

Meiyolet Méndez

## Cuba on our minds

Online resources for the study of Cuban history and culture

The last year and half has seen a more rapid change towards U.S. relations with Cuba than the previous 50 years combined. The historic December 17, 2014, announcement restoring relations with the island nation led to increased interest in Cuba's history and culture, past and present. Research in Cuban Studies, exchange programs, and study abroad options have become increasingly visible in the landscape of North American higher education.

Cuba's colonial history begins in the 15th century and ends in 1898. The end of the Spanish-American War also meant the end of Spanish colonial rule on the island. From 1898 to 1902, Cuba was under the control of the United States, until the Platt Amendment of 1902 restored self-governance to the island. The period following this return to self-administration until the Cuban Revolution of 1959 has become known as the Republican period of Cuban politics, although *coup d'états* roiled the Cuban presidency during this time. The 1959 revolution changed the course of Cuban history, and many who disagreed with the new government were forced to migrate and leave family, possessions, and homes behind. Many of these exiles came to the United States and settled primarily in Miami, although significant Cuban communities exist in New Jersey. Smaller numbers settled in Spain, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and other Latin American countries.

Primary and secondary resources that address Cuban history and culture are available through a number of institutions and web

portals. The following guide attempts to bring some of these resources together. The guide is organized by institution/web collection, with the understanding that a single institution can contain a multiplicity of format resources, from photographs to manuscripts to digitized periodicals and books.

- **Cuban Heritage Collection Digital Collections (University of Miami Libraries).** The University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC) is a distinctive and area studies collection that collects, preserves, and provides access to the cultural and historical record of Cuba and its diaspora. With a thriving digitization program, CHC has made available thousands of photographs, archival, ephemeral, and printed materials related to the Cuban and Cuban exile experiences. In addition, with two oral history projects, CHC documents both the journeys of earlier generations of exiles, as well as the stories of newer arrivals to the United States. *Access:* <http://merrick.library.miami.edu/digitalprojects/chc.php>.

- **Cuban Heritage Collection Digital Exhibits (University of Miami Libraries).** In addition to the digitized holdings, CHC has made available digital exhibits on a number of topics. The "Memory and Record" exhibit

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presents a timeline of Cuban and exile history featuring selected items from the collection. Other exhibits, such as “The Cuban Rafter Phenomenon: A Unique Sea Exodus” and “In Search of Freedom: Cuban Exiles and the U.S. Cuban Refugee Program,” focus on two specific eras of contemporary Cuban experience. These, as well as other exhibits on theater, literature, and art, can be found in the CHC Digital Exhibits page. *Access:* [http://merrick.library.miami.edu/digitalprojects/chc\\_exhibits.php](http://merrick.library.miami.edu/digitalprojects/chc_exhibits.php).

- **Digital Archive of Latin American and Caribbean Ephemera (Princeton University).** This growing collection contains digitized ephemera from Latin American and the Caribbean. Most of the items related to Cuba can be found by searching by geographic origin. The ephemera tends to be more contemporary, perfectly complementing the Latin American Pamphlet Digital Collection (below), which focuses on the 19th and early 20th centuries. Topics in this collection range from health and medicine to education to religion. There are a number of art exhibit pamphlets, as well. *Access:* <http://lae.princeton.edu/>.

- **Latin American Pamphlet Digital Collection (Harvard University).** This collection of Latin American pamphlets contains a significant number of 19th- and early 20th-century pamphlets published on or about the island. A quick search for “Cuba” will yield more than 800 results. Each record has a link to the full text of the item, and the digitized object can be navigated via the index located on the left side of the screen. *Access:* [http://vc.lib.harvard.edu/vc/deliver/home?\\_collection=LAP](http://vc.lib.harvard.edu/vc/deliver/home?_collection=LAP).

- **Biblioteca Nacional Jose Marti (Cuba’s Jose Marti National Library): Carteles Collection: Poster collection of over 15,000 items.** Cuba’s National Library has digitized its poster collection and made it available to the public via their website. Many of the posters date from post-1959 and feature the design of many well-known Cuban graphic designers. Beyond their artistic value, these posters reflect the Revolution’s

effective use of the medium to engage and inform its population. Metadata for the poster collection includes author or artist, year, title, place of publication, physical description and subject, all in Spanish. To search this collection, enter the URL below and enter your keyword in the Busqueda Simple area. The Carteles collection is automatically selected. *Access:* <http://bdigital.bnjm.cu/index.php?s ecc=catalogo&tipo=digital&colece=carteles>.

- **MICONS Collection: A collection of digitized glass negatives from the Cuban Ministry of Construction.** This collection features a growing number of photographs digitized from glass negatives from the archives of the Cuban Ministry of Construction. In addition to photographs of buildings, the collection also contains aerial photographs, public works, and street views. To search this collection, enter the URL below and enter your keyword in the Busqueda Simple area. The MICONS Collection is automatically selected. *Access:* <http://bdigital.bnjm.cu/?secc=catalogo&tipo=digital&colece=fotos>.

- **Digital Library of the Caribbean.** The Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC), a cooperative digital library that collates and makes accessible digitized primary sources from and about the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean. dLOC resources are contributed by member institutions throughout the region, including the University of Florida, Florida International University, University of the West Indies, and the University of Miami. Researchers interested in Cuba material can search the entire collection from the homepage, and then use the facets on the search results page to narrow down by subject, geographic location, language, resource format, date, etc. Searching by Topical or Thematic Collections brings up specific resources on Cuba, such as the 19th-Century Cuban Imprints Collection, and the Cuban Sugar Industry, Braga Brothers Collection, among others. *Access:* <http://www.dloc.com>.

- **Sandy Lillydahl Venceremos Brigade Photograph Collection (University of Massachusetts-Amherst).** In the 1970s,

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circulates, and we are skilled in explaining to users how complicated systems and structures work. Many of us are doing important work to reform our individual publishing practices, and our field has made great strides in open-

ing up many of our journals. Editorial boards outside our field are promising places for us to leverage our experience and expertise. Another world is possible, and we might be the only ones in the room who know it. *ZZ*

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*(“Making Cuba connections,” continues from page 485)*

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## Notes

1. The W&M–Cuba Connection, <http://globalvoices.wm.edu/2015/12/23/the-wm-cuba-connection-i/>.

2. Ann Marie Stock is a specialist on Cuban film and media culture and has developed relationships with scholars, artists, and organizations on the island. She is the author of *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking during Times of Transition* (UNC Press, 2009), editor of *World Film Locations: Havana* (Intellect, 2015), and founding director of the nonprofit

Cuban Cinema Classics, making available subtitled Cuban documentaries on DVD for libraries and cultural organizations. To learn more about the initiative, visit [www.cubancinemaclassics.org](http://www.cubancinemaclassics.org).

3. The College of William & Mary, The College Curriculum, [www.wm.edu/as/undergraduate/curriculum/coll/index.php](http://www.wm.edu/as/undergraduate/curriculum/coll/index.php),

4. The College of William and Mary, COLL 300, [www.wm.edu/as/undergraduate/curriculum/coll/300/index.php](http://www.wm.edu/as/undergraduate/curriculum/coll/300/index.php).

5. Estudiantes de Estados Unidos visitan Televisión Serrana, [www.tvserrana.icrt.cu/index.php/noticias/177-estudiantes-de-estados-unidos-visitantelevision-serrana](http://www.tvserrana.icrt.cu/index.php/noticias/177-estudiantes-de-estados-unidos-visitantelevision-serrana).

6. Unmade in Cuba, <https://libraries.wm.edu/exhibits/unmade-cuba>.

7. W&M Libraries visits Cuba, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjfjYcJPI1w>. *ZZ*

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the Venceremos Brigades were composed of North American college students who thought the United States’ approach to relations with Cuba was misguided. They sought to create “people to people” connections and effect change in government diplomacy. The Sandy Lillydahl Venceremos Brigade Photograph Collection at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, provides an unusually candid look at what the members of these brigades did and had access to while in Cuba. The photographs document the sugar cane cutting season, a major driver of the Cuban economy. *Access:* <http://scua.library.umass.edu/ead/muph056.html>.

• **Granma, Official Newspaper.** This is the website of the official newspaper of the

Cuban government. In addition to current Cuban news and events, the website features stories and press releases related to topics of particular importance. *Access:* <http://www.granma.cu>.

• **14 y Medio.** This is an alternative, independent, digital newspaper founded on the island by Yoani Sanchez, a well-known Cuban dissident. The newspaper covers international issues, as well as reporting on everyday life in Cuba. One of the sections, for example, provides the price of produce on a supermarket in Havana. The newspaper is also available in English and in a print edition featuring the previous week’s reporting. *Access:* <http://www.14ymedio.com>. *ZZ*