“Challenging Colonialism Through Archives & Digital Humanities”

Migration, Mobility, and Sustainability: NEH Caribbean Studies and Digital Humanities Institute
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Learning Outcomes

• Understand points of access to UF’s Latin American & Caribbean Collection (LACC) and to the Panama Canal Museum Collection (PCMC)
• Analyze the history of LACC, specifically of the PCMC collection, as an example of colonialism and US hegemony.
• Understand the cases of underrepresentation in LACC and in the PCMC
• Evaluate how UF LIS specialists have challenged underrepresentation through exhibits
Archives and Colonialism

• Empires used extensive recordkeeping to control their colonies.
• They used classificatory systems (example: racial) to ensure the hegemony of a small group of European colonists over indigenous, African, and Asian people.
• 1823- Monroe Doctrine derived into US hegemony over Latin America & the Caribbean.
• 1898- Spanish American War
• The U.S. also became an intellectual hegemonic power in part by collecting (“removing”) Latin American & Caribbean cultural heritage.
History of UF’s Latin American & Caribbean Collection (LACC)

• 1930- UF President Tigert created the Institute for Inter-American Affairs.
• 1948- Farmington Plan
• 1951- Farmington Plan assigned UF as the repository for Caribbean material.
Imperialism and Underrepresentation at LACC

• Latin American and Caribbean archival collections at UF parallel US history.

• LACC collections document US interests and investment in the region. Examples:
  1. Braga Brothers Collection
  3. Frank R. Crumbie Papers

• Points of access: LACC website
  2. Guide to LACC special collections: https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/laccspecialcollections
  3. Exhibits: https://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/lac/exhibits
History of the PCMC

• 1999- Zonians open the Panama Canal Museum in Seminole.
• Mission: “to preserve the history of the American Era of the Panama Canal (1904-1999).”
• 2012- PCMC was transferred to UF.
• The collection documents the stories of white U.S. residents of the Panama Canal Zone.
• Point of access:
  http://ufdc.ufl.edu/pcm
Challenging Underrepresentation

• Challenges:
  1. Hidden voices: West Indians & Panamanians
  2. Pushback from PCMC friends

• Solutions:
  1. Finding the hidden stories
  2. Exhibits: Inclusive, stories of conflict
Finding Hidden Voices

1. Photographs of workers
2. Documentation on the system of segregation
3. Photographs of agency
4. *Isthmian Historical Society. Letters from Isthmian Canal Construction Workers*
5. Yearbooks
6. Oral histories
Photographs of workers

Concrete Mixing Plant, Gatun Locks, Nov. 1909
Panama Canal Museum Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.
(http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00016431/00001)
Photographs of workers

Rock Channeler at Work in Upper Miraflores Lock Site Jan. 6, 1910

Panama Canal Museum Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

(http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00016789/00001)
Photographs of workers

Lidgerwood Unloader – 14% grade- Tabernilla Dumps

Panama Canal Museum Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

(http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00016788/00001)
Documentation on the system of segregation

Errors on the Rolls of May 1915 Panama Canal Employees

Panama Canal Museum Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

(https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00014744/00001)
Documentation on the system of segregation

Panama Canal Commissary, with personnel, showing the "silver" and "gold" entrances

Panama Canal Museum Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

(http://ufdc.ufl.edu/PCMI007246/00001)
Documentation on the system of segregation

U.S. Dredge Sandpiper excavating in lock site at Miraflores, Panama Canal

Panama Canal Museum Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

(http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00016121/00001)
Photographs of agency

Interior view of restaurant showing proprietress

Panama Canal Museum Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

(http://ufdc.ufl.edu/PCMI008135/00001)
Photographs of agency

1916- Parade of West Indians
Panama Canal Museum Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.
(http://ufdc.ufl.edu/PCMI011782/00001)
Isthmian Historical Society competition for the best true stories of life and work on the Isthmus of Panama during the construction of the Panama Canal - Explanation of the contest and list of entrants

http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00016037/00001
Yearbooks

Pacífico Yearbook: Paraíso High School

http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00015058/00016

Arco Iris: Rainbow City High School Yearbook

http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00015016/00001
Oral Histories

Interviews with former residents of the Panama Canal Zone for the Panama Canal Centennial Celebration at the University of Florida. Interviewed and videotaped by Eva Egensteiner on August 16, 2014, at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, Florida.

(http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00027174/00002)
Exhibits

1. Voices from the Panama Canal
   • Signature exhibit of the Panama Canal Centennial Celebration at UF, 2014
   • Labels: http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00026934/00001
   • Analysis:
     • “Facing Diversity: Challenges of Curating an Exhibit on the Panama Canal” (http://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00005597/00001)
     • Poster “Voices from the Panama Canal: Finding the Other in the Colonial Archive” (http://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00007360/00001)

2. An American Canal in Panama
   • Albert H. Nahmad Panama Canal Gallery, Smathers Library 1st Floor
   • March 16, 2019 - February 23, 2020
Voices from the Panama Canal

People who assisted in the curation (Fall 2013):

- Students of the Museum Studies Exhibition Seminar taught by Thomas Southall
- Students of the course “Panama Silver, Asian Gold: Migration, Money, and the Making of the Modern Caribbean” taught by Leah Rosenberg

Editors:

- Library administration
- Executive Board of the PCMC Friends
- Paul Ortiz and Julie Greene
Self-Censorship

Banner in Panama City Demanding Americans Go Home c. 1964
Panama Canal Museum Collection
2006.003.054.002
Thank you!
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