

Memoria, voz, y patrimonio: Considering Latina/o Film, Print and Sound Archives*

By: Clara M. Chu

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Abstract:

An introduction to the section of this *InterActions* special issue on archives and record-keeping that focuses on Memoria, voz y patrimonio: The First Conference on Latino/Hispanic Film, Print and Sound Archives and Sixth Institute of the Trejo Foster Foundation for Hispanic Library Education. This conference/institute offered a glimpse of the breadth of Latina/o archival collections, practice, research and concerns. The guest editors of this Latina/o archival section are Clara M. Chu and Rebecca Dean, with contributions by Patrick Keilty, of the UCLA Department of Information Studies.

Keywords: Latina/o archives conference, memory keeping, archival practice research and education

Article:

Introduction

"What is our Latina/o legacy that can be passed on to future generations?" and "What are we preserving, what stories do we tell, and how are we using technology to archive Latina/o history, identity, and spirit?" were the questions that shaped the content and dialogue at *Memoria, Voz y Patrimonio: The First Conference on Latino/Hispanic Film, Print and Sound Archives* (MVP) and Sixth Institute of the Trejo Foster Foundation for Hispanic Library Education (<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/LAConf/>). For the first time a national conference brought together people from all walks of life who were concerned about preserving the history of Latino/Hispanic¹ cultural heritage and society, who wanted to expand their knowledge of managing Latino/Hispanic film, print, and sound materials, and/or who were interested in creating a Latino/Hispanic cultural heritage system or repository. In this special section of *InterActions*, we bring together selected conference papers, a Latina/o archives resource list, and after a 5-year cogitation period, contemplations on the future of Latina/o archival and memory practice, research, and education.

MVP: The Conference ~ Making It Happen

MVP was held at the UCLA campus on August 15-17, 2003 and was hosted by the Department of Information Studies of the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, under the auspices of the Trejo Foster Foundation (TFF; <http://www.tffoundation.org/>). TFF was established in 1992 to bring to the forefront issues concerning library and information services for people of Hispanic heritage in the United States, and is affiliated with the American Library Association (<http://www.ala.org>) and REFORMA

* Acknowledgements: This special *InterActions* section on Memoria, Voz, y Patrimonio is dedicated to Yolanda Retter Vargas (1947-2007), Latina lesbian activist, archivist, librarian and scholar. Yolanda spent the last four decades raising the visibility of lesbians and minorities and preserving their history, through her research, volunteer service and professional work. Her last position was librarian and archivist for the UCLA Chicano Studies Resource Center. In addition to her master's degrees in library science and social work from UCLA, she earned a doctorate in American studies from the University of New Mexico with a dissertation on lesbian activism in Los Angeles, 1970-1990. Despite her abrasive style and radical stances, Yolanda was widely respected in the Los Angeles lesbian, library and archival, and Latina/o communities for her unrelenting drive to achieve social justice for oppressed groups, particularly lesbians of color. We pay tribute to Yolanda, a speaker at the Memoria, Voz, y Patrimonio Conference, and a friend and colleague who pressed us to use our voice. UCLA Department of Information Studies 210 GSE&IS Bldg., Box 951520 Los Angeles, CA 90095-1520

(<http://www.reforma.org>), the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. REFORMA cosponsored the conference, and its members played key roles on the planning committee. MVP also provided the opportunity to commemorate the achievements of Dr. Arnulfo D. Trejo, founder of TFF and REFORMA.

In addition to the above organizations, many individuals were involved in putting together and lending support to this conference. To start, our honorary board was made up by:

- Judith Baca, visual artist, arts activist, community leader, and professor of visual art in the UCLA César E. Chávez Department of Chicana & Chicano Studies and the UCLA World Arts and Cultures Department;
- Paul Espinosa, award-winning filmmaker and producer who has been involved with producing education films and documentaries for over 20 years, and is currently a professor of Transborder Chicana/o & Latina/o Studies at Arizona State University;
- Cristina García, Cuban-born American journalist and novelist, visiting writer in residence at UCLA and at Mills College, a Guggenheim Fellow and a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University, and the recipient of a Whiting Writers Award;
- Lalo Guerrero, 1916-2005, legendary Mexican-American singer and composer, farm labor activist, and internationally recognized as the "Father of Chicano Music;"
- Luís Rodríguez, novelist, poet, community activist, and co-owner of Tía Chucha's Centro Cultural and Bookstore (<http://www.tiachucha.com>).

I chaired the Planning Committee which was made up very energetic, hardworking, and creative members from the UCLA Chicana/o Studies community, UCLA Information Studies community, UES Seeds Elementary School community, and southern California library and archives community (for a list of names, see <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/LAConf/>). MVP also received the generous support of many donors and volunteers who have been recognized in the conference program and/or website.

MVP created a unique opportunity for K-12 educators, scholars, archivists, students, librarians, Latina/o artists, community workers, and community members, among others, to share different experiences in documenting and using Latina/o heritage materials and to introduce different perspectives in a dialogue on the importance of archives and memory keeping. Records, in any format, are essential for the Latina/o community to document in order to protect its rights, to capture its collective memory, and to ensure access to its cultural past, achievements, and legacy.

MVP: The Conference ~ A Dialogue on Latina/o Film, Print, and Sound Archives

The conference offered a diversity of content, including workshops on *Strategies For Developing An Archival Program* and *Teaching with Latino/Hispanic Primary Sources*; panels on film preservation and film documentation, including a film screening; exhibits; and presentations on documenting music, women's experiences, archival materials use in K-12 education, and individual and organizational collections on Latina/o photography, political posters, specific Latina/o communities, and Latina/o cultural topics.

Tomás Benítez, then Executive Director of Self-Help Graphics & Art, a cultural worker and arts administrator for over 25 years, presented the opening keynote address, *Accidental Legacy: Collection Chicano Culture, Art and Artifact*. He spoke of the need to document Latina/o culture and art, using his experience collecting baseball cards as a youth as an example of potentially throwing things away and not recognizing their future value, and the need to adopt a *rascuache* approach—making do with what's at hand—in the development of Chicana/o archives. The first plenary session featured young scholars Mario Ramírez, Miguel Figueroa, and Annabelle Nuñez who infused theory into the conference with presentations on their research using emerging archival theories. Ramírez, whose paper was selected for publication here, spoke of the fallacy of archives as a space of neutrality because “we are what we collect, we collect what we are,” and of the different ways to conceptualize *Latinidad* (i.e., are we Latinos, Hispanics, Chicanos, etc.) and how the way in which it is defined will affect what we end up collecting (or not). Figueroa and Nuñez, then MLIS students in the Knowledge River Program,

University of Arizona, used subaltern counterpublic theory to develop different models of Hispanic archives which they applied in the examination of a number of Hispanic archival collections.

A Tribute to Dr. Arnulfo D. Trejo, a celebration of his life, was a highlight of the conference. It included an exhibit of his life's work, tributes from Ninfá A. Trejo, TFF President, and other REFORMISTAS, and featured Moctesuma Esparza, film and TV producer (including *The Milagro Beanfield War* and *Selena*), who has received over 100 honors including an Academy Award nomination, an Emmy, and a Clio Award. Esparza spoke of the significant contributions of librarians and archivists in assisting Latina/o creators with research materials and Latina/o students with learning resources, and the role of leaders, such as Dr. Trejo, to advance Hispanic Library Education.

The second plenary session featured Salvador Güereña,² Archivist and Director of the California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives (CEMA), University of California, Santa Barbara, and Chon Noriega,³ Latino film scholar and Director of the Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles, who addressed *An Archival Call for Action*. Güereña emphasized that the creation of Latino/Hispanic archives is based on making a commitment that requires organizations to make hard choices, and used CEMA as a case study. Noriega highlighted the accidental nature of archiving and the challenge of preserving ephemera and other work that may not have been created to last forever.

Closing keynote speaker, Roberto Rodríguez, spoke on *Sacred Geography: Going Back to Where We Came From*. Rodríguez and his wife, Patrísia Gonzales, are journalists writing the *Column of the Americas*, authors of several books, and researchers and educators working on the Aztlanahuac Project. The Aztlanahuac Project uses maps and stories to document that Chicanos are not “aliens,” but that they in fact do belong in what is today the United States. During his multimedia presentation he invited Daniela Conde, a student from the UCLA class *Sacred Geography*, which he taught in spring 2003, to share her experiences in a family memory recovery project in which she tried to find what's indigenous within her family. In his presentation, Rodríguez emphasized that Chicana/o history is not only U.S. history, but “American” history and needs to be documented. One of his recommendations was to create a Memory Recovery Project, spearheaded by the TFF, REFORMA, and NACCS (The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies).

MVP: Selected Works and Future Considerations

The MVP conference offered a glimpse of the breadth of Latina/o archival collections, practice, research, and concerns. Some of the papers are appearing in publications in various sources (see notes 2 and 3) and in this special section of *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 5(1), two conference papers were selected because they engage the ongoing dialogue of what constitutes a Latina/o archive and a community-based approach to Latina/o memory keeping. First, the paper by Marío H. Ramírez problematizes what it means to be Latina/o in the United States when diverse groups and historical experiences are involved and notes the challenges of essentializing this diverse community in the memory-keeping process that is the creation of an archive. Michael Owen Jones and Claudia J. Hernandez describe their use of ethnography to archive cultural resources, using Latina/o traditional medicine in Los Angeles as a case study. This active documentation of cultural practices is essential to record a practice that is traditionally passed on orally, learned through practice, and rooted in community. They discuss their ethnographic process and the challenges of community-based research.

Although all conference papers are not being published, either the recordings or manuscripts may be accessed by contacting me at cchu@ucla.edu. Additionally, information on all aspects of the conference is available through the website <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/LAConf/>. A *List of Resources on Latino Archives*, originally compiled by me, with the assistance of Lindy Leong, and made available at the conference, has been updated and is published in this special section of *InterActions*. MVP was a forum that initiated a national dialogue on Latina/o archives and memory keeping. This discussion is engaged in an epilogue of this special section as meditations on the future of Latina/o archival and memory practice, research, and education. We hope that the

work published here will foster continued dialogue among community, archivists, and scholars on the documentation of *nuestra memoria, voz, y patrimonio*.

Notes

¹ While the term “Latino/Hispanic” was the ethnonym used during the conference to represent the cultures and peoples of Latin-American or Spanish- speaking descent, here we will use “Latina/o”.

² Salvador Güereña and John Ayala are co-editing the book *Pathways to Progress: Issues and Advances in Latino Librarianship* (forthcoming by Libraries Unlimited in its Latinos and Libraries Series), and have selected to publish the following MVP papers:

- Erica Bennett, "El Primer Día De Clases: In Search of Mendez vs. City of Westminster;"
- Salvador Güereña's paper presented at the “An Archival Call for Action” session; and
- Yolanda Retter Vargas, "Lesbianas Latinas: Buscando, Guardando y Compartiendo Nuestras Historias.”

³ Noriega's paper has been published as: Chon, Noriega A. (2005, Spring). Preservation matters. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 30(1), 1-20.