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And They Were There -- Reports of Meetings -- 49th Annual SALALM

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Women in Latin American Studies: Reshaping the Boundaries was the theme of the 49th meeting of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, June 4-8, 2004. The conference, sponsored by the University of Michigan Library along with the University of Michigan Latin American and Caribbean Studies Center, focused on the acquisition and processing of Latin American materials and their delivery via reference and bibliographic services. Monographs, serials, official publications, publications from NGOs, films & videos, databases and indexes were examined and discussed.

The opening session included welcoming remarks from SALALM president Angela Carreño of the Bobst Library at New York University. William Gosling, University of Michigan Librarian, encouraged participants to use the resources of the University of Michigan and to feel at home in Ann Arbor. Local Arrangements chair, Nerea Llamas thanked the committee for its efforts to plan the conference and acknowledged Mary Jo Zeter, of Michigan State University, in charge of organizing the book exhibits.

Every year, during the opening session, SALALM presents an award named for the famous Latin American bibliographer Jose Toribio Medina. The award acknowledges scholarship and publication in the area of reference and bibliography. Winners receive certificates recognizing their publications, a $250 honorarium, and the esteem of their colleagues. This year the award was presented to Tony Harvel of the University of San Diego for his work Latin American Dramatists since 1945: a Bio-Bibliographical Guide.

The opening session concluded with the keynote address delivered by Dr. Carmen Diana Deere of the University of Massachusetts. Dr. Deere, long-time Womyn: Intellectual History of a Book Project, described attempts to determine the laws and cultures that have affected land ownership by women in Latin America and Spain. Of particular interest to librarians were her anecdotes about searching for information and resources both here and abroad, and her suggestions for acquiring landholding records and laws in the area of land use and ownership.

The opening of the book exhibits has always been a festive occasion. Exhibitors from the U.S., Latin America, and Europe present a wide array of monographs, serials, microforms, and digital resources needed by researchers. This is a great opportunity to get updated information on the latest changes and about the newest programs and services offered by vendors who operate under conditions substantially different from those in the US. It is also often the best chance to make face-to-face contact with personalities and voices known mostly through correspondence.

Too much work makes Jack a dull librarian, so after a busy day, it was time to play. The bookdealers’ annual Libreros’ Reception, a great time to get to know other librarians and bookdealers in a different setting, was held at Cobblestone Farm outside Ann Arbor. The reception-plus-dinner-plus-dance featured the annual raffle with Lief Adelson, owner of Books from Mexico, as Master of Ceremonies. SALALM members donate prizes in order to raise money for the ENLAC committee’s efforts to bring Latin American librarians to the annual conference. This year’s award recipients were Gabriela Lorena Gutiérrez Schott, from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and Carolina Espinosa Arango, from Hentral, Argentina.

Panel presentations are central to each annual conference. Two major themes defined this year’s rich array of research and scholarship. The first was the discussion of women in Latin America, and the resources for studying women’s roles. The second theme was international cooperation and partnering among scholars and institutions.

Women in Latin America

A lively panel of librarians from the University of the West Indies addressed ten years of change and progress for women in Trinidad & Tobago. Dr. Margaret Rouse-Jones moderated discussions of women in Tobago. In Trinidad, the Trinidadian society, and the role of NGOs in their quest for feminine empowerment and equality. Many were unaware that T&T is one of the three top producers of oil & gas in the world, with enormous foreign investments and a vibrant stock exchange. Other Tobagans/Trinidadians on the panel of “Mapping Progress and Change” included Allison Dolland, Floris Fraser and Yacoob Hosein.

Cesar Rodriguez from Yale University, led a panel investigating “Women Affecting Social and Political Change.” Discussion ranged from Karen Lindvall Larson’s (University of California, San Diego) examination of Mayan Women’s Post-Peace Accords Participation in Guatemalan Elections to Ruby Meraz Gutiérre’s (Hispanic American Periodicals Index) history of Brazilian feminist periodicals. A particularly fun-filled panel was moderated by Lourdes Vázquez (Rutgers University), entitled “Women Artists and Expression Through Image.” Peter Bushnell (University of Florida) treated attendees to a slide show of Caribbean and Latin American postage stamp featuring Princess Diana. Improbably, there was even a set from Cuba. As noted by the University of New Mexico’s Russ Davidson, these kinds of stamps are generally produced for the collectors’ market as a source of revenue, and are rarely seen on actual in-country correspondence. Peter Stern (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) sketched the lives and careers of some less well-known figures in 20th century Mexican art in his presentation, “From Revolution to Surrealism: Five Women Artists of Mexico’s Golden Age.” Stunning slides and fascinating anecdotes enlivened his discussion of Marion and Grace Greenwood, María Izquierdo (the only native Mexican), Leonora Carrington, and Remedios Varo. All five of these women were hard-working artists in various media and styles, whose careers blossomed in Mexico but spanned continents. A video clip from Gregorio Rocha’s film, “War and Image” demonstrated the allure of Pancho Villa’s revolutionary campaign for the newly developing film industry.

Hortensia Calvo, of Tulane University, led a spirited panel which examined “Muses, Symbols and Authors: Women in Cuban History and Culture.” Patrick Gavilanes of Gavilanes Books of Indoamerica, described the image of the sensual Cuban woman, the jinetera and Rafael Tarago from the University of Minnesota recounted the legend of Mariana Grajales de Maceo, the iron mother of humble black origin who parented Antonio Maceo. Leslie Varona from the University of Miami described another independent and adventurous Cuban woman, author Lydia Cabrera. The final session panelist, Maritza de los Angeles Tellez Vigueaux, from the Biblioteca Provincial Elvira Cape, in Santiago de Cuba was unable to obtain a visa in time.

Interdisciplinary Cooperation

Darlene Hull of the University of Connecticut moderated a panel “Covering an Interdisciplinary Field: Monitoring Trends and Collecting Strategies.” Luis González of Indiana University examined “Latin American and Latino Studies: Directions in Research and Challenges to Researchers and Librarians,” by showing the difficulties in even defining the terms. Donna Canever de Paredes of the University of Saskatchewan Library described in detail the planning and execution of a seven year process of reviewing Latin American gender and women’s studies at that institution. Her detailed description of the steps involved was of particular interest to librarians new to the discipline.

Barbara Valk (Hispanic American Periodicals Index) surveyed the treatment of women's top-
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ics in serial publications. Paul Losch of the University of Florida presented a sample of the more than 600 items in the Brazilian Popular Groups’ microfilm collection.

Cooperation
Eudora Loh (University of California, Los Angeles) moderated a panel with the unlikely title, “Reading Urdu in Cochabamba: Global Strategies for Library Cooperation.” Starting the discussion, Dan Hazen, of Harvard University, gave an overview of the AAL/AHL Global Resources Network, which serves as an umbrella for a series of unrelated projects, many driven by grant funding. Jeffrey Garrett of the German Resources Project directed attention to Europe where they are eliminating duplication of efforts in a much more organized publishing environment. Finally, James Nye of the digital South Asia Library and Mary Rader of the University of Michigan described the South Asian Federation and what it has meant for libraries in the region. Field offices in Islamabad and Delhi, regionally established standards, cooperation and collaboration mark this not for profit endeavor.

A final look at cooperation featured a presentation by Perry Willett of the Digital Library Production Service of the University of Michigan. Using both in-house and vendor-supplied services, the operation has digitized important holdings. Test conversion software, use of metadata, and links with existing catalog records were discussed. While most libraries currently seem to digitize important local collections, there will be a need for some kind of registry to avoid duplication as more institutions get involved.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a motion picture must be worth millions, and the panel, “Indigenous Film and Video: Trends and collection needs” played to a very full meeting room. Several clips from a wide variety of videos provided just a taste of the myriad, high-quality offerings available. For people collecting in this field, Daisy Dominguez (Long Island University) is the go-to librarian for finding producers, distributors and online catalogs of film and video produced by Native Peoples. Her site can be found at http://homepage.nyu.edu/~dd62/cine-indigena.htm. Daisy presented on PowerPoint Web pages and bibliographies in English, white delivering a talk entirely in Spanish on the state of Latin American indigenous video activity. Panelist Catherine Benamou (University of Michigan) discussed the upsurge of indigenous film production in the 1980s, as technology became cheap and instruction was offered by NGOs and governmental agencies. Of particular interest in light of this year’s conference theme was the attitude and willingness of indigenous women to get behind the cameras, and taking on the role of transmitters of culture in ways the anthropologists of yore could never have imagined. Hard-working Alexandra Halkin, delivered details on the Chiapas Media Project, an undertaking in technology transfer to marginalized people. Members of the Zapata movement were the first beneficiaires, in 1998, of this bi-national collective, which empowers indigenous communities in Chiapas and Guerrero states via video technology. Two of the most important objectives of the project will be to eventually turn all facilities, equipment, and administration over to the various communities, and to ensure distribution and quality archiving for these productions.

Fifty Years Old!
In 1956, librarians and Latin Americanists met at Brooksville, Florida to discuss better ways to document and acquire library materials. Preparations are underway for the celebration of SALALM’s fiftieth anniversary. Events will include a “kick-off” party, photo displays of past proceedings and participants and other events to mark this historic and festive occasion. In addition, various bibliographies and indexes will document the organization’s accomplishments and publications. Incoming SALALM president Pamela Howard-Reguindin, from the Library of Congress office in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Richard Phillips of the University of Florida, have been busy planning the anniversary recognition and celebration. All members, past members, retired Salalmistas, and others who have been touched by the fifty years of bibliographic efforts in Latin American libraries are invited to come back and join the SALALM 50 Celebration in Gainesville, Florida, April 16-19, 2005. Newcomers will enjoy the celebration of old and new and the opportunity to visit with the people who have shaped Latin Americanist librarianship. Information about SALALM and the Gainesville conference can be found on the SALALM Web page. http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/salalmhome.html

Building Libraries for the 21st Century
The Shape of Information
Edited by T.D. Web. 2004 [2000], $49.95, photos, bibliography, index, 0-7864-2034-0

Library World Records
Godfrey Oswald. 2004, $29.95, 112 photos, bibliography, index, 0-7864-1619-X

Mycenean Civilization
Byran Feuer. 2004, $75, maps, glossary, indexes, 0-7864-1748-X

Anabolic Therapy in Modern Medicine
William N. Taylor, M.D. 2002, $55, references, index, 0-7864-124-1

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issue in August of 1999? Ah — it seems like yesterday! Anyway, Web VIII contains 57 new or revisited reviews as well as 543 reprinted reviews. Thank you, Choice for keeping us up-to-date on high-quality Internet resources.

And, more. The same issue contains an editorial from Irv Rockwood, Editor and Publisher, Choice (who has an article in this issue, by the way; see p.38) entitled “What About Bob?” It’s about Robert Balay who was presented with the 2004 Isadore Gilbert Mudge — R.R. Bowker Award during the recent Orlando Annual ALA Conference. Congrats, Bob! And next time I get stuck on the New York Times crossword, I know who to call!