C.L. SONNICHSEN
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
DEPARTMENT

ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2021/2022
Mission

The Special Collections Department supports the University’s mission of education, research, scholarship, and community service. The mission of the C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department is to acquire, preserve, and make available for use the archival, rare book, and media collections of the University Library within the scope of the Department's collection policies. Areas of collection emphasis include primary sources for the history of the University, El Paso and the border region; fine printing and book design; and military history.

Vision

The Library sits on a hill within sight of the Mexican border. Our unique position informs our attitudes and the services we offer. We aim for excellence in providing service to our users and in making our collections accessible.

Overview

The collections contained in the C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department directly support research and learning at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). The Department has almost 800 archival collections, over 1,600 oral histories, various rare book collections, and thematic book collections, such as the Southwest, Chicano, Judaica, Art, Military, and McCord Poetry collections.
Staff

Claudia Rivers, Head
Abbie Weiser, Assistant Head
David Flores, Photo Archivist
Yvette Delgado, Imaging Specialist
Anne Allis, Library Assistant II
Gracie Galvez, Library Assistant II

Humanities Collaborative Intern

Erick Balandran

Volunteers

Eva Ross
Laura Hollingsed

Student Assistants
What We Do

Reference
Access services
Archival management
Preservation
Exhibits
Digitization
Outreach activities
Art collection management
Library subject specialists
Instruction and SPC orientations
Grant-writing
Special projects
Professional service
In August 2022, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) awarded Special Collections a Preservation Assistance Grant. The grant will allow the Library to engage a consultant to make a preservation assessment of the collections and the spaces where the collections are housed. The report that the consultant will prepare will allow the department to create a preservation plan to extend the usable life of the materials. Because the department has very limited storage space available, and because the University is also facing severe space challenges, making the most of the areas where materials are stored is essential.

Since UTEP has achieved R1 research status, collecting primary source materials to support faculty and student research must be a priority. We have hosted over 2,500 researchers, students, and visitors in the past year, even with a reduced schedule and staff, but we need to continue to expand our resources and services. However, having facilities to house important new collections presents a continuing challenge for Special Collections. We hope that we can use the grant to build the case for improved or expanded storage.

We expect that the NEH Preservation Assistance Grant will make recommendations on the best way to utilize and improve the spaces we have now, and help us to set goals for future facilities.
Class instruction for Dr. Sam Brunk's class on the Mexican Revolution, August 25, 2022. Photo courtesy of Marissa Testerman.

Evaluating books, February 2022.
Making more materials available online to researchers has been a goal of the C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department for many years, but the efforts got a push during the pandemic when offering in-person services became difficult. Working from home allowed some staff members to concentrate on projects that showed immediate benefits.

The Fannie Zlabovsky National Council of Jewish Women case files had been digitized by Imaging Specialist Yvette Delgado, but in 2020 Web Librarian Lisa Weber was able to add descriptive data to the files. This collection contains fascinating immigration background—mostly from the 1930s—relating to people fleeing fascist regimes in Europe. The project was prompted by Mrs. Zlabovsky’s family members who made a donation to help make the material accessible electronically. https://scholarworks.utep.edu/fanny_z/

A grant from the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) allowed us to participate in the Southwest Cohort of the Community Archiving Workshop (CAW). This series of training webinars gave us and the staff members at four other institutions tools to evaluate the quality of older media in our collections and prepare the documentation necessary for making digital copies that will be accessible over the long term. As part of the grant, we received a stipend to help us send some older 16mm films out for reformatting and funds to pay for more server space to save digital files. Photo Archivist David Flores also used a template CAW provided to record information about the reel-to-reel audio tape of the KTEP radio program “The Edge of Texas” as he creates digital copies.

As our digital collections grow, we are learning that storing them presents challenges beyond the initial scanning and describing the materials. The University must charge for server space and for maintenance of the files—many of which are extremely large. Technical Support staff must back up the files periodically, and backing up terabytes of storage requires time and energy.
In September, Special Collections will begin to participate in a grant-funded project to evaluate institutions’ capacity for preserving digital files. This project, in part growing out of the CAW training, is funded by the National Historical Publication and Records Commission (NHPRC), and will consist of assessing the usefulness of a set of tools developed by the Wisconsin Library System for maintaining digital media.

View other digital content from Special Collections online at ScholarWorks (https://scholarworks.utep.edu/spec_coll/), ContentDM Image Collections (https://cdm15823.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/) and the Oral History Institute (https://scholarworks.utep.edu/oral_history/). Other electronic collections created by Special Collections staff and students may be accessed at ScholarWorks under the heading UTEP History or the History Department’s Student Papers.

Fannie Hutman Zlabovský, Fannie Zlabovský - National Council of Jewish Women case files, MS508
By the Numbers

- 28,563 images viewed online
- 2,532 visitors
- 2,121 books and archival collections used
- 13,455 oral histories used
- 1,320 reference questions answered
- 648 directional questions answered
By the Numbers cont’d

8 (117 attendees)
ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

7 (210 attendees)
PROGRAMS

5
NEW LIBRARY EXHIBITS

3
NEW AND ONGOING GRANTS

28 Tours (183 people)

15 classes (228 students)
Bibliographic Instruction
Department Highlights

National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant, August 2022

Materials featured in Centennial Museum and El Paso Museum of History exhibits

Materials used in books, dissertations, and articles

Nerd Night Tours of Special Collections, August 31, 2022

Virtual Border Archives Bazaar, Border Regional Archives Group, October 2021

Over 500 Casasola Studio photographs now identified

Over 800 followers on Instagram (@utep_specialcollections)

"Wish You Were Here" 2022 calendar

Day of the Dead altars to Leon Metz, Juan Sandoval, and Diana Natalicio

El Paso Matters article about the Leona Ford Washington photograph collection

History Department Seminar on Archives and the Archival Profession, October 2021

Researchers from Switzerland, California, East Texas, New York, the El Paso borderlands, and more.

Mexican Baroque music concert in Blumberg Auditorium, April 11, 2022. The UTEP Early Music group played music from Special Collections' holdings on their historic instruments.
Department Highlights cont'd

Mexican Baroque concert with the UTEP Department of Music, April 11, 2022


Community Archiving Workshop grant

Art tour of the Library for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute students, June 21, 2022

Talk about Special Collections by Abbie Weiser at the El Paso Museum of History, February 16, 2022

Hosted digital scholarship workshops with the Benson Latin American collection, June 2022

Claudia and Abbie taught sections of the Border Regional Archives Group's Archives 101 workshop, July 21, 2022

Archive-It web-archiving projects (here and here)

Five new library exhibits

Ghost of Mt. Cristo Rey exhibit by Tom Lea Fellow Javier Segovia

Tom Lea Month Talk by Claudia Rivers

Texas Digital Library conference presentations by Claudia Rivers and David Flores, July 2022

Total archival accessions: 168 feet, 7 inches (linear)

New front desk!
Dr. Albert Palacios from UT-Austin taught three digital scholarship workshops at the UTEP Library on June 30, 2022. Albert, Claudia, and Abbie also curated the exhibit A New Spain, which opened in June 2022.

Border Regional Archives Group’s Archives 101 workshop on July 21, 2022 in Special Collections. Participants were from central and southern New Mexico and El Paso.
Dia de los Muertos altars to Dr. Diana Natalicio (former UTEP president); Leon Metz (historian and UTEP’s first archivist); and Juan Sandoval (UTEP librarian and celebrated art collector), October 2021.
Images of Black El Paso exhibit

Page from the Ada Tharp lap desk, PH038.

A New Spain, collaborative exhibit with UT-Austin's Benson Latin American Collection

El cordero vivo y mvertó, 1673, Rare book collection. Example of marcas de fuego used in monastic libraries in colonial-era Mexico. The exhibit included examples of marcas de fuego and papel sellado from UTEP Special Collections.
Pan American Round Table of El Paso centennial exhibit

Second-Wave Feminism in El Paso exhibit (in-person and online)
New to Special Collections

University Communications photo files

Daughters of the Republic of Texas - El Paso Rio Grande Chapter collection

Lela M. Cole Kitson papers

FBI Surveillance of La Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS) collection

Amelia Branch Foster collection

David Long Muzquiz memoir

IMPACT/Counterpoint collection

Alexandra Minna Stern research files

Franklin Mountain Wilderness Coalition records

El Paso Native Plant Society records
Fun and Games

Social Media

El Paso Women's History
Coloring Books

Online Exhibits

Special Collections
Jigsaw Puzzles

Special Collections
Playlist on Spotify
Online Collections

Image Collections

Oral Histories

Special Collections on the Portal to Texas History

Special Collections on ScholarWorks@UTEP
In Memorium
Dr. Diana Natalicio (1939-2021)

Diana Siedhoff Natalicio was a linguistics professor and administrator at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). She served as the president of UTEP from 1988 – 2019.

Born and raised in St. Louis, Natalicio earned her undergraduate degree in Spanish from St. Louis University and received a Fulbright Scholarship to study in Brazil. She then graduated with a MA in Portuguese and a doctorate in linguistics from the University of Texas at Austin. In 1971, Natalicio became an assistant professor of linguistics at UTEP. She later served as department chair, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and as vice-president of Academic Affairs.

In 1988, Dr. Natalicio was named president of UTEP by the UT System Board of Regents. She was the first woman president of the school. During her 31-year tenure, UTEP’s budget and population increased and the school greatly expanded its graduate programs. Natalicio, in particular, emphasized UTEP’s accessibility to minority students and strengthened cross-border ties to Mexico.

During her career, Dr. Natalicio received many honors and awards including the Conquistador Award from the City of El Paso (the city’s highest honor) and the Order of the Aztec Eagle from the government of Mexico. She was inducted into the Texas Women’s Hall of Fame in 1998. In 2016, Time Magazine named her as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

After her retirement in 2019, Natalicio was named President Emerita by the UT System Board of Regents.

Dr. Natalicio was a good friend to Special Collections over the years and attended many of our events and filmed a segment for our department's fiftieth anniversary video in 2017.

In 2020, Dr. Natalicio donated $50,000 to Special Collections to help fund internships. We are grateful for her generosity and belief in the importance of our work.
In Memorium
Dr. Diana Natalicio (1939-2021)

Dr. Natalicio with photo archivist David Flores and former Special Collections intern Michael Reyes at our ASARCO exhibit opening, 2016.

Dr. Natalicio speaks to members of the Pan American Round Table of El Paso at an exhibit opening in Special Collections, 2007.
College of Mines faculty, staff, and students, December 1920, UTEP collection, MS001

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Report created by Abbie Weiser

Front cover image: Sanborn fire insurance map, 1893, MS133