

# COLLECTION OVERVIEW

## HISPANIC-AMERICAN STUDIES

### I. SCOPE

This overview focuses on materials about Hispanic Americans available at the Library of Congress. The term *Hispanic American* is used here to refer to Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Spanish (i.e. from Spain) Americans, Puerto Ricans and other Americans who share a Hispanic legacy. Materials about these groups are cataloged separately by subject by the Library but are all included in this essay. The Library collects a full range of monographic and periodical literature about Hispanic Americans, covering culture, arts, demography and economic conditions, politics and public policy, social conditions, history, literature, and bibliographies. Materials are in a variety of formats including bound volumes, pamphlets, microform, electronic files, audio and visual recordings, manuscripts, serials, posters, and photographs.

### II. SIZE

There is no specialized Hispanic-American collection in the Library. Couple this with the problem that LC classifies items in Hispanic-American history and culture by its narrower subject and one may see that it is difficult to arrive at an estimation of the number of items in the general collections of the Library that could fall under the category of Hispanic-American studies. To gauge the strength of literature holdings, a major bibliography (*Dictionary of Literary Biography: Chicano Writers*, 3 vols) was recently searched against the LC catalog. Of the 164 authors listed in this bibliography, the Library had materials from 82% (134) of the authors. A comparison was also done against Donald Urioste's "Chicano Literature: a Bibliography" (*Dictionary of Literary Biography: Chicano Writers*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 1999). The Library held 82% of the novels listed but only 43% of the poetry books, which suggests that the collection is weak in Hispanic-American poetry. Other comparisons from this bibliography yield: Short fiction 66%; Theater 65%; Nonfiction 77%; Anthologies 57%; and Criticism 75%. Further surveys of this type are needed to more accurately measure the collection.

### III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

The Library's research collections for Hispanic-American studies are strongest in the area of history. Thanks to the Library's *Handbook of Latin American Studies*, contributing editors frequently scan available materials on the history of the Spanish and Mexican portions of the United States. Regrettably, the *Handbook* does not cover the history of those territories after their incorporation into the United States. Fortunately, the Library has extensive microformat collections relating to the history of the American Southwest and Hispanic-American (particularly Mexican-American) history.

#### **IV. AREAS OF DISTINCTION**

The area of Hispanic-American studies frequently overlaps with Latin-American history. LC has one of the world's strongest collections pertaining to Spanish borderlands history, which includes monographs, serials, and manuscripts. Among the vast collections housed in the Manuscript Division are numerous collections of Hispanic-American materials, including the Hans P. Kraus collection of 162 major Spanish-American manuscript items covering 1497-1819, the Woodbury Lowery collection of the Spanish borderlands covering 1551-1803, the Vicente Pintado papers dealing with early 19<sup>th</sup>-century West Florida, the Mexican Archives of New Mexico collection covering 1821-1846, the Spanish Archives of New Mexico collection covering 1810-1816, the New Mexico papers covering 1621-1843, and the Texas collection of ecclesiastical and *cabildo* records covering 1689-1836. Of interest to scholars of Puerto Rico are the Alice B. Gould Puerto Rican Memorial collection of 18th- and 19th-century materials and the West Indies miscellany that includes Puerto Rican manuscripts. The Law Library holds primary and secondary legislation from the periods of Spanish and Mexican colonization of Florida, Texas, and the United States Southwest. Notable holdings include *Reglamento para el gobierno de la provincia de Californias*, promulgated by royal decree on October 24, 1781 and the *Leyes de California* covering the period 1850-1878.

#### **V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES**

The Library subscribes to standard electronic resources for the study of literature and the social sciences that cover Hispanic-American themes. LC does not, however, have access to numerous specialized electronic resources for Hispanic-American literature. The major resources for Hispanic-American studies in general at the Library of Congress are the *Chicano Database*, available at through a subscription to *OCLC's FirstSearch*, and the *Hispanic American Periodicals Index*. The former provides extensive coverage of the humanities and social sciences from the 1960's to the present especially relating to Hispanic Americans. The latter provides bibliographic information from the 1970's to the present concerning political, economic, and social issues in the U.S. borderlands. Latino newspaper coverage is afforded through the *Ethnic News Watch*, available in full text in Spanish and English through *ProQuest*.

#### **VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS**

The lack of an integrated Hispanic-American collection demands a specialist to compare known materials in the field with the holdings at the Library. As mentioned above, the collection is especially weak in the area of Hispanic-American literature. The Library should consider hiring a full-time specialist to adequately develop the collections.

The Library should also consider expanding its serials collection by purchasing the collection of the National Clearinghouse of Chicano Serials, of the Chicano Studies

Library Serials Collection, the most extensive collection of Chicano and Latino-related serials in the United States.