

Who Are We Really?:
Latin American Family, Local and
Micro-Regional Histories, and Their
Impact on Understanding Ourselves

Papers of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the
SEMINAR ON THE ACQUISITION OF
LATIN AMERICAN LIBRARY MATERIALS

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Preface and Acknowledgements

When I think back on the first Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) meeting I attended, in June 2002 at Cornell University, I still feel the warmth of meeting new colleagues and subsequent friends, who shared a deep and solid interest in the trends and traditions of Latin American librarianship. In the days that followed I was treated as a family member, exposed to formats and strategies employed by librarians and their associated institutions, and to *libreros* who affirmed the values, goals, and vision of SALALM's mission statement. That sense of family never left me, so it is not difficult to see what inspired the theme of the 59th SALALM meeting of May 10–14, 2014, at the Radisson Downtown in Salt Lake City, Utah. That theme was “Who Are We Really?: Latin American Family, Local and Micro-Regional Histories, and Their Impact on Understanding Ourselves.”

The present volume includes a representative sample of the presentations made at the conference, and captures the essence of how scholars and librarians focus on family, local and micro-regional historical resources, and their place in the scholarship. Further, the scholarship explores several areas. One is how these resources add to the discussion of genealogical data: how families represent themselves; and how governments record vital statistics to document growth of population, guarantee certain rights for citizens, as well as attempt to document non-citizens. Another area treats racial and ethnic identities, or how people view themselves and are viewed by others. Still another is how those perceived identities conflict with perceptions of governments in the citizenship and rights guaranteed to people based on racial and ethnic identities.

What this volume does not capture, and can only be experienced in person, is the warm, informal sharing of information among libreros, experienced librarians, new SALALM members, and scholars. It is in this that SALALM comes together and why we look forward to seeing one another annually, when possible.

I want to thank many people and institutions who helped organize the SALALM meeting. I am very indebted to John Wright and the Local Arrangements Committee, and especially Wendy Duran at the Harold B. Lee Library, for their collective expert logistical assistance. Salt Lake City, Utah, was a wonderful conference site. I am also very grateful to Brigham Young University for its commitment to making our meeting a success. An immense thanks to Orchid Mazurkiewicz and the Editorial Board for their help in editing these papers. I want to express my gratitude to the SALALM Secretariat, as well, for its efficient efforts and helpfulness. Thanks also to the many active members of SALALM who participated in committee meetings and volunteered as panelists, moderators, and rapporteurs. Finally, I dedicate these

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8. Challenges and Alternatives to Caribbean Family History and Genealogy: Archives and Sources in Puerto Rico

Antonio Sotomayor

Family history and genealogy has experienced a boom in recent years. Websites like Ancestry.com, Familysearch.org, Geni.com, and Geneanet.org have grown both in content and membership to levels never seen before. The genealogy frenzy has reached television with shows like *Who Do You Think You Are?* (BBC in the UK and NBC/TLC in the US) and *Finding Your Roots* with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. on PBS. The study of families, lineages, and ancestral backgrounds has even entered in cutting-edge scientific disciplines such as molecular anthropology and genetics, popularly known as genetic genealogy. Genetic genealogy has proven to be highly attractive to individuals who have come across a "brick wall," or who have run out of documentary sources to trace their families further into the past (Fitzpatrick and Yeiser 2005; Pomery 2007; El-Haj 2007; Larmuseau, Van Geystelen, and Van Oven 2013).

Genetic genealogy has claimed special success in helping break down those brick walls. Although the tradition of "family names" in the Western World has been in place since the eleventh and twelve centuries, few people can actually trace their families back to those times, unless of noble ancestry or a public role in society. Yet most people can trace their ancestors back to the eighteenth century in societies with good record keeping. This is the case in many Latin American countries, where there has been a long tradition in tracing family lineages. As early as the sixteenth century, for example, colonists of Peru sought to gain social prestige by documenting their families to the conquistadors (Lockhart 1994, 191). This emphasis on Spanish family history has associated genealogy research with lineage adulation. On the other hand, searches to trace family histories of enslaved or indigenous peoples face insurmountable difficulties due to subaltern positions of their descendants. Recently there has been a shift in genealogy towards democratization, and many people look to genealogy to learn about their families without a need to find aristocratic ancestors.

The Spanish Empire is known to have kept good administrative written records. While this is beneficial for economic, political, and sociohistorical research, we are only beginning to understand how this translates into the genealogical. Yet access to these records is still difficult. For the peripheral areas of what was once the empire, such as Puerto Rico and other parts of the Caribbean, resources are scarce and limited, at least for the first two and a half centuries of Spanish colonization, the early 1500s to the 1750s. Moreover, much of the documentation with potential for genealogists still resides in Spanish archives or elsewhere. After the second half of the eighteenth century we have more local records and by the nineteenth century, more and better resources become available.

This article will discuss the challenges to doing genealogical research in the Spanish Caribbean, particularly in Puerto Rico, and will sporadically use the Sotomayor family as an example. It will also discuss alternatives for the researcher to address these challenges. In doing so, it will present the current state of the field of genealogy on the Island and its diaspora. The article will discuss some of the traditional genealogical works, then specific challenges to researching genealogy. Finally, it will introduce ways of overcoming the limitations to deep genealogical research, including the importance of historical context and DNA testing.

Puerto Rican Genealogies

Puerto Ricans have been researching and publishing genealogical work for most of the twentieth century. One of the earliest works is Enrique Ramírez Brau's (1947) *Orígenes puertorriqueños*. This is a very well researched volume that provides a narrative history of the Ramírez de Arellano family and its descendants. It also provides abbreviated information on various birth, marriage, and death records of its members, covering the mid- to late-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. The benefits of this volume are its chronological coverage and its inclusion of other families. That is, while it focuses on the Ramírez de Arellano family it also includes other families that married into it.

Similar to Ramírez Brau's book is Francisco Lluch Mora's (1976) *Catálogo de inscripciones demográfico-sacramentales y de otra índole del linaje puertorriqueño Ortiz de la Renta*. Lluch Mora provides valuable information on the sixteenth century ancestry of the Ortiz de la Renta lineage in Puerto Rico, mainly in western towns, and the families it married into. He then lists sacramental records for each town as far back as records exist. For the Colón family in Puerto Rico, associated with Cristóbal Colón, there is Edmund Colón's (1988) *Colón Families of the Seventeenth Century in Puerto Rico*. This is a valuable book, although the recent research on the Colón family by Gil-Loyzaga (2007) is also recommended. Another important volume is Martín Gaudier's (1963–64) *Genealogías puertorriqueñas*. Although this book

does not focus on one family, hence does not analyze deep ancestry, it does list as many genealogies from as many towns on the Island as possible. There is an index that the user may consult directly for specific surnames and dates. There are many more books on Puerto Rican genealogies, often focusing on certain wealthy families, particular towns, or time periods. They range from documentary information to micro-histories (Acosta and Cuesta Camacho 1983; Armstrong Mejía de Blila and Villares Armstrong 2000; Barragán Landa 1996; Casanova 1982; Cuesta Camacho and Pérez Coma n.d.; Castro and Castro 1991; Dávila 1995; Delgado Plasencia 1998, 2009; Encarnación Navarro 2005; Font 1987; Gil-Loyzaga 2007; Huerga 2008, 2009; Machado Martínez 1999; Martínez Nazario 2004a, 2004b; Mayoral Barnés 1946; Negroni 1998; Nieves Méndez 2004; Platt 1990; Oquendo Pabón 2000; Reed and Kaus 1994; Rosado 1994; Sáez 1995; Santiago Torres 1986; Schmal 1994; Solivan de Acosta 1988, 1993, 1996).

Recently, family history and genealogy have been studied by professional academic historians. Among them is George Ryskamp who has had a long career as an historian at Brigham Young University, publishing academic work on Spanish and Latin American family history and anthroponymy, the study of family names (Ryskamp 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005). For the Caribbean in general and Puerto Rico specifically, the best known is David Stark, an associate professor of history at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. Aside from the white Puerto Rican population, Stark has been devoted to studying the lives and family relationships of the enslaved black population. His articles, "Parish Registers as a Window to the Past: Reconstructing the Demographic Behavior of the Enslaved Population in Eighteenth-Century Arecibo, Puerto Rico," and "The Family Tree Is Not Cut: Marriage among Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Puerto Rico," are premier examples of this type of scholarship (Stark 2002, 2006).

In his work, David Stark provides us with a much-needed window to the histories of the enslaved or blacks in colonial Latin America and the Caribbean, a severely neglected topic of research. This is because family histories and genealogies traditionally focused on elite white urban men. While researchers in the late twentieth century paid more attention to analyzing how family structures intersected with bigger social, political, and economic dynamics (Borges 1992), earlier genealogical writings focused on discovering famous or important male ancestors, extracting data on wealthy men in urban centers. Females, especially those of lower classes and rural areas, were for the most part ignored. This lack of attention to subaltern groups should not surprise us, as the field of history in general also focused on telling the stories of white elite men and their great deeds. While Puerto Rican genealogy research as a whole is still far from the study of subaltern families, the increasing number of casual researchers will only help to grow the data and family trees of the common family.

Genealogy Research in Puerto Rico: Challenges

If it is difficult to research genealogy on Puerto Rican subaltern groups, such as blacks and women, similar research is also a challenge regarding rural men. This is the case of families in the northwest of the Island where my family is from. I have been doing genealogical research for more than ten years and have visited and researched at parish, municipal, and state archives. Information on several of the branches on my family tree, both from the paternal and maternal sides, disappears around the mid-1700s and some even in the mid-1800s. While there were documented *mulata* ancestors, most of my family belonged to the rural white landowning class. In my experience, researching the past of my female ancestors, and of the *mulata* line, has been very difficult and I can only trace it back to the mid-1800s. As for the rest of the branches, even of the white landowning class, I can only trace them back to the mid-1700s. Here is where I hit numerous brick walls. My case is not that different from other genealogists on the Island and the following discussion will illustrate the difficulties many other researchers face when doing genealogy work in Puerto Rico.

To briefly discuss the challenges to the Sotomayor branch of my family tree, I can trace my paternal ancestry to Don Juan de Sotomayor Hernández, circa 1700, in the town of Aguada, Puerto Rico. This gentleman married Doña Rosa Lorenzo de Acevedo and they are believed to be the parents of my fifth great grandfather, Don Juan de Sotomayor. Yet, the information we have for the first Juan is fuzzy and actually comes from a secondary source.

Genealogist Rafael Reichard Sapia gathered the information and reached this conclusion after doing extensive research in the parishes of the northwest of Puerto Rico, including the towns of Moca and San Sebastián where many of my ancestors came from. Reichard Sapia found Juan de Sotomayor Hernández's death record in the parish of Moca, which stated that he died on March 6, 1791 at the age of 112 years. The problems with this record are various for genealogy. First, even though it is plausible, living for 112 years seems rather long for any human being. Although my second great grandfather died at 94 and my great aunt at 96, 112 pushes the limit! Centuries ago, even early in the twentieth century, people did not keep track of their birthdates so their ages at death were estimated. Second, we cannot find the original record anymore. When I went to look for the record in person, the archivist vehemently affirmed that the church *never* kept death records, when we know for a fact they did. Third, the record does not list Juan's parents, something not uncommon before the eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries. Fourth, although the record lists a "Juan" as one of his sons, there is no way to prove that Juan (the son) was actually my fifth great grandfather. However, the record created by Reichard Sapia in approximately the 1920s is the only source that we have for now.

Finally, my family's surname in numerous records throughout Spanish colonial times appears in different versions that include Sotomayor, Soto, Soto Mayor, Soto maior, Soto=mayor, and Soutomayor. This is because names, and grammar overall, were not standardized or as strict as they are today. The *Real Academia de la Lengua Española* was established in 1713 and started creating grammar rules in 1741, which were gradually adopted in the Americas afterwards. The first dictionary was published in 1781 (García de la Concha 2014). This inconsistency in grammar did not only occur in Puerto Rico but throughout the Spanish world, including medieval Galicia where the Sotomayors were originally from. In Galician, the name is spelled Soutomaioir (Vila 2010). Other families, especially those with compound last names, experience the same situation. The name Lorenzo de Acevedo appears as Lorenzo, Lorenzo Acevedo, or Acevedo; Vélez Borrero as Vélez; Luciano de Fuentes as Luciano or Fuentes; and Ortiz de la Renta as Ortiz.

Parish archives, as the official place where birth, marriage, and death events were recorded in Latin America, constitute the first research option for genealogists. The example of my sixth great grandfather introduces us to many of the challenges genealogists face when trying to do family history in Puerto Rico's parochial archives. First, many parochial archives only have records back to the late eighteenth century, if not the early nineteenth century (Rodríguez León 1983). The town of Moca's oldest book is its First Book of Marriages, from 1775 to 1782. Moca was established in 1772 and seceded from Aguada. Although Juan de Sotomayor Hernández is said to be from the town of Aguada, its parish records only go back to 1804 (*Libro de Bautizos de Pardos*), even though the town was founded in 1648 (Nieves Acevedo 2009, 55). Another hurdle that grows more and more stringent is that researchers need to obtain special permission from the diocese's bishop in order to gain access to the archive. This is because the Catholic Church distrusts the growing genealogical work done in Latin America by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (aka Mormons). There is a formal application process and it could take months to receive a response, which could likely be a denial of access.

If the researcher gets access to the archive, another challenge is to bypass the archivist. In the best of cases, an archivist will feel overprotective of old delicate records and might pull books from public access. In the worst of cases, unscrupulous archivists or researchers steal documents or entire boxes of them, to sell on the black market. Other people might hide a document or even cross out information that would reveal sensitive information, such as illegitimacy, race, or conflicting evidence. The problem of record availability, theft, or destruction is by no means a contemporary one. For centuries, these parish archives have been suffering from a tropical climate that destroyed fragile documents. Mold, flooding, earthquakes, and ink burn are some of

the natural elements that have severely affected Puerto Rican parish and civil archives, especially those of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Additionally, the fact that Puerto Rico is located in the Caribbean, a region characterized by constant warfare between European empires, indigenous attacks, and slave rebellions, means that many archives were lost during battles through arson, bombings, or theft.

If the documents have survived centuries of hurricanes, earthquakes, war, humidity, ink burn, and theft, the researcher might face another problem: the lack of organization and bad cataloging. Often these books are located near workspaces or hidden in boxes in separate rooms. They are at risk of being misplaced or shelved in the wrong place. They have no systematic numbering, only dates. Access to these archives is extremely limited to working hours at best, or a few days a week at worst. Some of them, particularly the General Archive in San Juan, close often due to recurring water leaks, maintenance, or air conditioning failure. At the General Archive, where the researcher finds notarial records, wills, and other civil data along with genealogical information, gaining access to boxes is extremely bureaucratic. The researcher must ask for only three boxes twice a week and can only view them after one p.m. the next day. If these boxes don't have much data and the review lasts an hour, you will have waited a full day and a half to find out.

Genealogy Research in Puerto Rico: Alternatives

Although challenges to genealogy in Puerto Rico seem cumbersome, there are several alternatives that range from online databases to DNA testing. A good website with introductory recommendations for genealogical research is *Puerto Rico en breve*, at <http://www.preb.com/ref/geneal.htm>. Genealogists distinguish between recent genealogy and deep genealogy. Recent genealogy researches the twentieth, nineteenth, and the late eighteenth centuries. I have chosen these centuries because there are more records available, and because they mark the stabilization of last names in the Spanish world. Although in Peninsular and New World Spanish cultures, the tradition of inheriting surnames favored the father's, a child might also inherit the mother's family name. This is because Spanish culture had a more comprehensive view of the family (Ryskamp 2005, 361–63), and while names were passed down through their fathers in 80 percent of the cases, children would also inherit their last names from their mothers, or other ancestors (Ryskamp 2005, 353). After the 1700s, when patrilineal family name inheritance became law, families consistently passed down the fathers' surnames but that was still in the era researchers consider deep genealogy. The practice of having two surnames in the Spanish world only became standard in the nineteenth century.

For recent genealogy, users can become a member of the Ancestry.com website to make use of its census data and other digitized documents. For Puerto Rico, users have access to the censuses of 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940.

Another useful database is Familysearch.org, a part of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, which has digitized the records for Puerto Rico's civil registry and some parish records dating back to 1645. Yet the bulk of their collection is the civil registry, which was established for all of Spain and its colonies in 1885. The records in Familysearch.org for Puerto Rico are not indexed, so the user must browse record by record through 4,792,160 unindexed records and 12,475 indexed records, as of August 2014. Some of the books have indexes, and the site has saved some genealogies by other members, as does Ancestry.com, which users are encouraged to check first.

An important collection of court cases from the district of Arecibo, including the towns of Arecibo, Barceloneta, Camuy, Ciales, Hatillo, Manatí, Morovis, Quebradillas, and Utuado, cover the years between 1844 and 1900. The digital versions are held at the University of Connecticut at <http://www.crl.edu/focus/article/8565>, and may be accessed from that page or directly, at <https://archive.org/details/puertoricancivilcourtdocuments>.

Another important digital collection, one that bridges recent and deep genealogy, is the *Padrones de Puerto Rico, 1779 to 1802*. This collection gathers twenty-three censuses, covers the entire island, and provides population statistics on social status, race, and sex. The collection can be accessed, but only by the members of the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), part of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/30262>).

In addition to these databases, there are different online social groups and forums that serve as discussion sites for people looking for research hints and advice. Some of these forums have archives where members post transcriptions of personal research data, family trees, photographs, and other useful information. Yahoo! Groups is host to many of these forums and, in my case, the Sociedad de Ancestros Mocanos (SAM) has been very productive, at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/SAMocanos/info>. SAM was founded in 2004, and one of its founding members and moderators served as the president of the California Genealogical Society. Like SAM, the other active Yahoo! Group is the Sociedad Puertorriqueña de Genealogía (SPG) at <http://www.genealogiapr.com>, an offshoot of the original.

Established in 1989, the SPG is the oldest and most important association for the scientific study of genealogy in Puerto Rico. Their official journal, *Hereditas*, publishes peer-reviewed works of genealogy and family history, to which many academics and professional genealogists contribute articles.

In addition to the SPG, Familysearch.org has opened several of their "Family History Centers," which act as intermediaries between localities and the microfilm, books, and other records and resources found in the centers' headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. As of 2014, there are eight of these centers in Puerto Rico: San Juan, Ponce, Mayagüez, Caguas, Arecibo, Toa Baja, Guayama, and Fajardo. Yet, most of the information that might be found at

these centers may be found on their websites. The advantage of going in person to the centers is that someone can explain aspects of the database that are unclear online, or offer advice on research strategies.

Other online resources for recent genealogy with excellent information, articles, and even data sets, include Puerto Rico en Breve (<http://www.preb.com/ref/geneal.htm>) and the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Genealogical Society, Inc. (<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~prhgs/>).

Finally, oral history can serve as a quick and easy resource. Family members often have gathered information passed down from generation to generation. While some of that might be inaccurate, romanticized, or embellished, there is often a degree of truth in it, at least some hints to continue the document search. It is a matter of thinking critically about the information passed down by our older family members.

In regards to deep genealogy, some sources repeat the section above while some alternatives open new possibilities. Researchers should start by reading the article by Blanca Silvestrini-Pacheco and María de los Angeles Castro Arroyo (1981) on sources for Puerto Rican history. Additionally, researchers should consult the holdings at the Centro de Investigaciones Históricas of the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras. This center, created in 1946, holds a significant number of print and microfilmed materials from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. These were obtained locally and from archives in Spain, the US, and other Caribbean countries. A finding aid from 2013 can be accessed at <http://archiredpr.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/guia-descriptiva3.pdf>. The new collection of sixteenth-century documents about Puerto Rico by Ricardo Alegría (2009), complements older collections, such as the *Actas del cabildo de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico* (1966; Hostos 1990–1995; Murga Sanz and Huerga 1961; Tapia y Rivera 1970; Tió 1961). Once again, genealogical forums and societies such as SAM and SPG are helpful. Except for some records from the San Juan Diocese (Castro and Castro 1991), due to the barely existent parish records from the 1500s and 1600s researching on the island is all but impossible.

Much research is yet to be done in Spanish archives, such as the Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Archivo Militar de Segovia, and the Archivo General de Simancas. Some records have been uploaded and many more indexed on the AGI's PARES Portal de Archivos Españoles site at <http://pares.mcu.es/>. Although PARES is a good way to start, they have not indexed many records, and a number of boxes in Puerto Rico are not accessible through the portal but in the archive waiting to be indexed. Similarly, records about Puerto Rico might be found in Mexico City, the site of the viceroyalty of New Spain. Due to the brief but significant occupation of Puerto Rico by the Dutch in 1625, there is a need to research Dutch archives. Researchers must also be familiar with and consult the different sections of the *Catálogo de pasajeros a Indias*, which covers all of Spanish America from the 1490s to the 1700s (Benzo de

Ferrer 2000; Bermúdez Plata 1940–46; Romera Iruela and Galbis Díez 1980; Rubio y Moreno 1927–32).

For deep genealogy, researchers must understand Puerto Rican, Caribbean, and Spanish history, both in and between the Peninsula and the New World. More than looking for names to fill up boxes in a family tree, the search for our ancestors can be a true learning experience. The researcher will be lost in the archive if there is no understanding of the historical context in which our ancestors lived. For example, in order to trace lineages into the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries it is crucial to understand that Puerto Rico was a peripheral area of the Spanish Empire that received few immigrants (Gelpí Baiz 2007; López Cantos 1975; Sued Badillo 2001; Vila Vilar 1974). Although there was constant migration from the Peninsula and neighboring islands to Puerto Rico between 1510 and 1550 (Sued Badillo 2001, 44–54), after the 1550s the Caribbean's relationship to the European continent became peripheral and increasing attention was paid to Peru and New Spain.

One must also understand the practice of intermarriage and social codes of honor and respectability that often dictated who was a good spousal candidate (López Cantos 2001). Oral history is also relevant in deep ancestry and is considered an essential tool for the history of Puerto Rico during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Don Diego de Torres y Vargas's 1647 book, entitled *Descripción de la isla y ciudad de Puerto Rico, y de sus poblaciones, presidio, gobernadores y obispos; frutos y minerales*, was partly based on recollections of data through oral history (Stevens-Arroyo 2010).

Finally, another alternative for deep genealogy is DNA testing, a field in a constant state of flux and innovation. It is rather challenging to get started in this investigation as new discoveries and research findings arise almost monthly. However, the fundamentals of the field are simple and there is much reliable information on the web. There are a few basic ways to use DNA for genealogy. People can test their paternal lines directly into the past through a yDNA test, or their maternal lines through an mtDNA test. These can be as precise as to find relatives a few generations ago, such as second or third cousins, or the general areas where your ancestors lived ten thousand years ago. The third option is to test all lines from both sides through an autosomal DNA test.

To consider DNA testing, *Wikipedia* is a good starting point. As users get deeper into the subject, it is recommended they use up-to-date online forums because this is where they can learn about the most current information and recent discoveries. Forums range from specific closed groups on Facebook and Yahoo! Groups, to Anthrogenica.com. It is also good to consult the wiki page for the International Society for Genetic Genealogy (ISOGG). (http://www.isogg.org/wiki/Wiki_Welcome_Page). For users interested in trying out genetic genealogy, the leading company is Family Tree DNA. Founded in 2000, it is the oldest and most respected company in the field. Much of its

clientele is North American or European, but a growing number of Iberian, African, Middle Eastern, and Asian descendants use it, as well. Other company sites are 23andme.com, AncestryDNA.com, and the National Geographic's Genographic Project, at <https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/>. They have different missions and specialties, for some are better at recent genetic genealogy and others look into deep ancestry that dates to tens of thousands of years ago. Some are solely for genetic genealogy, while others include medical genetics in their results. Some people end up taking multiple tests with multiple companies to have a comprehensive understanding of their genetic makeup, but this can become expensive. The ISOGG has a useful table with each company's focus, missions, prices, and reviews, at: http://www.isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_testing_comparison_chart.

Conclusion

Puerto Rican genealogy is not that different from that of other parts of the Caribbean. Places like the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Haiti lack resources due to climate and human-made damage. Places inhabited by Europeans some four hundred or five hundred years ago, but which only have documents back to some two hundred, greatly hinder genealogists. An even bigger factor, the introduction of African slaves who often did not have their ancestry recorded, makes black Caribbean genealogy even harder. In this case, oral history is an eminent resource, as well as DNA testing. Moreover, the latter reveals the strong presence of indigenous mitochondrial or mtDNA, and makes us seriously rethink the history of indigenous extinction (Via, et al. 2011).

Puerto Rican genealogy is experiencing a recent boom as has genealogy in other parts of the world. Websites, online databases, genealogy virtual groups and forums, have opened new lines of communication and information exchange that facilitates the study of our ancestors. Long-held ideas regarding genealogy as an activity of the upper classes, to find or corroborate important ancestors, are slowly fading, yet have not totally disappeared. However, while still hoping to find that extraordinary ancestor, people are also trying to discover, confirm, or explore family legends and lore passed down through generations, or are simply curious about their family history. As librarians we must understand the rapidly changing field of genealogy, and be able to discern good resources from unreliable ones.

This article has introduced the common problems in Caribbean genealogy and reliable alternatives to engage in this fascinating field. Genealogy is mainly done by untrained researchers, thus there is fertile ground to produce or reproduce inaccurate and often outright false information. Stories of great, even mythological, ancestors abound and need to be confronted with historical rigor. For example, the Sotomayors are said to have descended from Hercules! Researchers are encouraged to do genealogy after having read reliable

historical secondary sources to understand the context in which their ancestors might have lived. Indeed, a genealogical researcher should confirm the existence of an individual by using two reliable primary sources. Among those are censuses, vital records, wills and testaments, and notarial records. With the rapid increase in DNA testing, users need all the more to understand the science behind a fast-growing field. In this regard, online genetic genealogy sites such as Anthrogenica.com and the ISOGG wiki are recommended due to their reliability.

Overall, it seems that genealogy is not going away, as long as the tradition of inheriting last names persists. Because of this, it is important for librarians, both public and academic, to pay more attention to this field, in order to teach users to find, evaluate, and interpret information.

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