

Building Ethnically Diverse Digital Collections

Kathryn Blackmer Reyes, Emily K. Chan, April M. Gilbert
San José State University Library

SJSU

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. LIBRARY

Introduction

- CSU Special Collections pre 2000 - primarily University archives (received by the President's Office) and fine books.
- CSU SC post 2000 actively collecting materials beyond the pre 2000 materials
- Special Collections vs Ethnic Collections - The **Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF)** is a Sacramento, CA based art collective, founded in 1970 by José Montoya and Esteban Villa. In 2001 CSU Sacramento did not accept gift from RCAF members



Democratizing Elements of an IR

- Users directly engage with the digital materials
- Gatekeeping, particularly at the point of retrieval, is minimal
- For textual documents, all words are access points
- Lack of rituals during search and retrieval of materials





I want to challenge that conceptualization of open. I want to flip the script, so to speak, on how we view open; rather than looking at it as a means of getting mainstream scholarship out to the margins, instead I want us to see it as a way of getting scholarship from marginalized communities into our mainstream discourse.

APRIL HATHCOCK

"Opening Up the Margins." November 18, 2016

<https://aprilhathcock.wordpress.com/2016/11/18/opening-up-the-margins/>

Ownership of Materials

- Sheffield: Stewardship vs. Representation
- On Acquiring and Collecting
- Ownership and the Institution
- Access and Outreach
- Rights





...information professionals must begin to think more critically about how to work with communities to ensure that documentary evidence is preserved, and to think less about how to add it to their collections.

REBECCA T. SHEFFIELD

"More than Acid-Free Folders: Extending the Concept of Preservation to Include the Stewardship of Unexplored Histories." *Library Trends*, vol. 64 no. 3, 2016, pp. 572-584. doi:10.1353/lib.2016.0001

Responsible Curation and Digitization

- Ownership
- Distribution
- Copyright
- Specifying use downstream




Cultural Heritage Center (CHC)

- History
- Need - Working with the affinity groups on campus, CHC was a likely home for some of those materials
- Audience - From the administration's perspective, the audience for these materials is rather limited

CULTURAL HERITAGE CENTER

SJSU ScholarWorks Collections

- Student (protest) publications
 - [Qué Tal](#) - Mexican American Studies Graduate Student publication, 1970-1976
 - [Cry of Color](#) - SJSU Journalism Student of Color publication, 1970
 - [Shaka](#) - SJSU Black Journalism Workshop student publication, 1970-1971
 - [La Voz Estudiantil](#) - Mexican Am Studies Graduate Student publication, 1983
 - Academic association
 - [NACCS](#) - National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Proceedings, 1975-2016
 - San José community collection
 - [Con Safos](#) - E. David Sierra, editor for National and local SJ Chapter of the American GI Forum
 - Affinity group commencements memorialized through programs
 - [Chicano](#) - 1971 to current
 - [African American](#) - 2009 to current
 - CHC events
 - [CHC Flyers](#)
- 

Considerations for Building Ethnically Diverse Collections

- Strive to decenter the archive and challenge structures of authority. Include the creators in the process. (Dialogue)
- Don't just "post and ghost." Adding these voices demands that you serve as a locus for ongoing dialogue with the communities and with existing power structures.
- Administrators and managers may have concerns about optics - interrogate why you would (or would not) include these works
- Content may be fraught with conflict (e.g., protests and efforts in trying to get voices heard and in promoting equity)






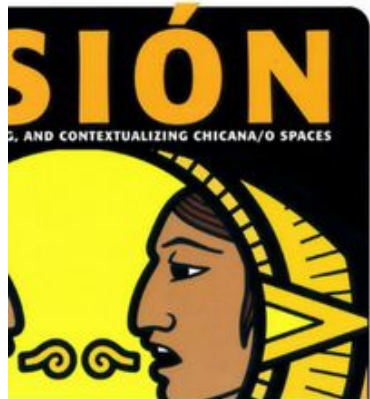
Creating the kind of space... that librarians and archivists hope to achieve is... much more complicated than simply broadening the collecting scope to integrate as much material as possible from previously underrepresented groups... just because a university preserves unexplored history does not mean that it is ready to acknowledge or confront any of the structural inequalities that exist in order to create the conditions in which that history remains unexplored to begin with.

REBECKA T. SHEFFIELD

"More than Acid-Free Folders: Extending the Concept of Preservation to Include the Stewardship of Unexplored Histories." *Library Trends*, vol. 64 no. 3, 2016, pp. 572-584. doi:10.1353/lib.2016.0001

Self-Reflection and Engagement

- Acknowledge your own structures of power, hierarchies, and systems of labor in bringing these works to light
 - Undo conceptions of Collecting and Acquiring; avoid adhering traditional structures of value to works
 - Be diverse in your own team (librarians, staff, and student assistants)
 - Engage with staff, students, & faculty on campus who work with affinity groups
 - Let's be honest -- librarians who engage in this endeavor may not feel comfortable approaching affinity groups (power dynamics)
- 



Takeaways

- Build relationships with your communities
- Don't take → borrow instead
- Target current events and activities; seek analogs, ephemera, etc.
- Preserve born-digital documents or web-based pages



Questions?

Thank You!

kathryn.blackmerreyes@sjsu.edu

emily.chan@sjsu.edu

april.gilbert@sjsu.edu