

<b>Memoria</b>	<b>Mémoire</b>	<b>Hap`iqay</b>	<b>Qaahal</b>	<b>Geheugen</b>
<b>Memory</b>	<b>Memória</b>	<b>Mandu`a</b>	<b>Memwa</b>	<b>Nasundaa`wa</b>

The newsletter of the Latin American & Caribbean Cultural Heritage Archives Roundtable,  
Society of American Archivists

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## IF YOU'LL GIVE ME JUST A MINUTE . . . . A few words around the Roundtable

Susan Laura Lugo, C.A.  
LACCHA Senior Co-Chair



Two years as SAA LACCHA Co-Chair have not flown by. These past nearly twenty-four months have been the critical formation period for our roundtable and the tasks have been as plentiful as they have been varied. Everything was new. Everything was a first.

We needed a mission. We needed a Roundtable Handbook. We needed a newsletter. We needed a Web site. We needed a Facebook page. We needed a blog. We took on a project. We took positions and promulgated statements on diversity issues. We doggedly held high the protective banner for imperiled archives in Central America. We promoted. We impaneled. We published. We collaborated with other SAA colleagues, roundtables and sections. We solicited (and won) endorsements for LACCHA-sponsored panel presentations. We attended meetings. We spoke up. We liaised with other organizations. We learned. We exchanged information. And, still, we've just begun.

For the past 11 months as LACCHA's Senior Co-Chair I have repeatedly reassured Junior Co-Chair Patrick Stawski "It's not always like this—really! Once we get these systems down it will be a lot easier."

But, then, the disaster in Haiti happened. SAA Council asked for input on forming its response to the ALA Statement on Diversity. We initiated a “meeting by blogging” experiment. We tapped into SAA’s electronic elections capacity for Roundtable voting. With the newly-formed Human Rights Archives Roundtable we convinced SAA to provide a unique roundtable forum for discussing the effects of political turmoil on key Central American archives. Newsletters were published. Online listserv usage and users were monitored and analyzed. The Web site was updated (and now we’re on the verge of migrating to SAA’s Drupal platform). News, notices and developments in other regional and archival organizations were monitored and shared. And we supported, managed and promoted four panel submissions, and several endorsements, for the 2010 joint annual meeting in D.C. (two of which were chosen!).

I’m no longer sure it’s necessarily going to get any easier—the world is not getting any simpler and more and more I’m beginning to realize that LACCHA’s unique mission is as global as it is local. But as long as LACCHA has highly capable, patient and good-humored colleagues like Patrick to lead LACCHA, the roundtable leadership experience no doubt will remain as rich and enjoyable as it has been for me. It has been a supreme pleasure to work with him, and I know he will bring his own brand of energy and direction to the organization.

Thank you to Webmaster Marisol Ramos, Newsletter Editor Noah Lenstra and Assistant Editor Luisa Yanez for an especially active, creative and productive year, and special thanks to all the LACCHA Liaisons that helped to gather and direct information to our growing membership through the LACCHA listserv, blog and newsletter. Our roundtable’s relationship and communication with SAA Council benefitted from the strong support given by Council Liaison Deborra A. Richardson, and SAA’s Brian Doyle and René Mueller patiently offered LACCHA much needed technical and programmatic guidance and advice on more than one occasion. What a team!

Being a Roundtable Co-Chair has been exceedingly rewarding professionally, but the friendships gained and collegiality shared will be the warmest of my many memories. Without question, the opportunity to serve as LACCHA Co-Chair has been a rare honor, surpassed only by the privilege it has been to promote the importance and accessibility of Latin American and Caribbean archives.

### **Blog. Blog. Blog.**

Last year we initiated a blog for LACCHA, and used it to keep open the communication pipelines by staging membership “blog meetings” every three months or so. We hoped that by blogging throughout the year on issues relevant to LACCHA’s mission and projects members would be more likely to freely share their thoughts and ideas on LACCHA activities and core issues. Increased communication often leads to increased opportunities for learning and project collaboration as well and I must admit I had hoped these would be some of the side benefits resulting from the LACCHA Blog. Meeting once a year face-to-face at SAA was great but the dynamics fostered in a yearly meeting were hardly sustainable for an entire year.

Now, you should know (although it is not easy to confess) that I am not a blogger by nature, and although I actually opened a Facebook account, I don’t “do” Facebook. I will admit to one (very tentative) tweet in late 2009 but I don’t even remember now the name of my Twitter account. Rest assured I am not proud of these technological shortcomings, but I must be honest with you—who in the name of all that is archives and records management has the time in this era of economic crunches and staff reductions to blog/post/tweet?

Apparently not many of us. LACCHA blog use and user statistics indicate that most members are not participating in the blogs and the LACCHA blog never achieved the far-reaching effect that I had hoped for. <Sigh>

So, for the moment, LACCHA leadership will forgo further scheduled virtual meetings by blog. But, when the occasion warrants, the LACCHA blog will remain an effective method for taking an occasional survey, initiating a discussion or sharing items of interest. LACCHA’s blogging experiment did make one thing very clear: It takes time

and no small degree of talent to properly manage a blog discussion, and a successful blog manager needs to be both engaging and engaged.

So, bottom-line, if you are interested in assisting LACCHA's leadership with blogging for the coming year, and you think the time for Roundtable Blogging has come, we would love to hear from you. Send us a blogpost, a Facebook message, or a listserv post and we'll get right back to you . . . er, by regular email. Just don't send me a tweet until I figure out again how to Twitter.

### **Leadership of the Latin American & Caribbean Cultural Heritage Archives Roundtable 2009-2010**

*Check the website in early Fall 2010 for the 2010-2011 leadership roster!*

**Co-Chairs:** Susan Laura Lugo, CA, and Patrick A. Stawski

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## **SECTION 2: NEWS NOTES**

### **Tutela Legal and the archives of El Salvador human rights violations**

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In early 1994, I ran across a small notice from the Marine County Interfaith Taskforce on Central America in *Archival Outlook* requesting help in archiving and preserving the historical record of El Salvador's human rights violations that took place during the country's 12-year civil war. The task force was a California-based group that provided humanitarian aid during the worst day of the war. At the time that I read this notice, I was involved in expanding a large archiving project aimed at acquiring the archives of major human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Salvador project not only fit the parameters of the initiative, but also would give the venture added international significance. After speaking with the director of the Task Force by phone, we agreed to join forces and meet in San Salvador to discuss the parameters of the project and visit with numerous Salvadoran human rights NGOs that had been involved in chronicling and reporting on the war's human rights violations. The purpose of visiting and interviewing the directors of the NGOs was also to see which of the organizations held the most vital and important documents. With a little more than \$100,000 in grant funding, the project had to be tightly focused on only the leading organizations in the Salvadorian human rights community, although it was clear from our surveys that other groups also held significant materials.

After visiting with these numerous organizations, we decided to focus on three groups that not only comprised

the most important NGOs in the Salvadoran human rights community, but also possessed the richest documentation. These included Tutela Legal, the human rights office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, Socorro Juridico Cristiano, and the Nongovernmental Human Rights Commission of San Salvador (CDHE). Each of these organizations played a leading role in producing witness testimony and photographic and video evidence of rights violations. The project commenced just two years after the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords that ended the war. In pursuing the project, there were considerable obstacles to overcome given that much of the country's telecommunications infrastructure was in ruins; telephones and faxes were mostly inoperable and the internet was not yet in service. Virtually all communication had to take place in face-to-face meetings, which was often difficult to plan and arrange. Political and criminal violence was also a continuing concern, although it was subsiding with the end of the war. Representatives of the various groups proved to be both hospitable and highly protective, making sure that both my Spanish speaking interpreter and I were never left alone in public due to fears of kidnapping. Nonetheless, the project offered the opportunity to archive and preserve copies of critically important human rights documents whose originals, in some cases, have long since disappeared. The NGOs understood the importance of preserving the legacy of their work in a research institution where it would be made available to the international community. In order to carry out the project, agreements were reached with each of the organizations on the parameters and protocols of the project. Funds were provided to each of them to purchase photocopying machines and hire and supervise local labor to copy their case files, reports, and other documents. A few visits were made throughout the two year project (1994-1996) to check on the project's progress and resolve any difficulties. In the end, the project produced copies of tens of thousands of witness and victim testimonies and other documents, which now represents the largest collection of human rights documents on human rights during the Salvadorian civil war.

As the documents revealed, in critical ways, Tutela Legal proved to be the most innovative in its methodology of documenting rights abuses. In addition to reporting on the abuses of the Salvadoran military and right wing paramilitary death squads, the organization also initiated the reporting on violations of guerilla combatants regarding the assassination of right wing political figures, the kidnapping of mayors, and the indiscriminate use of landmines. U.S.-based human rights groups relied heavily on the work of Tutela Legal in documenting human rights violations and openly challenging the Reagan administration over alleged Salvadoran progress on human rights. Tutela Legal's method of documenting both sides of the conflict was later adopted and claimed by Human Rights Watch as a general strategy for all of its human rights field work. The group was founded in 1978 by Archbishop Oscar Romero, a leading advocate of liberation theology, and Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas to record and disseminate information about the atrocities that were being committed during the civil war. Tutela Legal's activities comprised not only conducting human rights investigations and taking witness testimony, but also promoting international human rights law and challenging the courts to uphold the rights of people who had suffered from severe deprivations. Romero's commitment to speaking out against disappearances, torture, mass atrocities, and other deprivations became the hallmark of his bishopric; his high office in the Salvadoran Catholic church ostensibly provided him immunity from paramilitary death squads until his assassination in 1980. Following his death, others took over the organization's work, which continued to compile a grim record of human rights atrocities throughout the war.

The project also succeeded in archiving copies of the case files of Tutela Legal's predecessor organization, Socorro Juridico Cristiano (Christian Legal Aid), founded in 1975 at the outset of the war. Socorro served to provide legal counsel for victims of rights abuses and investigate and denounce human rights violations. From the beginning, the organization investigated the abuses committed by the military and right wing paramilitary units in urban areas. It produced numerous case files based on oral testimony of witnesses and victims, as well as disseminated monthly reports on human rights violations. The Socorro case files document extralegal executions, disappearances, and other human rights abuses in El Salvador during the years 1977 to 1987. The other leading Salvadoran human rights NGO, the Comision de derechos humanos de El Salvador (CDHES), was also founded in 1978 with the support of Oscar Romero. From its inception, CDHES became the target of

attacks; several of its members were murdered or disappeared as a result of its work in the early to mid 1980s. Death squads and paramilitary groups were responsible for the secret extralegal murder and disappearances of suspected government opponents during the 1980s and early 1990s, while benefitting from total impunity. Like the other leading Salvadoran NGOs, the activities of these clandestine groups became a primary focus of CDHE.

In 1992, both sides to the conflict signed peace accords that ended the war, while acknowledging that respect for human rights was elemental to a lasting peace after more than a decade of wide spread violations of human rights. Under UN auspices, the Salvadoran peace accords provided for the creation of a Commission of Truth to investigate and acknowledge human rights abuses committed during the war. Most of the evidence provided in confidence to the Truth Commission in the form of thousands of testimonies and photographic and video material came from Tutela Legal, Socorro Juridico Cristiano, and CDHE. While the UN has since placed a decades-long restriction on access to these materials, they are publicly available at the Archives at the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU-B Archives) through a special screening process that protects the confidentiality of victims of human rights violations. Researchers must apply for approval to use the documents through a university International Review Board (IRB), which serves to protect the rights and privacy of human research subjects. They may do so either through IRB's at their own institutions or through the IRB at the University of Colorado.

The Salvadoran collections are part of a wider archive at the CU-B Archives of NGOS that have made human rights in Latin America their focus, including the Guatemala Commission on Human Rights, the Interfaith Task Force on Central America, the International Committee on Human Rights (founded by Joan Baez), the Resource Center for the Americas, the Physicians for Human Rights, and a large collection documenting the Salvadoran guerilla force, the Frene Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN).

## **New Latin American Cinema and Archives**

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Writing in the late 1990s film scholar Juliane Burton-Carvajal noted that "The bibliography on Latin American cinema has grown exponentially from the 1940s to the present, with the most explosive increase taking place over the past decade." The 1980s saw a rich period of writings on Brazil's Cinema Novo, revolutionary Cuban cinema, Chile's exile cinema and others that came to be known as the New Latin American Cinema. Shaped by factors that included the Cuban Revolution, student movements, military dictatorships, and colonial histories among many others the New Latin American Cinema sought to intervene politically and culturally in society. According to Cuban film critic Ambrosio Fornet, the political and cultural objectives of the New Latin American Cinema were to promote three essential and common goals:

- 1) To contribute to the development and enrichment of national culture, and at the same time, to confront the ideological penetration of imperialism and any other manifestation of cultural colonialism.
- 2) To hold up a continental perspective focused on common problems and objectives through a shared struggle for the future integration of the great Latin American heritage.
- 3) To critically address the individual social conflicts of communities as a way to create consciousness among the popular masses.

The collaborative relationships formed by filmmakers to affect social change should raise questions about the type

of shared projects archivists shaped to safe-keep the cinematic record of this movement. If filmmaking productions were joint efforts, the final products also required transnational care and maintenance carried out in a collaborative fashion. While scholars and filmmakers have had much to say about the historical, aesthetic, and ideological content encompassing the New Latin American Cinema, the stories from those who had to safe keep these highly charged political films have largely remained in obscurity.

To date, the only person to compile any information on the foundation and status of film archives in Latin America is Maria Rita Galvão, former director of the Cinemateca Brasileira, in an article she wrote for the *Journal of Film Preservation*. Working in collaboration with the Foundation for the New Latin American Cinema to survey cinematheques in the region, her efforts represent the ongoing spirit of collaboration amongst Latin American archivists, scholars, and filmmakers to address the future of moving images with regard to preservation.

Since the 1940s, when the first Latin American cinematheques were established, there has been an ongoing struggle for recognition at both international and national levels. In the 1960s, the Union for Latin American Cinémathèques formed at the Mar del Plata Film Festival in Argentina to make official and to strengthen their efforts as archivists and preservationists. This early collaboration would prove to be useful a decade later as a number of films were seized in different Latin American countries by authorities that sought to destroy moving images they did not approve of for political reasons. For instance, in *Plano secuencia de la memoria de Chile: veinticinco años de cine Chileno (1960-1985)* Jacqueline Mouesca provides a transcript of a testimony given by Marcos Llonca, then employee of Chile Films (the national Chilean film industry), about a military raid that took place on September 11, 1973 based on their supposed knowledge of weapons held at the institution. The real weapons, in this case, were motion picture films that were confiscated and burned. In other cases, many films were shipped out to other countries, and particularly Cuba before they endured the same fate.

More recently, the *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano* (ICAIC Latin American newsreel) produced from the 1960s-90s was selected for UNESCO's Memory of the World Register program. Cuba's participation in this program is also indicative of the ongoing struggles and danger in which much of the New Latin American cinema, and moving images in general, continue to find themselves, and the importance of collaborative, transnational efforts to secure their long-term preservation .

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**We want to know what you are up to! Contribute to the LACCHA newsletter and website.**

We have been thrilled by the amazing articles we received for this and for past issues – which are all available on our website. Let's keep the momentum going! The first issue of volume three will be sent out in January 2011. We seek articles, news notes, book reviews and event announcements of all types for this issue. We encourage the submission of images to accompany articles. E-mail ideas to the LACCHA listserv or post them to our blog!