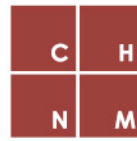


ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
Bracero History Archive—Collaborative Documentation in the Internet Age
[Grant PM-50062-07]
Report covering May 1, 2008 – April 30, 2009

During the second year of the *Bracero History Archive* project <braceroarchive.org>, the project partners have continued the momentum established in our first year of work, and are on track to accomplishing all of our goals. As a collaboration between the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University (GMU) and several partners, including the Oral History Institute at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the National Museum of American History (NMAH), and the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Brown University, the project is well on its way to being a roadmap for future archival aggregation and collaboration amongst humanities institutions and publics. Our work during this period has moved forward on three primary fronts.

Building the Archive

First, the partners have continued to build the archive. To this end the project partners have added well over 2,000 items to the archive in the space of the last year. The bulk of this acquisition is centered in the NMAH's collection of photographs by Leonard Nadel, who received support from the Fund for the Republic in 1956 to photographically document the bracero experience. The 1,726 Nadel pictures—the largest collection of photographs of braceros in existence—document the recruitment and assembly of braceros in Mexico City, the processing station in Monterey, Mexico, the bracero labor camps in the California San Joaquin Valley and the daily activities and leisure of the men working in the camps. Supplementing the tremendous photographic record, the partners have processed nearly 500 documents and images for the archive. Finally, project staff from the University of Texas El Paso, Brown University, and NMAH continued to work with the histories and materials collect through various onsite Bracero Heritage Meetings. To help facilitate this work, we created a discussion forums for graduate students and curators who were out in the field meeting with braceros and their families. In totally, this work has brought the holdings of the *Bracero History Archive* to 2,880.



Virtual Heritage Meetings

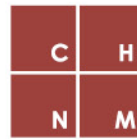
Second, the partners have been working on a series of Bracero Heritage Virtual Meetings. Designed to help local partners participating in collecting and archiving materials from braceros who reside in their own communities, these virtual meetings are central to our mission of collaborative documentation. In December, the primary project partners identified a set of local partner institutions with which to pilot our virtual outreach and collecting materials. Invitations to participate were issued in January 2009, and we scheduled virtual meetings for March and April. We distributed a set of documents for collecting partners to use during their work and asked them to review a four part instructional video series we created for the meetings.

This four part video series was designed to introduce the local partners to the project and the process of collecting. The first video features NMAH curator Peter Liebhold and introduces the history of the bracero program, placing it in historical contents. The second video explains the process of collecting oral histories and provides a short tutorial on what kinds of questions to ask, how to make subjects feel comfortable, practical time limits for interviews, getting consent and getting releases from interviewees. This video incorporated the instructional materials that UTEP uses to train its own staff and volunteers. The third video features NMAH curator Steve Velasquez discussing the importance of collecting photographs and documents for the archive. It includes explicit instructions on scanning images and documents, as well as photographing objects. Most importantly, this video includes instruction on collecting all of the data necessary to provide complete metadata for each collected item. The final video consists of a step by step tutorial using screenshots on how to add items to the *Bracero History Archive*, and how to create online posters using the items in the site.

After reviewing the materials and videos, the local partners were ready for our Virtual Heritage Meetings. Using Skype, the local partners conferenced with representatives of UTEP, Brown University, NMAH and CHNM. This mix of representatives were able to field historical questions, methodological questions and technical questions about the process of collecting materials and adding them to the archive.

The Virtual Heritage meetings were conducted with the following institutions:

- March 20, 2009: University of Texas at San Antonio;



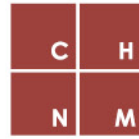
- March 20, 2009: Oregon Historical Society;
- April 3, 2009: Alameda National Center for Latino Arts and Culture;
- April 3, 2009: El Museo Latino;
- April 17, 2009: New Americans Museum;
- April 17, 2009: Muskegon County Museum (now called Lakeshore Museum).

We are in the process of scheduling a second round of meetings with additional institutions, including Chandler-Gilbert Community College Library, and other hosts of NMAH's traveling exhibit, "Bittersweet Harvest."

Upgrades to the *Bracero History Archive* Website

Finally, we have made a number of essential revisions and updates to the website during the last year. First, we successfully launched the Spanish version of the site. Users can now toggle between an English version and a Spanish version of the site to browse the archive and review the materials. Second, we added three core elements to the site: History, Resources, and Partners. The History section will allow us to include several concise essays on the history of bracero workers, contextualizing the items in the archive for those who are not familiar with the guest worker program and the lives that it touched. The Resources section will allow us to make the collecting documents, instructional videos and the "Practical Guide to Collaborative Documentation" available for all users interested in our process and method. This section will be a key stop for other groups wishing to replicate our collaborative work. The Partners section lets us fully recognize the many organizations and institutions that were participated in creating contacts between the *Bracero History Archive* and the local communities who provided the histories, documents and images that compose the core of the project.

In addition to these site additions, we are currently in the process of opening the site for individual contributions. Thus, members of the public who are unable to attend a local collection session or who become aware of the archive through other means will be able to visit the site and add their stories, upload digital versions of documents and images. Since these items will not be collected by a trained partner or curator, they will remain visually distinct within the site. The individual items will be displayed using the green color of the site, rather than the traditional orange that marks the curated materials. Additionally, the items will be marked with a disclaimer that they have been contributed, but not collected by a trained historian. We feel that these items are essential to the archive, but we are using this



Center for History and New Media

[Building a Better Yesterday, Bit by Bit]

design to mark the distinction between the submissions of the general public and the work of historians and archivists. This is an experiment in designing a system that allows for all of the openness and user-generated material that is definition of Web 2.0 work, while at the same time signaling the authority and expertise of credentialed historians. Museums and archives around the world are struggling with these issues, and we hope to contribute to that conversation with our work on the *Bracero History Archive*.

In sum, the *Bracero History Archive* continues to be a model of institutional collaboration, cutting edge archival practice, and community outreach. The collaborative work of the principle project partners: UTEP, Brown University, NMAH, and CHNM, has paved the way for our broad-based relationships with community partners and local institutions who have deep ties to braceros and their families. These working relationships are allowing us to build an archive of historical materials that simply would remain hidden in any other circumstances.

We would be delighted to provide more detailed information about our progress. We would particularly welcome an opportunity to share the features of the archive with NEH staff, either in a conference call or in a visit to CHNM at GMU at any convenient time.

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