive research led to the identification or "mapping" of key people, organizations, and exhibitions. Her research led to

our first contacts within the Latino arts community, which would in turn lead us to others.

The CSRC's Latino Arts Survey of Los Angeles (2004–2007) resulted in fifteen new archival collections and fifty-seven oral history interviews with twenty artists. The survey focused initially on nine arts groups established in Los Angeles between 1969 and 1977, and this documentation served as the cornerstone for four museum-based and one library-based exhibition, including one titled *Mapping Another L.A.: The Chicano Art Movement*. This project also resulted in three publications that expanded on the concept of “mapping” artistic presence through social space and networks.<sup>22</sup> While in some ways Chicano art in Los Angeles is better documented than in the Midwest, the earliest and most influential organizations were also the ones missing from the historical record.

### Identifying Collections and Working with Artists and Arts Organizations

To preserve the archives of this history at risk, our approach was collaborative and characterized by flexibility and expectations of long-term shared outcomes with our partners rather than just an immediate acquisition by the university.

#### COLLABORATIONS

As we knew from the model work of the New York State Archives, developing collaborations and building networks between stakeholders would be critical.<sup>23</sup> The nuances of how to carry this out successfully, however, were not so apparent.

Both centers used a model of regional “summit meetings” to initiate networks and gather input to guide efforts.<sup>24</sup> The meetings brought together key artists, arts leaders, archivists, and art historians for three-to-four hour discussions on preservation issues and brainstorming about key people, organizations, and events to be documented. But the meetings were also critical for building working relationships and clarifying the different outcomes each stakeholder needed for the collaborations to be meaningful. These included collection development and the production of new knowledge on the university side, but the meetings also addressed the question of how these outcomes could serve as validation mechanisms for artists and capacity-building for arts organizations in the Latino community.

From the experience of these summit meetings, we learned that it was critical to gain cosponsorship from within the community, that flexibility in defining multiple outcomes pays off, and that sensitivity to the emotional impact

and deep regard community members hold for legacy is paramount. For example, the ILS Wisconsin summit meeting was cosponsored by Latino Arts, Inc., an established arts organization based at Milwaukee's United Community Center. Latino Arts helped identify key participants and provided contact information, local guidance, and a meeting space. Flexibility proved successful in the case of an ILS Michigan summit meeting. Rather than the planned three-hour ILS-led program, we accepted an hour slot in the annual meeting of the statewide organization Artes Unidas de Michigan. We made our presentation and attended the day's events as conference participants, as well as the evening's social events. The long-term results are some of our most productive, with several collections preserved and two collaborative grant proposals developed. We continue to receive calls for advice and surveys.

Grimm's prior experience with the New York State Archives and Noriega's curatorial work with community-based venues had impressed upon them the need to be sensitive to the emotional impact and deep regard all individuals hold for legacy and history. During summit meetings, ILS and CSRC never spoke in terms of "value" and "importance"—instead, conversations focused on "watershed events," "key figures," and "mentors." We asked participants to tell us who and what should be documented, and we let their input guide us to collections. We found it important to focus on people and events most everyone agreed had made a difference—beginning with the *veteranos*, or the highly respected senior artists and arts organizers.

As simple as it may seem, we stressed the importance of hospitality for summit participants. Nice refreshments in a comfortable meeting space signal you appreciate the participants and value their input. ILS learned this lesson from evaluation forms completed at its first summit meeting. We had left food planning to the last minute and did not anticipate the message candy corn, apples, and bottled water would send. The next ILS summit included light hors d'oeuvres and flavored water.

## COLLECTIONS SURVEYS

With support from the MFAH and additional grants CSRC and ILS were awarded from the Getty Foundation, both were able to follow up summit meetings with field surveys with individual artists and arts organizations. In addition to preliminary inventory and condition assessment information gathered during these surveys, we conveyed to the records creators an understanding of what kinds of papers are typically "archival" and how to care for them. No two surveys proceeded in exactly the same way, but each was an important step in developing relationships with potential donors. In fact, the actual survey processes varied widely. Some individuals were very organized, while others kept

papers in milk crates, Charmin boxes, or shoe boxes, and desperately wanted help gaining control of them. They welcomed sitting on the floor with the surveyor surrounded by loose papers and photographs, talking through ways to keep them better organized. Spending two hours discussing the types, functions, and origins of the materials and helping to group them into labeled folders (exhibition files, correspondence, lectures, etc.) helped the participant manage his or her records better and establish better control over new materials going forward. This kind of hands-on assistance to community members is critical to stabilizing a collection, and, as such, constituted both an act of community relations and a professional obligation vis-à-vis collection development. We have found that collections can be identified and safeguarded by intervening prior to acquisition and providing archival supplies such as acid-free boxes, folders, interleaving paper, and equipment based upon needs identified during field surveys. In Chicago, for example, a field survey of the art collective Polvo, revealed that its publications and nearly all records of its past exhibitions existed only in electronic form on a laptop. In fact, some early publications had been lost due to a computer hard-drive crash. The need for a simple way to back up these unique records periodically was critical. We were happy to hear that the relatively inexpensive (\$120) hard drive the MidLAD initiative was able to purchase for the arts collective was useful. The following quote is from Polvo founding member Miguel Cortez:

We received the USB hard drive many weeks (months) ago and I have been backing up everything since. Thanks much. This really helped us. Below is info on our next show which will be one of our usual interesting thematic group shows. I will document everything and post as much of it online later.<sup>25</sup>

The CSRC initiated an ongoing effort to digitize artists' slides, providing them with a hard drive containing color-corrected, hi-resolution TIFF files for their own professional use, but also securing an important digital archives in the process. In many cases, this attention to the parallel needs of the artists vis-à-vis access to their own materials was an important first step toward the establishment of both paper and digital collections at the university.<sup>26</sup>

## COLLECTING

Acquiring collections takes time, patience, persistence, and responsiveness to the needs of the potential donor. We viewed our goal as facilitating collection by *the most appropriate* repository rather than uncompromisingly gaining custody for our own institution. It was important to remember that our shared goal was to preserve the archives insofar as that served the needs of the university

and the arts community—not as an abstract ideal, but as a set of programmatic outcomes worked into the effort as a partnership.

In one typical case, it was only after eight site visits, four years, and an oral history interview with an artist, that Grimm was invited to survey. Subsequently, the ILS has received a donation of five linear feet of rich materials with eleven more pending. In another case, the artist already had his papers neatly grouped, labeled, and stored in milk crates. Staff answered questions about preservation supplies, made labeling format suggestions, and later provided proper archival boxes and folders into which the artist rehoused the already well-organized materials, which included extensive files for every mural he had worked on over a thirty-year career. This artist plans to donate these files to an appropriate repository in the future. The CSRC has had similar experiences and has also learned that digitization can play an important role in collections development. Some donors may not be comfortable giving up their originals immediately; selective digitization allows some materials to become more accessible while establishing a working relationship that may lead to collection donations.

## PUBLICATIONS

Publishing monographs, research guides, and teaching guides based on the collections we have surveyed or acquired is a way our academic research centers contribute to knowledge production in our field and give back to the community partners. These tangible products provide a general history based on the archival record and become a departure point for new scholarship. The CSRC established the Chicano Archives publication series in 2005 to extend access to collections and stimulate new critical and historical research. Each peer-reviewed volume brings together resources related to one of the center's special collections and includes original scholarship, the finding aid, reproductions of documents and images, and a selected bibliography. In volume 3, *The Mexican Museum of San Francisco Papers*, an appendix lists twenty-one prospective research topics the collection could support.<sup>27</sup> This publication further enables the archives to become a source for interdisciplinary research by students and scholars to advance our understanding of Mexican and Mexican American art. For ILS, since its preliminary Midwest “mapping” work was the first to gather and compile this history, publishing a monograph to serve as a starting point for students and scholars made sense.<sup>28</sup> A related interactive website was created as an introductory research guide and to enable artists to contribute to the project's history of exhibitions list.<sup>29</sup> In addition, in 2012, with a team of students, the ILS created and published an iPad app as a teaching aid about the Day of the Dead cultural tradition based upon documentation of the annual celebration.<sup>30</sup>

Both CSRC and ILS have editorial staff (in the case of CSRC, an in-house press) and involve students in research, collection processing, and writing.<sup>31</sup> Involving graduate and undergraduate students serves our universities' missions, providing professional hands-on training and credit. Student collections-processing work and research for publications has been used as the basis for several UCLA student dissertations, including three published in the Chicano Archives series. Notre Dame undergraduate students from many disciplines have worked as research assistants on ILS projects, giving them excellent experience and opportunity to implement what they've learned in the classroom. In these ways, student involvement bridges library and research activities, while advancing a new generation of scholars whose training is grounded in archival processing and community partnership.

### Surveys and Collection Development in a Community Setting

Since 2005, ILS has conducted thirty-three field surveys of private collections and acquired twenty-two collections as a result of its MidLAD initiative.<sup>32</sup> The collections range in volume from 0.5 linear feet to 17 linear feet. In addition, ILS facilitated the donation of two collections to the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, CSRC has conducted field surveys around several project areas: Chicano Cinema Recovery Project, Latino Art Survey, LGBT/Mujeres Initiative, and Mexican American Civic Participation Initiative.<sup>34</sup> In the last decade, the CSRC has acquired about eighty collections, ranging from 0.5 linear feet to nearly 800 linear feet.

One example from ILS demonstrates the urgency of these efforts and the critical importance of interpersonal relationships in our engagement with community partners. A year after ILS surveyed the Casa de Unidad's records, the twenty-five-year-old cultural organization tragically dissolved. The building landlord allowed forty-eight hours for removal of the "stuff" from the basement or it would be set out on the curb. The archives of Casa de Unidad—a Detroit cultural organization that supported Cuban American, Puerto Rican, and Mexican American musicians, poets, artists, and theater groups—was nearly lost. Fortunately, through the Michigan summit meeting network ILS had established, Grimm received an email within hours and was able to connect concerned community members with Len Coombs at the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. She shared survey data of the organization's records with Coombs and, following some quick negotiations by Coombs, twenty-eight boxes of rich materials were collected before the landlord's deadline, and the history of this Detroit cultural organization is now preserved and accessible. Similarly, the day before a rainstorm, CSRC secured the papers of a major Chicano art gallery that had closed and whose papers were stored outside. These

episodes demonstrate the fragility of the history of cultural organizations and the importance of coordinated collecting. Although many archivists can share similar tales of a collection's rescue at the eleventh hour, it is important to recognize the critical role played by what Scott Cline called the "covenant" between archivists and community partners with a shared vision of "a broad societal good and the welfare of humankind."<sup>35</sup>

Both ILS and CSRC viewed collaborative collecting across multiple institutions as essential to the preservation of Latino documentary heritage. From the start, we informed community members that our priority was preservation of and access to the archival resources, rather than just a desire to add to our institutions' holdings. In all instances, we encouraged community members to explore the available options and to work with those institutions that best met their needs or with which they were most comfortable. This last point was grounded in the belief that collecting must be based on "shared outcomes" between the collecting institution(s) and the community. Thus, in addition to the measurable outcome of collections acquired by institutions, the long-term goal of preserving Latino arts history must take the needs of the community into account.

We have discussed ways in which a project can produce shared outcomes, or products, that advance scholarship and also benefit the donor community in its day-to-day needs (publications, digital assets, validation mechanisms). But preservation education itself is also an outcome that directly benefits a community. As a result of our summits, surveys, and workshops, community members learned basic information about how to care for their records, acquired an understanding of the research value of their papers and files, and perhaps most importantly, developed a working relationship with an archivist who is now a resource to contact for advice, in time of crisis, or when they are ready to donate their records. With cosponsorship from arts organizations and libraries, institutional and grant funding, ILS and CSRC have held records management workshops for artists, arts nonprofits, and individual community members.<sup>36</sup> These workshops are very well attended and receive positive evaluations from participants.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

No set model exists for working in communities. We have learned that the only constant rules are to be attentive to community needs, individual concerns, and the relationship between the community and your institution. While cultural competency and understanding are obviously required when working with ethnic archives, ultimately, a willingness to seek community members' active input on legacy and historical significance alongside that of

subject experts may be even more important. The day-to-day process has to develop in dialogue with the community partners and be oriented toward a shared vision (that may in fact have different goals), and then be tailored to the resources at hand.

While we generally followed a documentation planning model, we found the basic methodology of meetings with stakeholders, field surveys, donor development, and collecting to be lacking an important consideration—the work we do to identify and preserve collections from marginalized and underdocumented communities must at the same time strengthen the communities from whence the archives originate. Each institution must determine how best to support the communities with which it works. Our contributions resulted from dialogue and from garnering strong backing from our home institutions. In our cases, infrastructure support manifested itself in various ways—distributing external hard drives and archival supplies where needed, producing publications to stimulate new research based on the archives, providing technical advice and student assistance, conducting preservation workshops, digitizing materials, and sponsoring lecture series and exhibits.

Our experience suggests that strengthening the capacity of community organizations and individuals to care for their private archives is a critical component of any effort to advance preservation and access to Latino archives, or any underrepresented community's archives. While our two centers have with considerable persistence found ways and funds to do this and, on a much larger scale, the regional archivists and grant program model of the New York State Archives' Documentary Heritage Program has seen success, how can comparatively modest institutions across the country hope to provide such support?

Indeed, it is critical that a variety of libraries and archives nationwide, from academic libraries and special collections to public libraries, engage in documenting underrepresented communities, particularly Latino communities. In this second decade of the twenty-first century, the diversity of American society is rapidly increasing and expanding in geographic scope. The Latino population, long established in American society, is at the forefront of this growth and expansion. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that the profession develop best practices that are practical, affordable, can be operationalized, and are effective in preserving Latino archives. But this issue is not just one of how to document an underrepresented, but significant population during a period of limited resources. Instead, it is about developing the working relationships and community partnerships that make that goal possible. Ultimately, to expand preservation of and access to primary source materials of underdocumented topics such as Latino history, the archives profession must support a methodology that calls for assisting community organizations and individuals to care for their own history. In many cases, the trusting relationships that grow from this

will eventually result in donations to repositories and a more representative record of history for students and scholars. But they will have an even larger impact on the institution itself. The methodology we are calling for is essential for archivists, librarians, and our parent institutions if they are to remain relevant in the emerging American cultural landscape.

The slow pace of preserving and making accessible minority and ethnic archives must be reversed. Forty years is too long to theorize and leave the collecting to a few specialized research institutions, cultural centers, and independent archives. These organizations remain critical and play a leadership role, but the broader preservation and access needs require a sustained investment by the larger institutions as well.<sup>38</sup> We must set aside the fear of never being able to develop archival holdings truly representative of an ethnic group or minority and discard old notions of “collecting” in favor of a new role for archivists as partners working toward a vision shared with community organizations. Archivists cannot do this alone. Success depends on collaborations with scholars/subject experts, our parent institutions, and community leaders and organizations.

The greatest challenge for archival institutions may be coming to grips with our changing roles as collector and controller of the archives of underrepresented communities. While this role as collector will remain in many cases, in others we need to accept the broader responsibility of supporting grassroots archives and helping them do the best job possible. Two initiatives to archive historically underrepresented groups that we can learn much from are the Black Metropolis Research Consortium (BMRC) in Chicago and the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives in West Hollywood, California. Both are collaborative and work closely with grassroots organizations.<sup>39</sup> More case studies of collaborative initiatives such as these, particularly with such strong independent community archives involvement, are needed in the archival literature.

At the conclusion of Ham’s 1975 article, he issued a call: “As archivists we must be in a more exposed position than we have been in the past, one that is more vulnerable.”<sup>40</sup> As the title of his seminal article suggests, he urged archivists to be “on the edge,” looking for what we could not dream of if we chose instead to remain in our comfort zone of passive neutrality. In 2013, that edge is still there, of course, overlooking a landscape much changed by digital technology, social media, and a population more diverse than ever. The difference today is that to succeed in our mission, archivists can no longer be alone on that edge. To succeed in preserving a more diverse record of the American experience, collaboration across institutions, disciplines, and communities will be necessary.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For a recounting of Zinn's critique during his 1970 speech to SAA and the profession's response during the early 1970s, see F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," *The American Archivist* 38, no. 1 (1975): 5–13.
- <sup>2</sup> Ham, "The Archival Edge," 5.
- <sup>3</sup> For an extensive review of the history of archival discourse on documenting ethnicity and the immigrant experience, see Dominique Daniel, "Documenting the Immigrant and Ethnic Experience in American Archives," *The American Archivist* 73, no. 1 (2010): 82–104. Daniel's article discusses the contributions of those such as Jeannette Allis Bastian, Francis X. Blouin, Terry Cook, Anne Gilliland, Gerald Ham, Ian Johnston, Elizabeth Kaplan, Helen Samuels, Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, and Joel Wurl, providing a thorough overview of the profession's grappling with postmodernist thought and its implications on the archiving of ethnicity, social history, and the complexities of identity and community.
- <sup>4</sup> For a recent analysis of the evolution of appraisal and acquisition, see Terry Cook, "'We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are': Archival Appraisal Past, Present and Future," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32, no. 2 (2011): 173–89. Cook pointed to the engagement of archival expertise with citizens as "participant and partner, and perhaps keeper" in a "blend of coaching, mentoring, and partnering"—an engagement he views as critical (182). Also see Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, "Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections," *Archivaria* 63 (Spring 2007): 87–101. For a discussion of community archives and partnership models with formal archives in the United Kingdom, see Andrew Flinn, "Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (2007): 151–76.
- <sup>5</sup> A guide developed for its Latino documentation project defines *Latino* as individuals living in the United States who are "migrants, immigrants, and descendants of people from Mexico, Central America, South America, Puerto Rico, and the rest of the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean." The guide encourages archivists to take into account the extensive racial, cultural, and national diversity of the Latino population. New York State Archives, *A Guide to Documenting Latino/Hispanic History and Culture in New York State*, Publication No. 67 (Albany: New York State Education Department, 2002), 13.
- <sup>6</sup> In March 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau released data indicating that more than half of the growth in the total U.S. population between 2000 and 2010 was attributed to the increase in the Hispanic population, and, that over that same time period, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent. See Karen R. Humes, Nicholas A. Jones, and Roberto R. Ramirez, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>.
- <sup>7</sup> Mario H. Ramírez, "The Task of the Latino/a Archivist: On Archiving Identity and Community," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 5, no. 1 (2009), <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/5d4366f9>.
- <sup>8</sup> Rabia Gibbs, "The Heart of the Matter: The Developmental History of African American Archives," *The American Archivist* 75 (Spring/Summer 2012): 204.
- <sup>9</sup> Cristine Paschild wrote, "Ultimately, in critical engagement with community archives, the concept of identity seems unable to provide a workable middle ground for analysis, tipping between facilitating flattened and exoticized misconceptions of authenticity and a subjectivity so diffuse no purchase for action can be found." Cristine N. Paschild, "Community Archives and the Limitations of Identity: Considering Discursive Impact on Material Needs," *The American Archivist* 75 (Spring/Summer 2012): 134.
- <sup>10</sup> Paschild, "Community Archives and the Limitations of Identity," 141.
- <sup>11</sup> For example, Joan Krizack's account of Northeastern University's initiative to document the history of Boston's African American, Chinese, Latino, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities demonstrated that once relationships are established in the community and the archivist and library become sources of advice, trust is established and collections will come. Reflections included at the end of this article are particularly helpful to consider before beginning a community documentation initiative. See Joan D. Krizack, "Preserving the History of Diversity:

- One University's Effort to Make Boston's History More Inclusive," *RBM* 8 (Fall 2007): 125–32. See also Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander's compilation of essays examining memory, identity, and power in relation to documenting communities: *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory* (London: Facet Publishing, 2009). Reporting on the interim findings of the project Community Archives and Identities: Documenting and Sustaining Community Heritage (University College London), Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd used ethnographic research methods to define and identify factors that inhibit successful community engagement between mainstream and community archives in the United Kingdom. While national and cultural differences preclude an absolute correlation to similar engagement efforts in the United States, their thorough discussion of the definition of community archives, identification of five areas of engagement (custody, collection, curation and dissemination, advice, and consultancy), thoughts on respect in engagement, and the practical realities of community partners are certainly applicable in the broader context of engagement. Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector: From Handing Over to Handing On," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, nos. 1–2 (2010): 59–76.
- <sup>12</sup> Thomas H. Kreneck, "Documenting a Mexican American Community: The Houston Example," *The American Archivist* 48 (Summer 1985): 272–85.
- <sup>13</sup> Kreneck, "Documenting a Mexican American Community," 284.
- <sup>14</sup> Salvador Guereña, "Archives and Manuscripts: Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Chicano Collections," *Collection Building* 8, no. 4 (1987): 3–11. Salvador Guereña, *Latino Librarianship: A Handbook for Professionals* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland Co., 1990).
- <sup>15</sup> Tracy B. Grimm, "Identifying and Preserving the History of the Latino Visual Arts: Survey of Archival Initiatives and Recommendations," *CSRC Research Report*, no. 6 (April 2005).
- <sup>16</sup> Chon A. Noriega, "Preservation Matters," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 30 (Spring 2005): 1–20.
- <sup>17</sup> A project of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA) at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, *Documents of Twentieth-Century Latin American and Latino Art* is a multimillion-dollar initiative to identify and digitize thousands of primary and critical texts by notable Latin American and Latino artists, critics, curators, and others who have played an important part in the development of the art produced along this cultural axis. The Web-based archives may be found at International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, <http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/>.
- <sup>18</sup> See Rita González, "Archiving the Latino Arts before It Is Too Late," *CSRC Latino Policy and Issues Brief*, no. 6 (April 2003).
- <sup>19</sup> See Rita González, "An Undocumented History: A Survey of Index Citations for Latino and Latina Artists," *CSRC Research Report*, no. 2 (August 2003). See also Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "Imagining a More Expansive Narrative of American Art," *American Art* 19 (Fall 2005): 9–15. Ybarra-Frausto talked of the marginalization of Latino art in American art history and the hopeful signs he saw for new scholarship, due in part to the formation of "the beginning of a crucial archival base."
- <sup>20</sup> See Taína B. Caragol, "Archives of Reality: Contemporary Efforts to Document Latino Art," *American Art* 19 (Fall 2005), and also Grimm, "Identifying and Preserving the History of the Latino Visual Arts."
- <sup>21</sup> As evidenced by the courses for which University of Notre Dame professors have requested primary source workshops and the high percentage of those students who return and utilize the Julian Samora Library's collections gathered during the arts initiative: "U.S. Civil Rights History: The Chicano Movement for Equality," "Race and Ethnicity in U.S. Latino Literature," "Latinos in the Future of American Politics," "'Rebel Youth' in Latino/a America," and "Race and Ethnicity and the Latino Population in the United States."
- <sup>22</sup> The exhibitions, developed under the L.A. Xicano Project, included *Art along the Hyphen: The Mexican-American Generation*, Autry National Center, October 14, 2011–January 8, 2012; *Icons of the Invisible: Oscar Castillo*, Fowler Museum at UCLA, September 25, 2011–February 26, 2012; *Mapping Another L.A.: The Chicano Art Movement*, Fowler Museum at UCLA, October 16, 2011–February 26, 2012; *Mural Remix: Sandra de la Loza*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, October 15, 2011–January 22, 2012; and *Chican@s Collect: The Durón Family Collection*, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Library, September 22, 2011–December 9, 2011. These 2011 publications, all by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, include Chon Noriega, Terezita Romo, and Pilar Tompkins Rivas,

- L.A. Xicano; Sandra de la Loza, *The Pocho Research Society Field Guide to L.A.: Monuments and Murals of Erased and Invisible Histories*; Colin Gunckel, ed., *The Oscar Castillo Papers and Photograph Collection*; and Armando Durón, *Chican@s Collect: The Durón Family Collection*.
- <sup>23</sup> New York State Archives, *A Guide to Documenting Latino/Hispanic History and Culture*.
- <sup>24</sup> The first of CSRC's Latino arts summit meetings were held in February 2004 and included fifteen Los Angeles-based arts organizations. A series of summit meetings followed. ILS held its first Midwest summit as a pilot in Chicago with eight artists and organizations represented.
- <sup>25</sup> Miguel Cortez, email message to Tracy Grimm, July 28, 2007.
- <sup>26</sup> See Noriega, "Preservation Matters," for other examples.
- <sup>27</sup> In addition to *The Mexican Museum of San Francisco Papers, 1971–2006* essay by Karen Mary Davalos (2010), *The Chicano Archives* series also includes the following essays: *Self Help Graphics and Art: Art in the Heart of East Los Angeles*, Kristen Guzmán (2005); *The Fire of Life: The Robert Legorreta-Cyclona Collection*, Robb Hernandez (2009); *The Latino Theatre Initiative/Center Theatre Group Papers, 1980–2005*, Chantal Rodríguez (2011); *The Oscar Castillo Papers and Photograph Collection*, ed. Colin Gunckel (2011), and *The Arhoolie Foundation's Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings*, Agustín Gurza with Jonathan Clark and Chris Strachwitz (2012).
- <sup>28</sup> Olga Herrera, *Toward the Preservation of a Heritage: Latin American and Latino Art in the Midwestern United States. Research from the First Year of the Midwest Latino Arts Documentary Heritage Project with a Chronological Overview, Selected Bibliography, and Exhibitions Lists* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2008).
- <sup>29</sup> For an online version of Herrera's book as well as the Midwest Latino Arts Documentary Project's online resources, including an interactive exhibitions list, please see <http://latinostudies.nd.edu/midlad/>.
- <sup>30</sup> "Day of the Dead—Experience the Tradition" is an educational resource for grade school teachers, students, and the general public. The project began as an experiment to explore emerging technologies as an exciting delivery method for primary sources and contextualizing content. The app created much excitement among our student project team and staff across the university and became the first internally developed app published by Notre Dame. The free download can be found at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/day-dead-experience-tradition/id497953588?mt=8>.
- <sup>31</sup> The ILS maintained a publications department until a reorganization during 2011–2012 eliminated the editorial staff positions.
- <sup>32</sup> A \$100,000 grant from the Getty Foundation to ILS provided support for research, summit meetings, surveys of privately held archives, and oral history interviews in four states; preservation and records management workshops; a website; and the publication of a monograph.
- <sup>33</sup> The Ana Cardona Papers and the archives of Casa de Unidad, a Detroit cultural organization (1980–2006) were donated to the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan.
- <sup>34</sup> The Society of American Archivists recognized these efforts with its first Diversity Award in 2012.
- <sup>35</sup> Scott Cline, "'Dust Clouds of Camels Shall Cover You': Covenant and the Archival Endeavor," *The American Archivist* 75 (Fall/Winter 2012): 284, 296.
- <sup>36</sup> ILS's Michigan workshop, "Managing and Preserving Your Piece of Michigan Latino Art History: A Workshop for Artists and Arts Organizations," was held November 10, 2007, and December 1, 2007, "Preserving Chicago Art History: A Workshop for Chicago-Based Artists and Arts Organizations" was held in Illinois. Both workshops were developed by archivist and poet Geof Huth. Grimm and CSRC archivist, Lizette Guerra, copresented a similar workshop, "Who Are We? Preserving Legacy and Memory: A Preservation and Access Workshop for Artists and Arts Organizations," on November 10, 2010, as preconference program of a Latino arts national conference. More recently, CSRC initiated an ongoing series of community workshops on preserving and digitizing family photographs.
- <sup>37</sup> This evaluation of the November 10, 2007, Michigan workshop in Detroit sums up what we often heard from participants: "This was excellent. It is so important for Latinos to know how, where and how to organize and donate work for the future generations. This effort is a very good start, it needs to keep going, reaching more, more Latinos." Quoted in ILS, *Midwest Latino Arts Documentary Heritage Project Final Report to the Getty Foundation* (July 2008).

<sup>38</sup> The smaller organizations that have taken up this task remain highly susceptible to shifts in donor base, economic downturns, and leadership changes. Paschild's observations about the Japanese American National Museum (see p. 140) echo the recent downsizing of ILS following the departure of Director Gilberto Cardenas. See *New Horizons in Latino Studies* 2 (June 2012), University of Notre Dame, "Institute for Latino Studies," <http://latinostudies.nd.edu/news/>.

<sup>39</sup> The survey initiative of BMRC's community-focused "Second Space Initiative" has surveyed five thousand linear feet of collections held by fifteen "Second Space" members (community organizations, small historical societies and research institutions, and private collectors) and conducted preservation, collections care, and copyright workshops. Bergis Jules, survey project director/archivist, said, "I would say we have been successful in helping people keep and protect their own history rather than feel like they have to give it to a larger institution. We truly believe in educating the community about these archival issues and leave it up to them as to how they want to proceed with their collections." Bergis Jules, email to Tracy Grimm, March 21, 2011. In May 2011, the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, a grassroots archives collaborating with the UCLA Library and the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, hosted the third international Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) conference, "Academic LGBT Conference with a Grass Roots Flavor." The annual conference focuses on "collecting and preserving public, private, academic and grassroots archives from LGBT communities to ensure our history survives unchanged," <http://www.mazerlesbianarchives.org/>.

<sup>40</sup> Ham, *Archival Edge*, 13.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Tracy B. Grimm** holds an MSLIS from the University of Texas at Austin with a concentration in archival enterprise. She was head of the Julian Samora Library at the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame for eleven years, from 2000 to 2012. In 2012, she accepted the position of Barron Hilton Archivist for Flight and Space Exploration at Purdue University Libraries' Archives and Special Collections. While at the Institute, she served as project director for the Midwest Latino Arts Documentary Heritage Project and as coordinator for the Midwest team of the Documents of 20th-century Latin American and Latino Art: A Digital Archives and Publication Project, administered through the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston.



**Chon A. Noriega** is professor of Cinema and Media Studies and director of the Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles. He has also co-taught a course on community-based archival practices in the Department of Information Studies. Noriega has published ten books on Latino art, media, and performance and is completing a book-length study of Puerto Rican multimedia artist Raphael Montañez Ortiz (b. 1934). He is editor of *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* and two book series, *A Ver: Revisioning Art History* and *The Chicano Archives*.