Cataloging in Spanglish: Capturing the Puerto Rican Experience Stateside Through Metadata (With Some Help from the Community)

LINDSAY WITTWER

Abstract:
As the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Library & Archives (Centro) began conceptualizing a digital portal to showcase material from its vast collections on the Puerto Rican diaspora, several questions arose around how to represent Puerto Rican language and culture in the metadata while still following metadata standards and ensuring the collections are accessible to a wide audience. How do we accurately apply and define identifying terms like Nuyorican, Borinquen, Tíano/a, Afro-Puerto Rican, etc. when describing people? How do we describe the ubiquitous bilingual material, numerous instances of codeswitching, and inherently Puerto Rican terminology in our material? How do we represent neighborhoods such as El Barrio and Loisaida in New York City when they don't show up on a map or in place authorities? How do we harness the deep knowledge of the community members that frequent Centro's reading room? To answer these and other questions, the Archives team solicited input from the staff, donors, researchers, other cultural archives, and Puerto Ricans in the community, and used their feedback to help shape both the design of the patron facing interface and the guidelines for cataloging the metadata. Drawing on the knowledge of these diverse groups, once the site went live, Centro implemented a program using the comments/tags options to solicit additional metadata. This platform presentation will emphasize the lessons learned while developing and implementing Centro's Digital Collections portal, highlighting issues around loaded cultural terminology, representing bilingual material, and active community engagement.

About the Author:

Lindsay Wittwer is the Digital Archivist at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro), Library & Archives where she is responsible for overseeing the creation, preservation, and access for all digital assets, including administration of Centro's Digital Collections portal and managing the Digital Projects and Oral History Project teams. She holds a MA in Archives and Public History from New York University.