

Job ^{of a} Lifetime

Ann Wheeler

Documents and diplomacy

If you love Latin America and foreign travel, have great networking and people skills, and enjoy a bit of detective work, then being the librarian for Latin American and Iberian studies might be your job of a lifetime. Eudora Loh serves in that capacity within the Young Research Library as part of Collections, Research and Instructional Services at University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA).

Hemispheres and regions

Loh's first UCLA job description had rather a broad scope. "I began as the assistant foreign documents librarian, and another librarian and I divided the world. Since 1994 I have been the main person responsible for the selection and management of Latin American and Iberian materials, which encompasses materials about those regions that are published or made available not only in Spanish and Portuguese, but in any language. Like many of the international studies areas, I work with vendors, when they're available, in the countries of the region. The Latin American *Libreros* are quite an active group thanks to the active solicitation of SALALM, the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials. Book dealers are all unique and interesting, one might even say idiosyncratic, and I enjoy making the most of those relationships. That is not to say that acquisitions in the Latin American area are easy. It is still very challenging and, for a research collection, requires acquisition trips to the region."



Eudora Loh, UCLA librarian for Latin American and Iberian Studies.

On the road

Loh went on to describe what an acquisitions trip is like. "I am usually able to make at least one trip a year, sometimes more than that, during which I visit agencies or institutions to look for materials that are not readily available through our normal channels to augment the collection. This involves visiting government agencies, nongovernmental organizations like women's centers and activist groups, as well as scholarly societies and research centers that are not easily covered by commercial vendors. I also visit exchange partners in order to consolidate those agreements."

Sherlock Loh

Loh explained the importance of what she terms having a nose for opportunities. "Often I will make an acquisitions trip with some contacts in mind, but those always lead to additional contacts or information about other organizations that are publishing similar materials. Following those leads often leads to some really successful collecting. For example, when I was in Central America several years ago, I was reading a local newspaper over breakfast and I saw an article about an event that was taking place at a women's center. So I made

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some inquiries and telephone calls and then went to visit the center. It had an excellent, well organized library. I was able to acquire the materials that the center published and also to look through a duplicate collection of materials of things that they had gotten by their exchanges with other women's groups in Latin America. It was very fun, and I am always on the lookout for those opportunities."

It's the perfect blendship

Loh has a very holistic approach to the role of the bibliographer. "I think seeing the big picture and how it all relates to the library's efforts is very important, but particularly so in a research library given the degree of specialization. Working with all the functional areas in the library system makes me more effective in what I do. Even though I'm not working in the digital library area or in cataloging on a daily basis, I work closely with staff in both of those areas in order to make the collection more accessible.

In our liaison responsibilities to academic departments, we have always had responsibilities for dealing directly with students, primarily graduate students, and with faculty. About two years ago though, the collection management department and the reference and information services part of the library merged together to form the Collections, Research, and Instructional Services within the Young Research Library to offer services like those of a specialized library to the faculty and graduate students in the humanities and social sciences."

Taking point on information literacy

I asked Loh if this had meant a big shift in her responsibilities, but she explained, "There has simply been more emphasis on participating in the information literacy efforts and in sharing general reference responsibilities. Information literacy at UCLA had been geared primarily towards the undergraduates, but because it's a

mature program now, there has been an effort to extend principles of improving information competencies to graduate students in all fields. In the past I worked with new graduate students in the Latin American program and the Spanish and Portuguese department, giving one shot sessions about important resources. This year, through a strategy developed by the Information Literacy Functional Area Team, I spoke in much more depth to the faculty about the goals of information proficiency for lifelong learners and talked to them about the kinds of changes that could be made in the actual course syllabus and in assignments to impart these skills. The professors embraced the suggestions and integrated my sessions into their course schedules, and I helped to develop the syllabus with them.

They were very open to the idea of changing their assignments in a way that would impart information literacy skills. It was really a great challenge and a great result."

Librarian for Latin American and Iberian Studies

Where: Young Research Library
University of California-Los Angeles

For more information, visit:
www2.library.ucla.edu/

Legacies

Loh has been a key figure in many extraordinary projects and initiatives, among them the Association of American Universities/Association of Research Libraries Global Resources Network, the Latin Americanist Research Resources Project, Latin American Periodicals Tables of Contents, and the Latin American Open Archives Portal. These projects have served as models of successful area studies programs and of global coordination and cooperation.

But when I asked Loh what accomplishment she is most proud of, she replied, "Although I am proud of these projects, I still feel that building a collection at UCLA that is here for future generations of scholars is the most important contribution I can make. I know the care and effort and brilliance of my predecessors, and I hear every single day about how great the collection is and how researchers from around the world find materials here that are nowhere else. I think that is a legacy." I couldn't agree more. *ZZ*