

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
Bracero History Archive—Collaborative Documentation in the Internet Age
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Report covering May 1, 2007 – April 30, 2008

During the first year of the *Bracero History Archive* project <<http://braceroarchive.org>>, the project partners have made considerable progress on building our collaborative online system and establishing our collecting networks. 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.

Though our progress has been great, the work of the last year has also been marked by the death of Roy Rosenzweig, the Founding Director of the Center for History and New Media. We continue to mourn this tremendous personal and professional loss, but we are well-prepared to move ahead with all of our grant obligations. CHNM has significant and continuing support from the Department of History and Art History and GMU as a whole. The Center's Director of Public Projects, Sharon Leon, and Managing Director, Tom Scheinfeldt, have a combined total of 10 years of experience in digital and public history that makes them well suited to carry on Rosenzweig's work as the Primary Investigator for the *Bracero History Archive*. All work will be completed as scheduled.

In an additional staffing change, James Halabuk joined CHNM as project assistant for the Archive. Halabuk is a PhD candidate at GMU, and a student of Rosenzweig's. He completed a teaching field in Latin American and Chicano History, and thus has interests both in digital humanities and in preserving the *bracero* experience.

Planning and Development

In June 2007, our work began with an initial meeting of the project partners. Curators Peter Leibhold, Bonnie Lillienfeld, Steve Velasquez, and Latino Programming Coordinator Magdalena Mieri from NMAH, joined Director of the Institute of Oral History at UTEP Kristine Navarro, Interim Director of Brown University's Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity Matt Garcia, and Sharon Leon, Tom Scheinfeldt and Roy Rosenzweig from CHNM for a day of project planning. During this meeting we discussed the Dublin Core Metadata Fields that we would be using for the archive items and defined the controlled vocabularies that the staff would use in populating the archival database. Secondly, we determined which database fields would require Spanish translation to make the archive accessible to Spanish speaking audience. Additionally, we made a number of alterations to the Bracero Heritage Meeting scheduling, based on the weather at the collection sites. We feel that these slight shifts in the collection trip timing have produced greater participation from the local communities.

Website Design and Programming

After the initial planning meeting, the staff at CHNM, including our lead web designer, Jeremy Boggs, and web developer, Kristopher Kelly, began to translate the needs of the *Bracero History Archive* metadata structure into a working archival management system. The planning for and development of the *Bracero* core metadata and item type metadata played an integral part in the planning and construction of the infrastructure for *Omeka*, CHNM's open source web publishing and exhibit software that is now been publicly released under a General Public License. *Omeka* is built on a Linux, Apache platform using PHP 5.0 and MySQL, and allows for full metadata exposure and exportability to common XML standards such as OAI. Thus, using *Omeka* as the core system from the *Bracero History Archive*, all of the items stored in the archive will be fully interoperable with other common content management system and open content repositories. Still images will be served at 150 dpi, a resolution that gives users image detail while protecting the copyright holder. Oral histories will be served in the mp3 format, while the archive will also hold .wav copies of all interviews for researchers who need the higher quality.

Once an *Omeka* installation was established for the *Bracero History Archive*, Boggs could begin working on design mock-ups for the website. CHNM uses a standard design process that calls first for the production and sign-off on wireframes, second for the production of three different flat image design concepts, and finally the production of a functioning CSS/HTML coded site. At each stage of the design process, Leon and Halabuk reviewed and commented on the information architecture and design. In January 2008, the project partners gathered for a phone conference in which they discussed the three Photoshop mock-ups and settled on a design concept, a color and font palette, and logo. The current place holder <<http://braceroarchive.org>> reflects the overall theme of the site. During the month of February, Boggs implemented this design concept and produced a working version of the website, including the homepage, the archive browse page and the individual item pages (*See attached screenshots*). We will continue to test and solicit comment on this design and architecture in preparation for the official public launch of the site at the end of June 2008.

In addition to the initial design and construction of the website, we have the web developers at CHNM have been working on a number of key deliverables. First, because many of the *braceros* have limited English skills, because many of the interviews were conducted in Spanish, and because we anticipate that many researchers may be primarily Spanish speakers, the site features a Spanish mirror. This functionality involves the use of a bilingual plug-in for *Omeka* that creates a series of duplicate metadata fields, so that the project partners can provide translations for key item data, including the title, and description. These fields will be pulled into a version of the site that has Spanish navigation and helper text. Thus, the site's important features appear in both English and Spanish. Second, we have decided to make the advanced search feature available to all users, regardless of their status as members of the general public or researchers. Hence, the site is searchable by both simple and advanced searches; researchers may search for

items using any of the metadata fields. All users will be able to annotate and tag their favorite items in the archive. Researchers will have access to full metadata for each item.

Bracero History Archive Items

We are in the process of completing the final steps of the data migration for all of the existing Bracero History resources at UTEP and NMAH. Currently, there are nearly 800 items in the database, including 590 oral history summaries, as well as almost 200 digital documents and images created during Bracero Heritage Meeting collecting days. In the fall, Navarro and her staff at UTEP began the process of populating the metadata for all of the existing oral histories. UTEP has passed on physical custody of the interview files to CHNM (both mp3 and .wav files for each oral history). Simultaneously, Velasquez went through the process of preparing the existing database of metadata for the 1700 Nadel photographs for import into *Omeka*. We are in the process of upgrading to a new server array that will insure the stability and sustainability of the archive. Once this upgrade is complete in June, we will attach the sound files to the oral history records, and the images to the Nadel records.

The staff at UTEP currently are providing transcriptions and translations for the oral history interviews. This material will be accessible to researchers. NMAH continues to provide crucial support for both collection efforts and in providing translation support. To aid in the often-complex translation of these interviews, we have created a discussion forum (www.braceroarchive.org/translators), where translators can exchange information relevant to the translation of discipline-specific documents.

Bracero Heritage Meetings

Since June 2007, project partners and associated graduate students have conducted a number of collecting trips and Bracero Heritage Meetings. One of the outstanding features of the Bracero collaboration has been its ability to forge partnerships between large research institutions and local interviewers and workers to reach *braceros* who are willing to tell their stories. Collecting activities and work with local partners includes:

- UTEP and Brown created a partnership with the University of Northern Colorado, in which they trained 25 UNC students to conduct 40 *bracero* related interviews.
- July 16-31, 2007, Brown University graduate student, Mireya Loza and NMAH Curator Steve Velesquez collected 12 interviews in Guanajuato, Mexico.
- September 17-21, 2007, NMAH curators traveled to California to survey the archives at the Ventura County Museum of History and Art. The trip resulted in the collection of two interviews and two digital images.
- October 2007, Representatives from Brown, NMAH and UTEP organized Bracero Heritage Meetings in Phoenix and Tuscon, Arizona. These meetings laid the groundwork for subsequent collecting trips in January 2008.

- December 19-27, 2007, Brown University graduate students, Mireya Loza and Alma Carrillo traveled to a number of destinations in Mexico. They collected fourteen interviews and four digital images.
- January 2008, Representatives from Brown and UTEP returned to Phoenix, Tucson and seven other cities in Arizona to conduct interviews with former *braceros*. In all, ten research assistants (Alejandra Díaz, Hugo Camacho, Manuel Sanmiguel, Jose Garza, Marina Kalashnikova, Alejandra Valles, Itzel Kuchle, Maribel Treviño, Yvonne Mendez, and Cristóbal Borges) collected ninety-one new interviews.
- February 25-27, 2008, Representatives from Brown, UTEP and NMAH organized a Bracero Heritage Meeting with California State University, Channel Island. The staff conducted training sessions for approximately 25 students and faculty, who participated in a public event to schedule more than forty interviews. More than 50 archival items were scanned for database during the first day. Under the direction of Pilar Pacheco, CSUCI students will continue to participate in an ongoing collecting project that involves community engagement and service learning courses.

Collecting trips have been organized for Oregon in July 2008 and Arkansas in September, and staff from UTEP and Brown have begun training interviewers. To support these trips, we have set up local telephone numbers in Oregon and Arkansas. Callers will hear a recorded message summarizing the project and giving instructions for those interested in sharing their stories (Arkansas: 870-275-4768; Oregon: 971-244-8797).

Virtual Bracero Heritage Meetings

We have begun planning virtual outreach meetings to train others to contribute to the *Bracero History Archive*. The virtual meetings will feature a short video tutorial on using the archive that will be delivered as a webcast. The staff at CHNM will script and produce the webcast using Final Cut Pro. The session will cover basic functions such as searching the archive, adding items with full metadata, tagging items and creating exhibits using the archive items. Then, we will schedule up to eight live follow-up sessions, where local partners can get real-time help. Representatives from each of the project partners will take a turn for one or more follow up sessions. We anticipate holding several of those sessions throughout the summer and fall.

Guides

Both CHNM and NMAH are in the process of outlining and drafting the guides that they will distribute on the *Bracero History Archive* site. First, Leon and Halabuk are keeping careful track of the successful and not-so-successful strategies for collaboration and documentation in the course of the project work. They are collecting these insights for future inclusion in the “Practical Guide to Collaborative Documentation in a Digital Age,” which will be distributed with the *Omeka* collecting system toward the end of second grant year. Second, Mieri is at work on NMAH’s “Teacher’s Guide to the

Bracero History Archive,” which will be available as a major feature of the live website in time for the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

Outreach and Publicity

The project partners have engaged in a variety of outreach and publicity strategies during the course of the last year. For the most part, these have been local effort to attract interview subjects and local partners. Also, NMAH curators participated in a roundtable at the Society of American Archivists at which they discuss the *Bracero History Archive*, and Navarro made a presentation at the Texas Association of Museums. In October 2008, we have a session planned at the Oral History Association Annual Meeting and at the National Humanities Conference. Finally we are in the process of planning for the production of publicity materials that will be released after the initial launch of the website.

In sum, the *Bracero History Archive* continues to be a model of institutional collaboration. While the Center for History and New Media has provided technical and advisory expertise, the close relationships between UTEP, Brown, and NMAH have facilitated the collection of the archive’s contents. The project has not been without its challenges, but it continues to move forward with relative harmony and essentially on schedule.

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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