

No, It's Not Online; It's in the Stacks

Latin American Collections in US Academic and Research Libraries

Sócrates Silva and Manuel Ostos

CURRENT TRENDS IN LIBRARIANSHIP HAVE DEEMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE of print collections. Immediate access to academic content via commercial databases and open access (OA) initiatives are perceived as solutions to reduce the high costs associated with the selection, acquisition, and maintenance of print books. Collections budgetary allocations for print materials have diminished over time, and library spaces used to store print collections are being repurposed and used as information commons and learning spaces. Therefore, libraries are no longer building collections to support local research communities but rather connecting users with information.¹ Recent studies call for additional support for e-books, OA, and collaborative collection development initiatives to minimize investment in support of local print collections, which are now seen as an exorbitant and unnecessary expense.² Although these transformations may provide cost-effective and timely research support to some academic areas, they do not address the needs of collections and users in disciplines that depend on print.

Print is the dominant format of monograph production in Latin America, and this chapter will explore the following questions with this core tenet in mind: Who are the users, and what do they need? What is unique and challenging about the Latin American publishing market, and about building and managing Latin American collections? And, how can Latin American studies collection development practices align with the larger trends in research and academic libraries? The chapter will provide background on the challenges

and an overview of collections strategies that aim to mitigate difficulties in the acquisition of and access to Latin American studies materials, including collaborative collection development initiatives. As a discipline that relies heavily on print, Latin American studies research is endangered by recent library trends and practices that deprioritize print, including the electronic-only collections policies or practices that have arisen amid COVID-19. It is imperative to understand, identify, and sustain collection development solutions and commitments that work at the local, regional, and national level because library services to the Latin American studies community are inseparable from collections and the future of research is at risk.

USER NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Latin America covers the territory south of the United States that includes Mexico, all of Central and South America, and the island nations of the Caribbean. Latin America also encompasses a multitude of peoples, communities, ethnicities, and languages. Latin American studies focuses on the study of Latin America and its vast and diverse populations. Across the humanities and social sciences, academic disciplines in Latin American studies include literature, history, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, and gender studies, among many others.

Spanish is the most widely spoken language in Latin America. According to the Cervantes Institute, as of 2019, there are about 483 million native speakers of Spanish, and it is the third-most widely spoken language in the world after English and Mandarin.³ Spanish is also the most studied world language in postsecondary education.⁴ The second-most spoken language in Latin America is Portuguese, the official language of Brazil, where there is an estimated population of over 211 million.⁵ A variety of different Indigenous languages are also spoken in Latin America, such as Maya in Mexico and parts of Central America, Quechua and Aymara in Peru and Bolivia, and Guarani in Paraguay, among many others. In the United States, according to the US Census Bureau, the Hispanic population is about 60 million, making people of Hispanic or Latin American heritage the largest ethnic minority, constituting 18.3 percent of the nation's total population, with about 41 million people speaking Spanish at home.⁶

Latin American studies scholars cannot be grouped nor described as a homogenous community. Although most students and faculty conducting Latin American studies research work in disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, research also may encompass other areas such as STEM or health sciences, as illustrated by the scope of the forty different sections of the Latin American Studies Association.⁷ Therefore, Latin American scholars have different research practices and methodologies according to their own disciplinary areas. Latin American studies programs rarely map themselves administratively as departments. Faculty from various academic departments and units are often affiliated with the campus Latin American studies research center or program. These units provide financial and administrative support and serve as unifying infrastructure for scholars of Latin America. Latin American studies faculty advocacy in university matters often depends on the political and economic cohesiveness of these centers and programs, and subject librarians often face an uphill battle communicating user needs to library stakeholders in support of such a diverse group of scholars.

The Ithaka S+R US Faculty Surveys track the changing research practices of higher education faculty members on a triennial basis. The 2015 and 2018 surveys document a shift in discovery methods as faculty increasingly use Google Scholar and other search engines as their starting point for research. Discovery is furthered by electronic formats when these are available. In the 2018 survey both electronic and print formats were deemed important, with a greater share of humanists indicating that print monographs play an important part in their research and teaching than scholars in other disciplines.⁸

Undergraduate research, which tends to rely more heavily on English-language resources, can provide more format flexibility for collections strategies; however, current trends of primary source usage in undergraduate instruction still require print collecting from the region. Expediency in the research process is a driver of undergraduate library services, and core secondary materials in English are often available through demand-driven acquisition (DDA) for teaching collections. However, it is logistically challenging to build research collections driven by immediate demand and need. As outlined elsewhere in this chapter, the on-demand model of collecting within Latin American markets and distribution channels is not currently feasible. There's a short window to acquire materials. Research beyond the undergraduate level

requires language proficiency, extensive and deep knowledge of geographical areas, and specialized content knowledge. Material to support this level of research requires long-tail collecting.

Two recent studies have explored usage of Latin American studies local collections with conclusions showing the importance of vernacular monographs in dissertation citations and the high use of print among Latin American scholars.⁹ These results highlight the importance of collecting from the region for scholarship and provide evidence of the need for nuanced localized studies of collection usage.

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES LIBRARIANSHIP

As of 2020, there are 144 undergraduate and graduate programs in Latin American studies and 20 Latin American research centers in the United States.¹⁰ There are also thirty-seven PhD programs in Spanish and Portuguese.¹¹ Latin American collections support these and other interdisciplinary programs and research areas that focus on the study of Latin America. Although these collections are not always considered as core resources in many academic research libraries, they represent the cultural, historical, intellectual, political, and creative knowledge of over twenty countries and diasporas. These collections are customarily composed of literary works by Latin American authors, along with works of history and social sciences. However, as academic institutions are moving toward globalized research, Latin American studies has expanded to areas in the sciences and technology, making the acquisition of materials and content more complex than ever before. As Dan Hazen notes, “Area and international collections have historically focused on language, history, and culture. Globalized scholarship and campuses are bringing new academic concerns to the fore that encompass a fuller range of disciplines.”¹²

Collections are an integral part of many interrelated and interdependent library services. In order to support a large scope of academic disciplines, the Latin American studies librarian responsible for making acquisition and collections management decisions requires intellectual versatility, an academic background that provides strong cultural and historical understanding of Latin America, and linguistic proficiency in Spanish and Portuguese. In practice, most Latin American studies librarians are also responsible for providing

library services and building and maintaining Iberian studies collections. Spain and Portugal have close cultural, economic, and linguistic affinities with Latin America, and many works by Latin American authors or about Latin America are published and distributed for these markets. Finally, the librarian should possess familiarity with user needs, a clear and deep understanding of the publishing industry and current trends in librarianship, and knowledge of digital resources, OA resources, datasets, and databases available to license that support Latin American studies research.

LATIN AMERICAN COLLECTIONS AND THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

The production and distribution of Spanish and Portuguese language publications are dominated by large conglomerates. As of 2017, four of the top ten largest publishers worldwide combined—Pearson, Bertelsmann, Hachette Livre, Grupo Planeta, and their subsidiaries—produce and distribute the large majority of print publications and content available in Latin America.¹³ Despite their size, these publishers do not produce and distribute print materials across the continent but rather focus on local and regional markets.¹⁴ Works published in one country by the same publisher are often not available in another.

With publishing conglomerates increasing in size, the power to make decisions on production and distribution is in the hands of fewer players, potentially compromising the diversity of the collections. However, a growing number of independent publishers are flourishing all across Latin America. Their publications, including scholarly, literary, and creative works, are also distributed only within local markets and often consist of a limited number of imprints. Therefore, the discovery and acquisition of these materials is difficult and even libraries with large collection budgets do not always prioritize these items for their collections.

Academic Monographs

The discovery and acquisition of Latin American print requires careful curation, understanding of local markets, and knowledge of distribution channels, along with an understanding of scholarly trends. According to the Regional

Center for the Promotion of Books in Latin America and Caribbean (CER-LALC), a total of 189,857 titles with ISBNs were published in Latin America in 2016. Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia produced 82 percent of all titles combined.¹⁵

In contrast to those handling English-language monographs, there are no vendors with comprehensive coverage of Latin American publishers in the United States or abroad. There are multiple local vendors that distribute print materials from a single country or region to academic libraries and offer a wide range of services, including approval plans, shelf-ready catalog records, and shipping and delivery. The Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) has compiled a comprehensive list of vendors by subject area and by country.¹⁶ These vendors are fundamental in supporting collection development in the United States. It is essential to establish strong relationships with these vendors and collaborate with acquisitions departments and technical services in the library to determine the best ways to acquire new print materials.

Attending book fairs in Latin America, such as the Guadalajara International Book Fair in Mexico, the Buenos Aires International Book Fair in Argentina, and the Bogota International Book Fair in Colombia, to mention only a few, may also provide a unique opportunity to discover recently published materials not yet available in the United States. At these events, librarians can acquire materials on site, meet with publishers, editors, and vendors, and discuss collection needs.

E-books

In contrast to the growing number of e-books, platforms, and content produced and distributed in the United States, as of 2016, only 23 percent of all Latin American publications are available in digital format, with Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia leading the production of e-books in Latin America.¹⁷ Despite representing over a fifth of the total number of publications from Latin America, the majority of e-books available are not research or scholarly publications, nor are they intended for an academic audience. For example, in Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina, the majority of e-books available are primary and secondary education textbooks, children's literature and juvenile titles, religion, and self-help.¹⁸

In recent years, several vendors have begun to license content and provide access to Latin American e-books for academic and research libraries in the United States. Libraries have the option of licensing large packages of e-books by theme or topic, or select individual titles to add to the collection. However, at this point, the largest share of academic and scholarly content continues to be distributed in print.

Electronic Resources, Indexes, and Open Access

Although print monographs are the core source of Latin American studies research, a number of well-known electronic resources, indexes, and OA initiatives are of significant importance to Latin American studies research. Major online indexes and bibliographic resources such as the Handbook of Latin American Studies (HLAS) and the Hispanic American Periodical Index (HAPI) are core databases for Latin American studies research.

OA initiatives such as the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and Redalyc (Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y El Caribe, España y Portugal) provide access to online indexes and OA journals. Despite the success of these two digital libraries, several others have struggled to survive as a result of political instability in the region or for economic reasons.

Similarly, there are initiatives for OA monographs such as El Colegio de México/JSTOR for out-of-print books and Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO)/JSTOR for CLACSO's frontlist titles. However, these efforts are not yet widespread, and libraries should not expect materials from Latin America to be widely available in electronic formats.¹⁹ Library selectors should also be aware that these resources cannot replace print, and access is not always guaranteed.

Current Collection Development Projects and Initiatives

In the face of these challenges, SALALM members have long explored collaborative collection agreements as potential solutions. These efforts have taken shape within regional groups, such as the California Cooperative Latin American Collection Development Group's (CALAFIA) agreement to cover regional publishing from Mexican states.²⁰ Other meaningful collaborations include the Consortium of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University, and the Research Library

Cooperative Program connecting the University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University, and the University of Texas at Austin.²¹ Additional efforts such as the 2CUL agreement between Columbia University and Cornell University, and the Ivy Plus Libraries Confederation have formed as a result of institutional agreements and along the lines of existing consortia.²² Other initiatives include the Latin Americanist Research Resources Project (LARRP) of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), which provides institutional support to acquire, digitize, and provide access to Latin American scholarly content including monographs, resulting in increased coverage of materials and reinforced institutional collections strengths of member institutions.²³

Despite outward administrative enthusiasm for collaboration, the infrastructure and support for these efforts vary widely across agreements and institutions. Although some collection collaboration agreements are driven by higher-level administrative mandates, many have been initiated by individual librarians. Some of these agreements have formal memoranda of understanding and include retention clauses, while others are looser and less formal. Given the immediate need to support local users, informal agreements are most likely to succeed when aligned with local programmatic, curricular, and research needs. However, once implemented, these informal collaborations require the involvement of librarians, vendors, and acquisitions and technical services staff. More importantly, these collaborations demand institutional financial support, cross-institutional collection development policies, collaborative cataloging, retention commitments, and assessment to ensure long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF LATIN AMERICAN COLLECTIONS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Latin American print collections remain essential to support library services, teaching, and research. Unfortunately, many current conversations and discussions on the future of libraries do not address the need to continue building and managing large print collections, but rather suggest reallocation of resources to support the acquisition of online content, digitize collections, utilize DDA and evidence-based acquisition model (EBM) collection development models, embark on OA initiatives, or advocate for consortial collaboration and collective collections. Although these trends have dominated the scholarly

conversations on collection development, and libraries have long moved in this direction, COVID-19 has accelerated the implementation of such policies to focus on support for remote users.²⁴ In response, SALALM approved and released the resolution “Collection Development in the Time of COVID-19.” This resolution urges libraries to continue acquiring print materials from local vendors in Latin America, encourages collaboration among area studies librarians, and advocates for continued support of OA and collection collaboration initiatives.²⁵

Although OA and consortial collaborations may offer a better distribution of services and reduce the costs associated with collections acquisition and management of print collections, these initiatives should be implemented by involving all partners including library administration, collections strategists, and acquisitions and technical services, as well as distributors and vendors, in partnership with the Latin American studies librarian who knows these collections and the industry. Electronic-only collections policies should be carefully drafted and implemented in light of the risk of excluding entire regions of the world.

Latin American resources remain primarily in print format, and users continue to be served by these collections. Embracing policies, practices, and discourses that dismiss the value of print collections and their contributions to academic research is not only irresponsible but also shortsighted. And no, it may not be online, and it will not be in the stacks either, unless libraries pause to consider the complexities of Latin American publishing markets and the nuanced solutions that would best meet user needs.

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