Collaborative and Active Engagement at the Hemispheric University

Supporting Ethnic Studies through Academic Library Outreach at University of Miami

Shatha Baydoun and Roxane Pickens

While librarians, curatorial and archival faculty, and staff at the University of Miami Libraries (UML) routinely support ethnic scholarship at the University of Miami (UM), library personnel, along with administrative members, have in recent years devised new approaches in outreach and engagement to assist ethnic studies programs. With collaborative initiatives in areas of research, curricula, and programming, along with investment in personnel and cultural capitals, UML has supported ethnic studies programs and helped augment the university's position as "The Hemispheric University." This paper traces these efforts by examining research and exhibition guides, primary resources projects, and oral history projects. The authors argue that

academic library support for ethnic studies turns on creative outreach and engagement activities. The essay also highlights, via the CREATE program, the various ways through which the University Libraries and the Lowe Art Museum (UMLLAM) have collaborated in instructional and resource projects to support specific programs in Africana, Caribbean, and Latin American studies. Recommendations discuss how academic libraries and their employees can more effectively collaborate to support ethnic studies programs.

As it moves toward its 2025 centennial, the University of Miami (UM) in South Florida self-identifies as "The Hemispheric University," a designation noting its status "as a connector between institutions, individuals, and ideas across the Americas and throughout the world."[1] This position is bolstered by the institution's priority to serve as a hub and platform for research and service across the Americas. The realization of this priority and that of community connection is further supported by initiatives in areas of ethnic studies. Scholarly, curricular, and community activities focusing on the social and cultural dimensions of race and ethnicity can be found at UM in Caribbean, Francophone, and Lusophone Studies programs in English, Modern Languages and Literatures, and History departments; independent programs such as Africana and Latin American Studies; as well as university-wide initiatives through the Office of Civic and Community Engagement and the Butler Center for Service and Leadership. Faculty, staff, and students in these programs work on projects that expand knowledge and facilitate both understanding and critical engagement with the histories, cultures, and lived experiences of ethnic communities on our campuses, in the wider metropolitan area, and at an even wider diasporic scale.

The University of Miami Libraries (UML) contributes to this dynamic work through collections, archives, and instructional and digital support for courses, research, and outreach projects. With six libraries across three campuses and over 180 working staff, library faculty and staff routinely leverage assets and collegial associations that augment course planning, information literacy instruction, research guidance for both novices and professionals, critical engagement with primary sources and distinctive collections, and access to creative and technically sophisticated resources. Practicing what Daniel C. Mack outlines in his introduction to *Interdisciplinarity and Academic Libraries*, UML acts "as negotiator among the multiple vocabularies, literatures, methods, and paradigms encountered throughout the curriculum" of ethnic studies.[2] Specifically, UML supports ethnic studies curricula with diverse methods of academic library outreach and engagement, designed to provide foundational knowledge, unique experiences with primary sources, and entryways into community dialogues.

Interdisciplinarity and Library Outreach and Engagement

As ethnic studies and other interdisciplinary programs at colleges and universities developed and matured in the latter part of the twentieth century, the academic libraries that would support them were called to develop new ways of finding and sharing information.[3]

Focused attention on librarianship and interdisciplinarity occurred in the 1990s with a special issue of *Library Trends* dedicated to the topic.[4] According to Evelyn Ehrlich and Angela Carreño in "The Changing Role of the Subject Specialist Librarian," strategies for how academic libraries can best assist these diverse fields of study have increased over the last several decades, and as librarians have become adept at supporting interdisciplinary scholarship, they have also taken advantage of new outreach opportunities.[5] These activities include the leveraging of new technologies for collections, discovery, and networking; embedded librarians on research teams and as part of instructional efforts, especially co-teaching; and community engagement linked to distinctive collections.[6] Like their interdisciplinary counterparts in the humanities, social sciences, and STEM, ethnic studies programs have benefitted from these dynamic efforts of outreach and engagement.

Outreach and engagement are long-standing features of academic librarianship, and the topic has received deep attention in the literature since the mid-twentieth century. In a survey of library outreach activities, Tina Schneider discusses the typical drivers of these endeavors, including responding to an expressed need from scholars and users, fulfilling a mission-driven interest, or addressing a particular crisis or social issue.[7] Outreach and engagement can take many forms, says Schneider, including instruction and programming that is offered to users within the institution as well as the public, community, and other libraries. Furthermore, these "programs demonstrate a library's (or librarian's) creativity, initiative, and sense of how best to present itself to those outside of an academic institution."[8] UML's outreach and engagement strategies build access to foundational information necessary for ethnic studies topics, highlight primary sources as a key set of resources, and set up dialogic exchanges through oral history programs. The fields are strengthened at the level of relationships with library collaborators for students and scholars and enhanced relationships with communities outside the institution, especially with distinctive collections.

Setting Foundations for Scholarship and Connections: Research and Exhibition Resource Guides

Research guides or pathfinders have historically served as essential reference tools for providing asynchronous access to library materials. According to Sara Morris and Darcy Del Bosque, research guides are curated lists of "recommended resources of varying types," often covering a particular topic.[9] Put into the interdisciplinary framework in which ethnic studies programs operate, research guides have the potential to significantly support researchers' work. Librarians engaged in the curation and production of these materials function, as Roberta Astroff suggests, as "specialist[s] in tracking and identifying texts across old boundaries, in filtering the information found in cross-disciplinary and cross-platform discovery tools, and in navigating the new structures of knowledge dissemination."[10] Research guides prove a convenient and effective platform for curating and disseminating this knowledge and information.

UM faculty librarians use SubjectsPlus, an open-source pathfinder, to build guides that serve their research constituents by helping them navigate through complex information systems. Located in easy-to-access websites that can also be embedded into the university's course management software, research guides provide effective sites of support for teaching and learning. They can be accessed asynchronously, which has proven extremely crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. These digital artifacts tie to the university's collections and other relevant materials, often surfacing diverse sources that might otherwise be overlooked. The guides further highlight the scholarly interests of librarians themselves who are invested in ethnic studies and critical scholarship.

One of the most immediate places where we see librarians creating unique navigational resources is for our Latin American Studies program. It is envisioned as a multidisciplinary

Table 6.1
Total yearly page views of Latin American research guides, 2017 to 2021

Total Page Views	Yearly Average					
Page Name/ User Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Latin American & Caribbean Studies	**168**	**253**	**233**	**408**	**110**	**1,172**
Returning Visitor	92	98	95	153	60	498
New Visitor	76	155	138	255	50	674
Database List By Subject: Latin American & Caribbean Studies	**100**	**50**	**96**	**88**	**25**	**359**
Returning Visitor	68	41	80	72	25	286
New Visitor	32	9	16	16		73
Latin American Music	**54**	**108**	**74**	**48**	**15**	**299**
Returning Visitor	20	47	46	23		136
New Visitor	34	61	28	25	15	163
Latin American Art				**161**	**65**	**226**
Returning Visitor				130	60	190
New Visitor				31	5	36
Latin American and Caribbean History			**138**	**82**	**5**	**225**
Returning Visitor			132	69	5	206
New Visitor			6	13		19
Latinx Art				**151**	**5**	**156**
Returning Visitor				123	5	128
New Visitor				28		28
Latin American Modernism				**44**	**35**	**79**
Returning Visitor				39	20	59
New Visitor				5	15	20
Latin American and Caribbean			**15**			**15**
Returning Visitor			15			15
Total	**322**	**411**	**556**	**982**	**260**	**2,531**

program in which scholars seek to understand the sociopolitical and economic factors influencing Latin American cultures. At UML, librarians have documented these multi-disciplinary components in several guides ranging from hip-hop to modernism in Latin America, each of which garners several hundred user views per year (see table 6.1).

This set of guides provides a useful resource for faculty and students and reflects the scholarly interests of librarians who are invested in Latin American scholarship and communities.

This is best exemplified in the guide relating to the Mariel Boatlift with links to resources available at Special Collection and the Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC). The guide contextualizes the event within the larger milieu of US-Cuban relations while framing the impact of the event on the city of Miami. In documenting the massive immigration of Cubans to the United States between April and October in 1980, the guide includes audiovisual and archival materials available in Spanish, Kreyòl, and English (see figure 6.1). The significant impact of this guide can be partially gleaned from the quantitative data. Since launching in summer 2020, the guide has attracted 2,981 visitors, with 1,909 users in the first year (2020) and 1,072 users in the first few months of 2021.

These guides not only highlight the diversity of library and archival resources at UML, but they also allow librarians to strengthen existing ties to the Caribbean and Latin American community in Miami. Included in the Mariel Boatlift guide were supplemental resources to the library's program *El Efecto Mariel*: *Before, During, and After*, which highlights a series of workshops and talks celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Mariel Boatlift. These talks gave rise to a crowdsourcing project in collaboration with HistoryMiami Museum, which collected oral histories from Cubans who left the island for South Florida. By augmenting community talks and related programming, the Mariel guide illustrates Schneider's note on the "independent efforts of academic libraries to move beyond their walls or traditional clientele to interact with their surrounding communities."[11] Furthermore, these community connections or "self-initiated efforts mean sometimes simply making a connection among just a few people within a community [but] the connections eventually affect many others in the community."[12]

Another opportunity for UML to provide foundational resources is with the Africana Studies program, which analyzes "Black intellectual and social-cultural traditions" through a translocal lens and connects to community institutions of arts and culture.[13] Location plays a significant role in the scope of that program, with Miami's position between the Global and US South. In addition to developing resources on local and diasporic Black history, art, and cultural studies, librarians have applied a social justice lens to research guides in the wake of protests condemning violence and persistent structural racism against Black Americans during the summer of 2020; UM librarians collaborated on a Racial Justice guide that is maintained by our Africana Studies liaison and provides an important set of resources for students, faculty, and staff. The curated guide has been designed to empower and educate the university community about combating intrenched racism, with resources in both English and Spanish. There have been over 1,400 views of the Racial Justice resources guide since its June release.

Related and in connection with campus-wide conversations about anti-racist and critical pedagogies, UM faculty librarians also collaborated with the One Book, One U common read program and curated materials around the 2020–2021 selection, Ijeoma

Figure 6.1
Screenshot of the Mariel Boatlift research guide

Oluo's 2017 book, *So You Want to Talk about Race*. The accompanying resource and instructors' guide provided both a listing of library holdings and a curricular engagement section to advise faculty and staff from a wide range of fields on incorporating dialogues about racism in their classrooms and other learning spaces. Nearly 330 views of the One Book, One U guide have been documented since its creation in fall 2020. Additionally, librarians helped develop and co-facilitate two instructor reading groups with an instructional designer and an education faculty member, an initiative garnering eighty registrants from nine schools and colleges and a total of sixty-five participants for two 3-session discussions on how to incorporate the text into courses and other learning environments. This has been an important example of librarian embeddedness in a faculty learning community situated around race and ethnicity—with a particular focus on active critical and anti-racist pedagogies and strategies for community action—and continues to impact faculty, staff, and students at the institution.

Pedagogies, Technologies, and Primary Sources: Opportunities for Innovations and Collaborations

While research and exhibition guides can provide a foundation to ethnic studies programs, work with primary sources transforms both these efforts and helps build important

connections between materials and the communities that they represent. Before 2016, archivists and subject specialist librarians at UML had most of the responsibilities associated with supporting ethnic studies programs, particularly in terms of highlighting materials within the collection for research and pedagogical use. A catalyst for reconsidering this work came from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, which invited UML to pilot the Academic Art Museum and Library Summit of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. Held in 2016, the summit included fourteen paired museum and library directors who gathered at the university's Coral Gables, Florida, campus to discuss concrete ways libraries and related museums could collaborate and increase access to distinctive collections. The impact of this summit on UML led to the creation of a new librarian-level and program liaison position funded by the Mellon Foundation. Among the responsibilities of this position is the facilitation of the newly developed CREATE program. The Cultural Resources, Engagement, Academics, Technology, and Enrichment (CREATE) program is a four-year project undertaken by the University of Miami Libraries and the Lowe Art Museum (UMLLAM).[14] CREATE was designed to display UMLLAM's extensive collection via innovative and interdisciplinary initiatives, pedagogies, exhibitions, and public programs.

In the four years since its inception, CREATE has successfully "encourage[d] faculty and student engagement with the University's collections while also increasing object-based outreach and educational opportunities" at UM.[15] This is especially salient in the area of ethnic studies. Since June 2017, the program has funded twenty-two separate projects spearheaded by twenty-three faculty members from a variety of schools and colleges. Of the twenty-two awards, ten projects were directly related to research and teaching initiatives for programs in ethnic studies, most of which contribute to the university's recent hemispheric focus. In every instance, faculty awardees collaborate closely with librarians, archivists, digital experts, and support staff to highlight library materials for students and instruct them in research methods and analysis. These relationships are collegial and mutually beneficial, providing faculty with instructional support as they work with primary sources, students with ongoing support as they also work with the materials, and wider exposure of the library collections with scholarly and community audiences.

An early awardee supported Africana and Caribbean Studies programs. Afro-Caribbean Religion: Healing and Power examined how religious traditions became subject to colonial rule, both in the metropole and colonies, and the impact of this on mental health, using materials from Special Collections and CHC that eventually led to a course on the same topic. These ethnic studies programs were further supported by the Black Feminist Archives Project, which was connected to a graduate course where students dialogued with the local Miami Black women's group *(f)empower* in Liberty City and Little Haiti. As part of the course, the professor and students studied the library's social justice–related Zine Collection, and with the assistance of Special Collections librarians, students deepened their understanding of the course theme by creating original zines celebrating female empowerment. These were debuted at a community event with *(f) empower* and then donated to Special Collections, where they were digitized and added to the larger set of archival zines.

A recent CREATE grant currently under development, Im/material Pedagogies: Building an Interdisciplinary and Holistic Curriculum on Archival Studies, epitomizes the spirit of librarian-faculty collaboration in the area of ethnic studies. Envisioned by a faculty member in the Modern Languages and Literatures department, this hands-on project will introduce students to the field of archival processing and collection management, particularly in the area of the Caribbean and Latin American studies. A key component of this project is that three librarian faculty will cocreate and co-teach the course along with the professor from Modern Languages and Literatures using primary sources from Special Collections. Another example of instructional embeddedness as outreach, this arrangement leverages the expertise of our librarian faculty, who will train students on the intricacies of archival theory along with best practices of archival work in the multiple languages of Spanish, Kreyòl, and English. These multilingual components, which are reflective of both the faculty and the librarian's knowledge systems, will allow students to work with primary sources and are a great opportunity to map personal connections with these materials, especially relating to ethnic representations. The outcome of the class will include a digital processing element that will ensure that these materials are widely accessible to the UM community, along with a student-led symposium displaying their work.

CREATE has also enabled a growing number of librarians, functional specialists, and paraprofessionals at UML to assist ethnic studies students and scholars working in digital humanities. UML's Data Services team and the Creative Studio in the Learning Commons are two sites of instructional support for those learning new technologies such as ArcGIS StoryMaps, Historypin, or Omeka. Whether through instructional
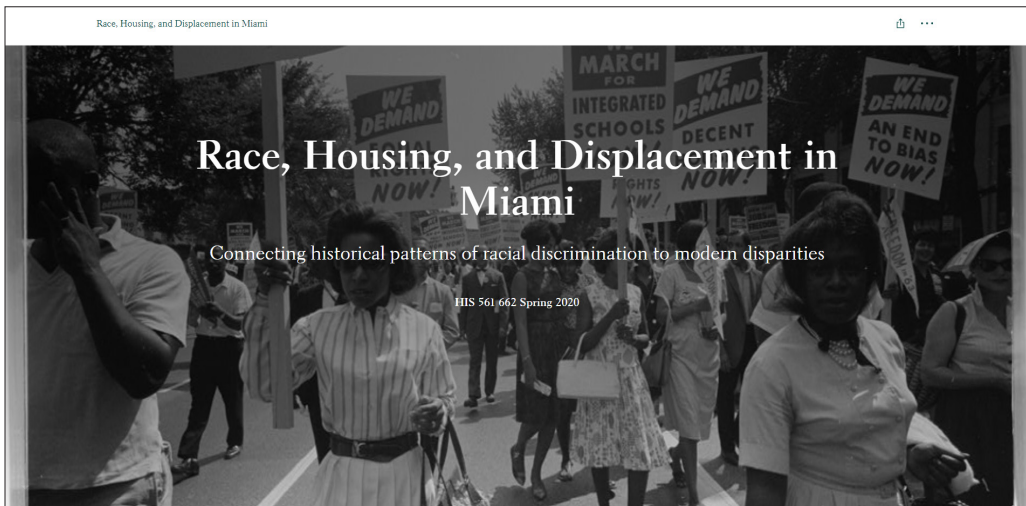

Figure 6.2

Screenshot of "Race, Housing, and Displacement in Miami" StoryMap in ArcGIS, https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0d17f3d6e31e419c8fdfbbd557f0edae

sessions in classes or through individual and group consultations, these librarian faculty and staff provide critical assistance on a variety of projects from the university's Latin American and Africana Studies programs. Additionally, Data Services and Creative Studio collaborate with the UML Digital Production unit and all the distinctive collections to develop and support digital repositories for ethnic studies initiatives. For example, this multidisciplinary collective of library workers came together to assist a professor whose project with students culminated in the digital exhibition *11 Intervisual Cubans/11 Cubanos Intervisuales*, opening conversations about art and theatre culture in Cuba among current artists there.[16] Similarly, the UML gave support to another professor working through the Office of Civic and Community Engagement to develop the "Race, Housing, and Displacement in Miami" StoryMap as a historical resource for people seeking to understand and address the legacy of residential racism among Black communities in the region (see figure 6.2).[17]

Facilitating and Documenting Community Connections through an Oral History Program

The ability of UML to help document and celebrate community and culture demonstrates the institution's meaningful investment in outreach that goes well beyond the ivory tower. A diverse roster of librarians, archivists, and paraprofessionals working with UML's Oral Histories program are crucial in helping our ethnic studies programs document the voices of the communities with which they are in dialogue, providing crucial pedagogical support for teaching faculty and ongoing engagement with students. These endeavors have led to the creation of initiatives elevated in part by the cultural and linguistic expertise of UML librarians and paraprofessionals, many of whom are bi- and trilingual in languages common to the region. Below are two examples where this interpersonal capital has merged with collecting oral and local histories to serve ethnic communities within the university and the Miami metropolitan area.

The Haitian Diaspora Oral History collection, recorded from 2010 to 2013, includes interviews with renowned individuals of Haitian ancestry from the art world, along with community activists and civic advocates (see figure 6.3).[18] These interviews recall the typical success stories of immigrants in the US and highlight the diversity of immigration within that community in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti (with the highest percentage of Haitian immigrants in the US, Miami quickly became the epicenter of aid relief to the country). Additionally, the interviews highlight the contributions of Haitians in Miami as they transformed neighborhoods into thriving locales, as with the development of Little Haiti, a neighborhood once known as Little Port-au-Prince and now home to a vibrant community of Haitian exiles, art galleries, Kreyòl cuisine, and indie music.

Figure 6.3
Screenshot of the Haitian Diaspora Oral History digital collection, https://digitalcol-
lections.library.miami.edu/digital/collection/asm0085.

The linchpin of oral history efforts at UM Libraries is the head of manuscripts and archives management, who also serves as the curator of Caribbean Collections and the subject liaison for French and Francophone Studies. Conducting workshops and presentations on oral histories, this librarian has been a driving force in diversifying the library's collection in Caribbean Studies generally and Haitian Studies more specifically. Additionally, the librarian has also worked with faculty from the departments of History and Modern Languages and Literatures to create a minor in the Haitian language of Kreyòl.

These academic collaborations have also led to successful university-wide outreach events that celebrate the Caribbean and Haitian voices. Marleine Bastien, founder of the Haitian Women of Miami, or Famn Ayisyen nan Miyami (FANM), has spoken at the university about the history of her organization, its impact on the Haitian diaspora, and her work in community building in South Florida. In commemoration of the 2010 Haitian earthquake, the 2020 One Book, One U common read program, which is housed and cosponsored by UML with campus partners, collaborated with the libraries to host a visit by Haitian American author Edwidge Danticat to talk about her experiences as a Haitian American, mother, and writer (her award-winning memoir, *Brother, I'm Dying,* was that year's campus reading selection).[19] This visit had an audience of nearly 200 campus and community members.

Other oral history projects have attempted to highlight specific aspects of ethnic studies and political history. As Thompson argues, oral histories have an "equal potential for exploring the political attitudes and personal lives of the more typical unknown activists, and equally of the unorganized, quiescent majority of the population."[20] Miami, with its significant population of Cuban and Latin American émigrés, presents opportunities to capture these marginalized voices. Several projects highlight the intersections between

politics and Latin American Studies, including the Human Rights Oral History project of *testimonios* or testimonial narratives.[21] For these collections, interviews were conducted by library workers from the CHC, which has the largest collection of Cuban-related archival sources outside the island of Cuba (the repository was first assembled by Cuban librarians Rosa M. Abella and Ana Rosa Núñez, who were themselves exiles from the island, a powerful demonstration of how the libraries help stage new knowledge structures and provide encouragement for ethnic studies at UM). The Human Rights Oral History project is an example of this knowledge production, particularly its inclusion of histories by Miami immigrants who, as Cuban dissidents in the 2003 Cuba Black Spring movement, were imprisoned as part of the *Grupo de Los 75* (Group of the 75) and members of the *Damas de Blanco* (Ladies in White). Many of these interviewed for these and other projects are connected to the UML system and highlight the multifaceted ways oral histories serve ethnic histories on campus and beyond.

Conclusion and Recommendations

With research guides, engagement with primary sources, particularly through the CREATE program, and oral history projects, employees at every level within UM Libraries (librarians, archivists, technicians, functional specialists, and paraprofessionals) contribute to the advancement of understanding, new knowledge, and creative expression within ethnic studies at the University of Miami, demonstrating how collaborative and intentional library engagements can strengthen interdisciplinary fields. Libraries are cooperative forces on the interdisciplinary landscape, and this fits completely within the practices of ethnic studies. Librarian faculty are actively connecting with emerging programs in this area, such as the university's nascent Center for Global Black Studies and the proposed Native American and Global Indigenous Studies program, the latter of which has included a librarian liaison on its steering committee. Being open to and actively cultivating and maintaining relationships with scholars from Latin American Studies, Africana Studies, Caribbean Studies, and the like can strengthen academic libraries' impact on these fields, particularly in conjunction with the development of library mainstays such as research guides and similar easily accessible resources. Investments in both material resources and technological infrastructures are key to these efforts and are an important demonstration of a library's investment in ethnic studies.

Further, having personnel who can deeply support curricular, scholarly, and community activities is crucially important. Care should be taken on the part of the libraries to support workers who must flexibly navigate a diverse information landscape from the subject position represented in the areas of study. Embedded in this flexibility is intentionality by library administration to allow librarians to freely acknowledge and intersect their professional interests with personal identities and ethnicities. Once this is allowed, librarian faculty can be at the forefront of ethnic studies programs at their universities, as in the example of the head of manuscripts and archives management, who is a force in the oral history program, serves as the curator of Caribbean Collections, is the subject liaison for French and Francophone Studies, and will be a co-teacher on the archival course mentioned earlier.

Responsiveness is another recommendation for libraries looking to support ethnic studies, not only in terms of campus needs, but also in terms of wider societal concerns (such as was seen in movements for racial justice in the summer of 2020 and more recently with anti-Asian attacks in 2020). Ultimately, if we operate with principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in how we initiate and sustain interdisciplinary ethnic studies support, we can continue to be instrumental collaborators in these important areas of local and global study.

Acknowledgments

Notes

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