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Collecting to the Core — La Frontera: The U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

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The U.S.-Mexico borderlands is a region of the United States and Mexico extending nearly 2,000 miles from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, and is formed by six Mexican states (from east to west, Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja California Norte) that border on four of the United States (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California). The steady streams of people and information that flow across the border have, over the years, exerted a strong influence on the culture of both countries, while close trade relations, commercial and financial interests, and the demand for labor have bound the countries together economically. This interaction of physical, human, and economic forces has been mutually beneficial in many ways but is also often strained, as cultural, political, and economic differences present challenges to finding common ground on shared problems, including economic development and exploitation; free trade; environmental issues; women’s, Native American, and human rights; health and education; undocumented immigration; and drug trafficking, to name a few. Yet despite these problems, the borderlands operate in many ways as an extension of the U.S. south into Mexico and likewise, from Mexico north into the U.S. Many borderlands residents are part of a selected list of works that capture the complex vision and range of the United States-Mexico borderlands.

In Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera, Gloria Anzaldúa argues that the term “borderlands” not only refers to the border but also extends to the cultural and social information found in these accounts, there exist thousands of administrative documents, including judicial records, inspections records, military papers, land deeds, mining titles, and civil documents. Church documents, such as baptism and tithe records, and Inquisition proceedings provide demographic, economic, and social information in addition to church history.

The U.S. Border Patrol originated in 1924, the primary targets of the American immigration laws were not undocumented Mexican migrants. In fact, Mexican agricultural workers, valued by American farmers, were exempt from key restrictions, namely the national quota system that strictly limited the number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. each year. However, by the middle of the twentieth century, the U.S. Border Patrol had shifted efforts toward policing undocumented immigrants at the Mexican border, a practice that continues to this day. UCLA historian Kelly Lytle Hernández charts this development.
ment in *Migrante!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol*. Drawing on long-neglected archival sources in both the U.S. and Mexico, Lytle Hernández uncovers the little-known history of how Mexican immigrants slowly became the primary focus of U.S. immigration law enforcement and demonstrates how the racial profiling of Mexicans developed through the Border Patrol’s increased prevention and detention efforts. Despite the historical focus of Lytle Hernández’s work, it underscores how the rise in policing and systemic failure to recognize the diversity of the Mexican-origin population has consequential ly led to the harassment, abuse, and incarceration of U.S.-born/ naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, visa-holders and cross-border workers of Mexican origin.

In the past twenty years, scholars of borderlands history have depicted the many obstacles facing poor Tejanos, blacks, whites, Native Americans, women, and other subsets of borderland society with a sturdy assertion that these groups were in many respects agents of their own lives. In this regard, Juliana Barr’s *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* is a representative work that adeptly examines the connections and interactions between cultural groups. Barr also adds complexity and nuance by taking great pains to explain the differences between Comanches, Apaches, Wichitas, Caddos, Cantonas, Payayas, and other American Indian groups in the Southwest. For example, each had slightly different kinship and gender patterns. Each had different economies, diplomatic alliances, and military power, which often led to different interactions with the Spanish and one another. In every instance, however, Barr argues that Native Americans ultimately controlled the power in relations with Spanish settlers. She also insists that given the language barriers between the Spanish and Native American Indians, symbols and gestures served as the primary form of communication with females playing important roles. When the Spaniards sought peace with the tribes they achieved the best results when they understood and acted upon accepted norms connecting gender with peaceful intent. Thus, when Spanish men attempted negotiations and trade missions, returned captive Indian women and children, and understood women’s function in the negotiation process, they successfully signaled peaceful intent. Barr’s work offers those primarily interested in borderlands history a case for Native American dominance and the importance of gender.

*Bridgeing National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories* brings together a collection of eleven essays exploring aspects of borderlands and transnational study from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Benjamin Heber Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, the volume’s editors, also provide an excellent introduction to the work called “Borders and Their Historians in North America.” Students new to the field as well as established scholars will find this introductory essay, together with the rest of the anthology, highly informative and useful. Complementing this work, Samuel Truett and Elliott Young’s *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* is a collection of ten essays that examine border life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. By analyzing homogeneous aspects, but by looking at the diversity, cooperation, and conflict that existed all at once along this vast, ethnically unpredictable region. Truett and Young argue that even during the mid-twentieth century, as both the U.S. and Mexico sought to define themselves as nations through the sharp delineation of borders, the border between the two countries remained a muddied national space. People of all ethnicities lived along it: Anglos, Chicana/os, African Americans, and immigrants from Mexico, China, and other European countries all made up the complex communities at the border. These people could not be neatly placed into either the “American” or “Mexi-
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der, style, and sensibility as José Vasconcelos, Graham Greene, Oscar Zeta Acosta, Maya Angelou, Sam Shepard, Elena Poniatowska, Demetria Martínez, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, and William Carlos Williams.

Clearly, one might argue that constructing a comprehensive bibliographic tool for monographic materials related to the U.S.-Mexico border region is an impossible endeavor. After all, how do you create a complete resource for a field of study that is not only inherently complex, but more importantly, is constantly growing both in quantity and quality? How do you begin to capture the vast amount of scholarship that has been produced by and about these multifaceted communities in a single document? Indeed, it would be difficult to list all available information resources about this borderlands region within a single text. To that end, this bibliography is by no means comprehensive, but offers a small sampling of titles to stimulate the critical study and understanding of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

Endnotes

*Editor’s note: An asterisk (*) denotes a title selected for Resources for College Libraries.

Academic E-Books: Publishers, Librarians, and Users
by Michael Zeoli (Vice President, Content Development and Partner Relations, YBP Library Services) <mzeoli@ybp.com>

Academic E-Books: Publishers, Librarians, and Users edited by Suzanne M. Ward, Robert S. Freeman, and Judith M. Nixon (Purdue University Press, 2016) contains all the elements of a compelling thriller. Depending on your perspective you may ask, “how will our hero escape this time?” or sitting on the edge of your seat, wonder, “when will the other shoe drop?”

The book captures the essential “January” perspectives and issues from a leading cast of characters in the academic book ecosystem, which is as challenged as the earth’s ecosystem these days. We have come to a moment in which, as Rhonda Herman, President of McFarland Publishing, states, “…inaction is simply not an option.” In the Introduction, the editors write modestly that “this book provides a snapshot of both the eBook reality and its promise in the mid-2010s.” This book in fact uncovers major chasms opening between parts of the scholarly book supply chain; some described directly in the essays and others indirectly through the juxtaposition of views, which “snapshots” also capture information obliquely though the juxtaposition of views, which like “set traps for accidents”; in fact, one of the major chasms opening between parts of the academic book ecosystem is as challenged as the earth’s ecosystem these days.

From a publisher perspective, Rhonda Herman writes, “For print books, advance orders fell roughly 50% since 2010 […] the amount of revenue from eBooks is not enough to make up for the drop in print revenue.” She continues, “But the combination of DDA and the Short-term loan (STL) has begun to undermine the equilibrium in the revenue of some titles.”

Her views are echoed in the contribution by Tony Sanfilippo (Director, Ohio State University Press) who writes, “But it is also becoming evident that certain models are becoming rather problematic for publishers […] Demand-driven (or patron-driven) acquisitions and the typically accompanying short-term loan option […] is one example. […] one thing is immediately clear: this model is guaranteed to delay the majority of a title’s revenue until one year after publication.” As Herman noted, Sanfilippo also observes that “this model is also significantly cannibalizing print sales.”

We should bear in mind that for most publishers in the humanities and social sciences, 70-90% of publisher book revenue continues to be from print and much of this material is unavailable either in digital format or in DDA. As an aside, fewer than 250 of the 1,500 publishers on YBP’s approval plan publisher list make more than ten frontlist titles available in DDA; as of September 2015, fewer than 100 publishers with more than 50 new titles per year make more than 50% of their frontlist available in DDA, and just half of those publishers make more than 75% available. It is important for us all to recognize that not all publishers have had the courage to participate in and experiment with new digital business models, and that many titles are not available in these models even for publishers that do participate.

McFarland, like many publishers, is making changes to its DDA and STL policies concluding that “Revenue has fallen too quickly so inaction is simply not an option.” This position is in fact widespread among publishers and recognized in libraries that have been experimenting with DDA and STL longest. As Karen Fischer (University of Iowa Libraries) states in her article, “By 2015, some librarians began wondering about the long-term sustainability of the short-term loan model. As more libraries employ the STL model, many publishers have become increasingly uncomfortable with it. […] Many publishers attribute considerable revenue losses to the STL model...” Beyond changes in pricing, publishers are also withdrawing titles, as Kathleen Fountain (Orbis Cascade Alliance) explains in her essay, writing, “in a review of the five titles with the most loans in FY 2014, three were no longer for loan or sale.”

The publisher experiences are borne out in the library contributions to the book, albeit cast naturally in a different light. As Suzanne Ward and Rebecca Richardson write, “In...