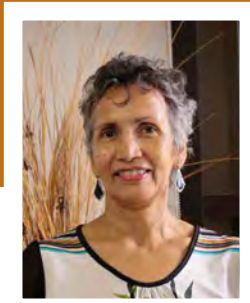


2022 Annual Report







From the Vice Provost

Friends,

As we move to a new chapter in the story of these Libraries,
I want to briefly reflect on the past year.

It was largely a true return to normal operations in 2022, and as such we began to build strategic plans that reflected some stability in our outlook. COVID as a pandemic began to fade into the background as the spring progressed, though surges early and late in the year reminded us to remain vigilant. The university launched its “What Starts Here” capital campaign in March with a modest \$6 billion goal, while our spring 40 Hours for the Forty Acres work resulted in over \$54,000 in donations. We built our own “Plausible Futures” framework as UT released its “Change Starts Here” strategic plan, and redoubled its DEI effort with the launch of the “You Belong Here” Plan for an Equitable and Inclusive Campus just as we were approving recommendations for our own IDEA Action Plan. In the fall, the Texas Library Coalition for United Action was finally able to close out negotiations resulting in a historic agreement with Elsevier that means lower costs and greater access. As campus wrapped for the year, we began preparatory work on the new Scholars Lab on the entry level of PCL, slated for completion later this year.

All in all, it made for a pretty remarkable year
after a prolonged period of unexpected challenges.

As we look forward to a new year, I want to recognize what tremendous perseverance our institution has shown in the past year, if not the past few. Our staff has shown great resilience in the face of uncertainties and challenges that had no precedent, and we can judge by the bustle of activity that has returned to our spaces and platforms that we have succeeded in maintaining the Libraries’ central role on the Forty Acres.

We hope that you will join us as we look forward to an even brighter future,
and the promise of the year ahead.

Dr. Lorraine J. Haricombe
Vice Provost and Director, University of Texas Libraries

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Haricombe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



Reading Room Named to Honor Hartness

The Benson Latin American Collection dressed up and campus lit up for the opening of the newly-named Ann Hartness Reading Room.

On Thursday, March 24, the Benson hosted a dedication ceremony for the renovated space in recognition of former head librarian Ann Hartness, who is renowned for her 38-year career at the Benson and her contributions to Brazilian studies. The space naming is the result of a generous gift by Hartness's son Jonathan Graham and daughter-in-law and Elizabeth Ulmer, who are both graduates of UT's School of Law,

The couple is directing a portion of their gift to establish the Jonathan Graham and Elizabeth Ulmer Fund for Library Materials on Brazil, an endowment to enhance the Benson's Brazilian studies collection. The remainder of their gift will match other donors' gifts to new or established endowments in

any area at the Benson.

"My mother raised three boys in two different countries, moving back and forth while balancing her family, her education and her work," says, Graham. "I'm just so proud of her, because when I think of the arc of her life, at a time when women from her background essentially followed their husbands, she made her own very distinctive career."

The reopening of the Hartness Reading Room extends the Centennial Celebration of the Benson, which began last year. In honor of the Benson centenary and the occasion of the reopening, the UT Tower was lighted orange.

Hartness joined the Benson in 1970, working as a cataloger of Latin American periodicals. She helped with the transition as libraries moved towards digital services and resources, and eventually worked her way up to director. Throughout her tenure, she increased the depth and breadth of the library's holdings

in Brazilian materials. She retired in 2008 at age 73.

"Ann Hartness is synonymous with Brazilian collections at the Benson," says Benson Director Melissa Guy. "It was through her tenacity, in-depth knowledge, and personal relationships that the library built a strong foundation for the study of Brazil at The University of Texas at Austin."

The Benson's main reading room is frequented by students, faculty and scholars from around the world, and it is the very room where Jon Graham spent countless hours studying as a teen and later as a Texas Law student.

"It was a refuge to study in one of the graduate student carrels in the Benson Collection. It was a quiet place to read, wander and collect my thoughts. This is a perfect way to honor my mother," he says.

The Benson Collection Takes a Summer Roadtrip

Thanks to a Department of Education National Resource Center grant, the Digital Scholarship Office at the Benson Latin American Collection had the distinct opportunity to share some of the Benson's Spanish colonial treasures with communities outside of Austin. In a traveling exhibit titled *A New Spain, 1521–1821*, reproduced materials demonstrated the cultural, social, and political evolution of colonial Mexico.

The Benson continued its longstanding partnership with the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). In collaboration with Claudia Rivers and Abbie Weiser at the C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, an exhibit was created that highlighted Spanish colonial holdings from both libraries, providing both a hemispheric and local perspective. To broaden the impact of the collaborative effort, partners organized an accompanying series of workshops based on the materials for social studies teachers, colonialists, and archival professionals in the El Paso–Las Cruces (NM) region.

The collaboration kicked off the programming with a two-day in-

tensive training for teachers from El Paso and Clint independent school districts. Workshops started onsite at UTEP's library with a curator's tour, a lunchtime loteria game based on the exhibit, and an in-depth look at Indigenous and Spanish maps from a previous traveling exhibition, *Mapping Mexican History*. By the end of the day, teachers were able to take home the facsimile *Mapping* items, some of were displayed in the fall at Horizon High School.

A second day of online workshops featured 2022 Digital Scholarship Fellow Dr. Diego Luis, who shared an interactive simulation he designed based on an inquisitorial case archived at the Benson to teach about Afro-descendant colonial experiences. Lesson plans developed with UT Austin's Department of Curriculum and Instruction on the navigation of gender roles in New Spain were presented, and teachers were provided with a survey of digital resources at UT Austin and digital humanities tools they can use to teach about colonial Mexico in their classrooms.

On the final day, a series of digital scholarship workshops were pro-

vided for local scholars. Students, faculty, and cultural heritage staff from the University of Texas at El Paso and New Mexico State University Library attended three sessions that provided them with practical training in the visualization and analysis of Spanish colonial materials using various digital tools. Attendees learned to annotate various colonial texts and images, map the origins of New Spain's soldiers, and visualize the networks of Afro-descendant hechiceras, or women casting incantations, in Veracruz.

Upon its return to Austin, the Benson partnered with Huston-Tillotson University to host the traveling exhibit. Benson staff installed the history of colonial Mexico on the walls of the Downs-Jones Library where it remained throughout the fall.

The exhibit has been digitally preserved and is available for viewing through the Exhibits platform on the Libraries' website.





Texas ScholarWorks Surpasses 100k

The University of Texas at Austin's digital repository Texas ScholarWorks (TSW) announced last summer that it had exceeded 100,000 items.

The milestone was reached when the minutes from a meeting of Student Government on May 3rd, 1988, were added. This item is part of a larger collection of over 3,000 documents related to UT Student Government.

Texas ScholarWorks (formerly the University of Texas Digital Repository) was created to provide open, online access to the products of the University's research and scholarship, preserve these works for future generations, promote new models of scholarly communication and deepen community understanding of the value of higher education. TSW went into production in September 2008, and the process of making content available online has been a team project from the start. The repository is a partner contributor to the larger Texas Digital Library consortium, which is a network of libraries and institutions across the state of Texas that collaborates to provide digital services and support for research, teaching, and learning.

Texas ScholarWorks is committed to preserving and maintaining the scholarly output of the university over the long term. The repository uses industry-standard preservation techniques and technologies to ensure that the materials stored within it remain accessible and usable for years to come. This includes strategies for ensuring the authenticity and integrity of the materials, as well as maintaining the necessary technical infrastructure to support long-term storage and access.

As of earlier this month, there have been over 39,000,000 total downloads of TSW materials, from locally in Austin to the far corners of the globe. Some of the most highly used items include:

- *Piano quintet in Eb major, op. 44 by Robert Schumann: Transcribed for clarinet quartet and piano – a 2003 music dissertation*
- *First principles-based atomistic modeling of the structure and nature of amorphous Au-Si alloys and their application to Si nanowires synthesis – a 2008 chemical engineering dissertation*
- *Panamá, Resultados Elecciones 2009 – electoral data from a 2009 election in Panamá*
- *The Development and Psychometric Properties of LIWC2015 – a 2015 faculty paper about a text analysis program*
- *COVID and Corrections: A Profile of COVID Deaths in Custody in Texas – a 2020 report published by the LBJ School of Public Affairs*
- *The Causal Effect of Campus Residency on College Student Retention – a 2011 faculty paper*
- *Kangura – a Rwandan magazine archived in the Genocide Archive Rwanda collection*
- *Design and analysis of a 20 MW propulsion power train – 2004 publication from the Center for Electromechanics*

Texas ScholarWorks plays an important role in promoting scholarship and research at the University of Texas at Austin. By providing a platform for sharing and preserving scholarly output, TSW helps to facilitate collaborations among researchers, increase the visibility of UT Austin's research, and promote open and equitable access to knowledge and information.

Texas Library Coalition Reaches Deal with Elsevier



The Texas Library Coalition for United Action (TLCUA) announced a new agreement with Elsevier in the fall to provide greater access to and lower costs for access to its publications at Texas universities and libraries.

In 2019, 44 public and private university campuses across Texas joined together to form TLCUA to think creatively about access to faculty publications and the sustainability of journal subscriptions. TLCUA has negotiated with Elsevier, the world's largest publisher of scientific journals, including *The Lancet* and *Cell* and over 2,500 other journals covering topics in medicine, biology, psychology, engineering, business and more. The TLCUA effort aligns with other

libraries across academia that have sought to evolve the relationship between libraries and publishers and find new ways to thrive together.

As a result of the agreement, all TLCUA members receive a discount on journal subscriptions—some as high as 30%—while still maintaining significant amounts of access to journals and combined, will realize a savings of over \$4.75M annually. Beyond initial cost savings, Elsevier agreed to a maximum annual increase of 2% over the course of the license agreement, with some years as low as 0%, which is significantly lower than industry standard.

“Impacts of our agreement with

Elsevier will be realized this fiscal year through lower costs, and more importantly over the coming years with researchers across the globe accessing more open content,” said Alexia Thompson-Young, Assistant Director of Scholarly Resources of the University of Texas Libraries. “Elsevier and the Texas universities can take pride in these positive impacts for years to come.”

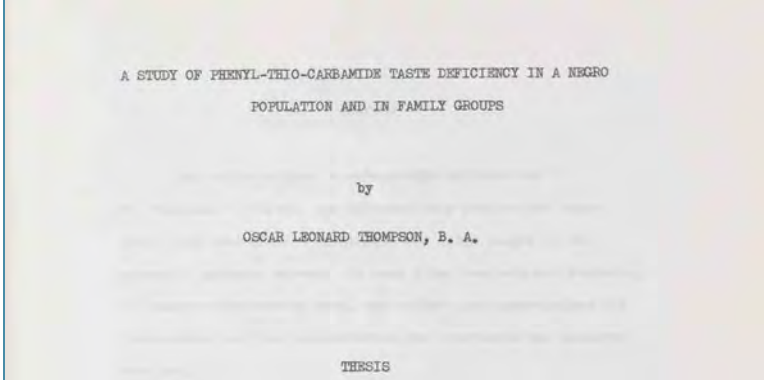
TLCUA and Elsevier have agreed to partner on a pilot project to revert ownership of journal articles back to original authors—and not just those at TLCUA-member institutions. Currently, authors transfer copyright of their work in exchange for that work being published. This pilot will provide for rights to go

back to authors after a period of time that will be collaboratively determined with Elsevier. A subset of Elsevier journals will be chosen to study the impact of the copyright reversion pilot for authors and its applicability more broadly to STEM (scientific, technical, engineering and medical) publishers.

Further, all TLCUA-member authors who choose to publish their work under an open access license will have access to discounted author publication charges (APCs). TLCUA also negotiated a license template that removed non-disclosure terms, restrictions on sharing usage data, and 44-year-old limitations on interlibrary loans (i.e., CONTU Guidelines) to expand library collaboration and improve how libraries can share information on journal usage.

“Our collaborative effort with partner institutions across Texas has resulted in a step forward towards shifting a relationship to a more mutually-beneficial model,” said Vice Provost and Director of the University of Texas Libraries Lorraine Haricombe. “By addressing cost challenges and opening content to larger audiences, we will all benefit from the multiplier effect it will have on inclusive and equitable access to new knowledge creation and innovation.”

Initial workshops to define the parameters of the pilot project will begin soon. TLCUA has begun exploring their next negotiation priorities and other projects that can benefit from state-wide collaboration.



First Black Graduate Thesis Now Online

Though Heman Sweatt is the historical figure most associated with integration at The University of Texas at Austin, the first Black graduate to benefit from Sweatt's efforts is getting a notable space in the university's digital repository.

Thanks to a heads up from John Wallingford, professor in Molecular Biosciences, the thesis of Oscar Leonard Thompson is now available online. Thompson became UT's first black graduate in January 1952.

Thompson's thesis – “A study of phenyl-thio-carbamide taste deficiency in a Negro population and in family groups” – is now available online through Texas Scholar Works.

Born in 1907 and raised in Rosebud, near Waco, Thompson had his college career at Paul Quinn College in Dallas delayed by the Great Depression and further interrupted after a stint serving for three years in the Pacific Theatre during World War II. When he returned after the war, he used the GI Bill to complete his degree at Paul Quinn, then attended Tillotson College in Austin, and graduated magna cum laude from Samuel Huston College in 1949.

After the Sweatt v. Painter decision effectively integrated UT, Thompson came to the university in September 1950 to pursue a master's degree in zoology, with an emphasis on genetics. He was 45 when he became the university's first black graduate, and became a research scientist at the Human Genetic Foundation assisting UT geneticist C.P. Oliver investigate sickle cell anemia.

A mere four months after Thompson graduated, John Chase – who has previously been mistakenly identified as the university's first black graduate – earned his Master's of Architecture.

In 1956, UT admitted its first black undergraduates, of which there were about 75.

Thompson died in 1962 at 55, when he was working on his Ph.D. and teaching at Tillotson College in Austin. UT flew its flags at half-mast.

In a bit of irony, Thompson's wife Irene – whom he met through his research and who typed his thesis for him – lived in a house designed by John Chase in East Austin.

Construction of New Scholars Lab Begins

Researchers at The University of Texas at Austin will soon have a new space for scholarly collaboration and innovation on the Forty Acres.

Construction began late in the fall on the creation of a new Scholars Lab on the entry level of the Perry-Castañeda Library (PCL) that aligns with a growing focus on digital scholarship at the university. It will provide a technology-forward community hub for interdisciplinary scholarship for students, faculty and researchers.

"The Scholars Lab is envisioned as supporting and enhancing digital humanities scholarship with the expertise and support of Libraries' staff, resources and services," says Assistant Director of Research Support and Digital Initiatives Jenifer Flaxbart. "The project will result in a campus-wide resource that provides infrastructure, access to Libraries' subject librarian and other research life cycle-situated experts and oppor-

tunities for learning, consultation, collaboration and research presentation to enhance multidisciplinary research and digital scholarship."

The new Scholars Lab will inhabit a significant space formerly occupied, in part, by the PCL's largest computer lab, and will feature a variety of study and collaborative project areas to accommodate a range of digital scholarship and data-related activities. A 32-seat Data Lab with high end Apple computers will provide a suite of specialized data analysis software for drop-in use as well as faculty/research-guided project work. Six medium-size Project Rooms with robust videoconferencing capabilities will provide meeting and collaborative space for projects or drop-in use; four smaller Huddle Spaces offer similar options for limited group work. The Scholars Lab will also provide ample collaborative and individual study space for serious scholarship with modular furniture, whiteboards,

and sequestered seating for solitary study.

To enhance the collaborative design for the space and to build a sense of community for users, the Scholars Lab will also become home to relevant digital scholarship events and activities that have been developed in recent years – such as Digital Scholars in Practice, Data and Donuts, and Digital Humanities workshops – and will feature new Libraries' and campus community-driven programming.

The Libraries has long been on the leading edge of incorporating innovations at the nexus of information resources and technology. From the early adoption of an online catalog and access to the world wide web, to the development of online resources – like VOCES, the Human Rights Documentation Initiative, and the South Asian Open Archives – as well as the development of digital and data repositories like Texas ScholarWorks and the Texas Data Reposi-





tory, the Libraries has continued to adapt technological innovation to traditional library resources and services to keep up with a changing world. The redevelopment of Libraries' spaces continues to be informed by campus needs that are influenced by the ever-evolving higher education landscape – digital scholarship is supported in constant updates to physical infrastructure of computer and data labs, as well as the strategic acceleration of digital preservation and access.

The Scholars Lab is a next step in the development of the idea of "Libraries as Platform," where the digital and analog are being integrated to spur innovation across disciplines and areas of inquiry. The project has developed in parallel with the expansion of digital scholarship initiatives across academia, and has largely been motivated by feedback and efforts from campus faculty, researchers and administrators. College of Liberal Arts Associate Professor Tanya Clement, who was instrumental in organizing and hosting the 2017 Humanities Intensive Learning and Teaching (HILT) conference at the university, has helped to make the project a reality, and the Office of the Vice Provost provided funding

for the redevelopment of the space after it was initially interrupted by the health crisis.

"Digital humanities scholars have few lab spaces on campus where we can create and collaborate," explains Clement. "The Scholars Lab in PCL will afford much-needed centralized space alongside opportunities to take advantage of expertise and training that will enhance innovation and community-building."

"We've anxiously awaited the Scholars Lab, discussed as a concept for years now, and are so excited to see that its construction is now underway."

While the Scholars Lab may seem like a natural fit for advanced degree holders and researchers, the space has significant appeal for the undergraduate community, as well. The extensive special collections and primary resources held across the university – at institutions like the Benson Latin American Collection, the Harry Ransom Center, the Blanton Museum of Art and the Briscoe Center for American History – are increasingly being applied to classroom learning. With the supporting informational resources cultivated

and maintained by the UT Libraries, and the co-location of the Scholars Lab at the PCL with complementary services and expertise, students will have heightened opportunities to participate in collaborative projects, or develop digital scholarship of their own.

Amy Shreeve – a Senior Rhetoric & Writing and History double major in the College of Liberal Arts – is president of Texas Student Digital Humanities, a student organization which seeks to engage undergraduates on campus with digital methods (like coding and GIS) and apply these methods to digital questions, has had a role in providing support and feedback for the project.

"This is a great moment for such a space to come into being since more and more students are getting involved in digital projects," says Shreeve. "Not only is this hub important for students at UT, but it is also important for UT as a whole since it strengthens the university's digital research and could increase the amount of undergraduate research coming out of the institution."

The Scholars Lab will open in Fall 2023.

Campus Survey Reveals Postive Perceptions

Library work involves simultaneously preserving the past, meeting needs in the present and trying to predict the future. Since there is no crystal ball, libraries rely on tools like surveys to help us monitor needs and make predictions. To that ends, the Libraries conducted a campus-wide survey of students, faculty and staff in spring 2022.

Following trends from the past decade, faculty and staff rated access to online materials as their top library priority and undergraduates ranked library spaces as most important. Grad students have continued to prioritize online materials throughout the past decade, while library space has emerged as a secondary priority over the past 5 years.

Throughout the past 10+ years, students and faculty have continued to display a shift in preferences toward digital materials. This shift, however, is not complete. While ranking online materials as being more important than physical materials, 48.5% of respondents still reported that they prefer print materials to electronic resources. This is despite the fact that 96% of faculty reported that online materials are “very important,” compared to only 50% who rated physical materials as “very important.” These somewhat contradictory results, combined with usage statistics, paint a complex picture in which users value physical materials, but are more and more likely to use digital materials to fulfill their information needs.

Happily, since collections are of

high importance to every user group, results show that users are largely satisfied with our library collections. In fact, about a quarter of the responses to an open-ended “What are we doing well?” question focused on collections and resources, the highest percentage of any topic areas mentioned. 87% of respondents agreed that “UT Libraries gives me access to the resources I need to achieve my academic goals.” A student from the College of Natural Sciences stated, “As a graduate student I am constantly searching for articles on my research topic. With so few journals being open access, I literally could not do my work without UT Libraries!” The Get a Scan service and Interlibrary Loan are also highly appreciated, ranking in the top three priorities for faculty, staff, and graduate students.

We were pleased to see that 87% of respondents agreed that they “feel safe from discrimination, harassment or harm in library spaces and when interacting with library staff.” This continues a trend of decreasing worries about safety following concerns seen in the 2012 campus survey. An undergraduate business student noted, “During finals season I needed a safe space to study when I could in my dorm room. The only place open closest to me was the PCL which was perfect that night.” Additionally, 86% of respondents agreed that UT Libraries is a welcoming place. Demographic breakdowns, however, show us that those who identify as black or African American, or nonbinary in gender identity, were slightly less likely

to agree that they feel safe than the overall group. With the Libraries’ focus on IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) including a recently adapted IDEA Action Plan, we hope to close that gap so that everyone feels safe and welcome in library spaces.

Results also showed how much library users value the expertise, kindness, and labor of library staff. Library staff are seen as friendly, approachable, and knowledgeable by all user groups. In fact, staff comprised the second largest category of “What are we doing well?” responses. “In my UGS, a librarian came to explain to us how to use the library website and how to find the sources we would need to conduct academic research,” shared an undergraduate from the College of Communication. “It was extremely helpful and I have since used these tips and skills in all of my classes!” Faculty especially value staff expertise – research support from a librarian is ranked as the third most important service by faculty respondents. Library web pages (research guides) for a subject area or course, which are designed and curated by librarians, were ranked within the top five priorities by every user group.

While it’s nice to receive confirmation of what we’re doing well, it’s also important to look for ways we can better serve the campus community. In an open-answer “What can we do better?” question, navigation and wayfinding were often mentioned as areas that the Libraries can

2022 Campus Survey



RESULTS

improve. One example of a task that some users currently find difficult is the process of finding a book on our website and then locating it in the stacks. Under the guidance of our UX Designer, we're working on a project to improve signage on the entry level of PCL and will eventually move toward improving navigation and wayfinding at large. We also noted that the increase in remote learning and work brought on by the pandemic has possibly introduced a new need, as 20% of undergraduates who reported visiting a UTL space did so in order to attend a Zoom meeting or class. Individual space to attend online meetings is consistently being mentioned as a recent desire both anecdotally and through more formal assessments.

While survey results are useful for confirming suspicions, tracking trends, and uncovering areas of interest, they also raise further questions. Respondents frequently expressed a lack of awareness of the Libraries' communication channels, and undergraduate responses showed that there is room for improvement in outreach. We will follow up on these findings by doing further research to untangle where the disconnects are and what we can do to better reach all users. The results will continue to provide rich fodder for ongoing planning, and rather than being satisfied with the positive findings, the Libraries will continue to strive toward continual improvement so that everyone on campus can succeed. An undergraduate student from the College of Liberal Arts summed up why we do what we do, stating that "UT Libraries are essential to the accomplishment of my academic work."



Scan code to view survey results.

Overall Satisfaction

91% of respondents were somewhat or extremely satisfied with the UT Libraries. 71.3% of faculty strongly agreed that "UT Libraries is an important part of my academic success."



E-resources are key

Online materials were ranked as being more important than print materials by every group (students, faculty, and staff).

Differing priorities

Faculty & staff ranked access to online materials as their top priority, undergrads chose library space, and graduate students fell in between, prioritizing online materials with space as their second priority.



Safe & welcoming

Respondents overwhelmingly felt safe from discrimination, harassment or harm in library spaces and when interacting with library staff, though some demographic groups were slightly less likely to feel safe than others.

Pandemic changes

20% of undergraduates who visited a UTL space in person did so to attend a Zoom meeting or class.



Excellent staff

Library staff are seen as friendly, approachable and knowledgeable by all user groups.

Essential resources

About 25% of the responses to "What are we doing well?" focused on collections and resources, the highest percentage of any topic areas mentioned.



LLILAS Benson Receives \$2.1 Million for Education

LLILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections was awarded Comprehensive National Resource Center (NRC) and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) grants from the U.S. Department of Education of \$2,183,792 for the 2022–2026 cycle. This includes \$1,027,492 (\$256,873 annually) for NRC activities and \$1,156,300 (\$289,075 annually) for FLAS fellowships. The grant will be managed by LLILAS Director Adela Pineda Franco in the role of Project Director.

The funds will support outreach, program development, and fellowships in line with three central priorities mandated by the Department of Education's Title VI.

The first priority of the project funding is to encourage diverse perspectives and meet national needs for Latin American Studies regional and language expertise.

NRC funds will support expansion of LLILAS public and scholarly programs for career training, professional school partnerships, and curricular development. They will also support less commonly taught language programs through targeted Benson Collection enrichment and ongoing online language instruction development focused on Portuguese, Quechua, K'iche', and Nahuatl, including open-source materials. FLAS fellowships will be awarded each academic year and summer

to BA, MA, and PhD students. The languages designated by Title VI as high priority for the 2022–2026 cycle include Portuguese, Quechua, Kaqchikel, Guaraní, and Haitian Creole.

The second Title VI priority, teacher training, is designed to bring Latin American Studies content into K–12 classrooms. LLILAS Benson's initiatives in this area will feature collaborations with the UT College of Education, UTeach, and Hemispheres, UT's consortium of National Resource Centers.

The third Title VI priority involves partnerships with minority-serving institutions and community colleges, and is designed to internationalize curriculum and elevate the study of Latin America and Latin American languages. NRC funds will support LLILAS Benson's ongoing collaboration with Hemispheres, Huston-Tillotson University, and Austin Community College to strengthen global studies programs and develop faculty expertise in Latin America. Other key partners include Texas State University, University of Texas at El Paso, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, University of New Mexico, and University of Arizona. LLILAS Benson's application to the Department of Education highlights The University of Texas at Austin's status as home of one of the largest, most dynamic Latin American Studies programs in the

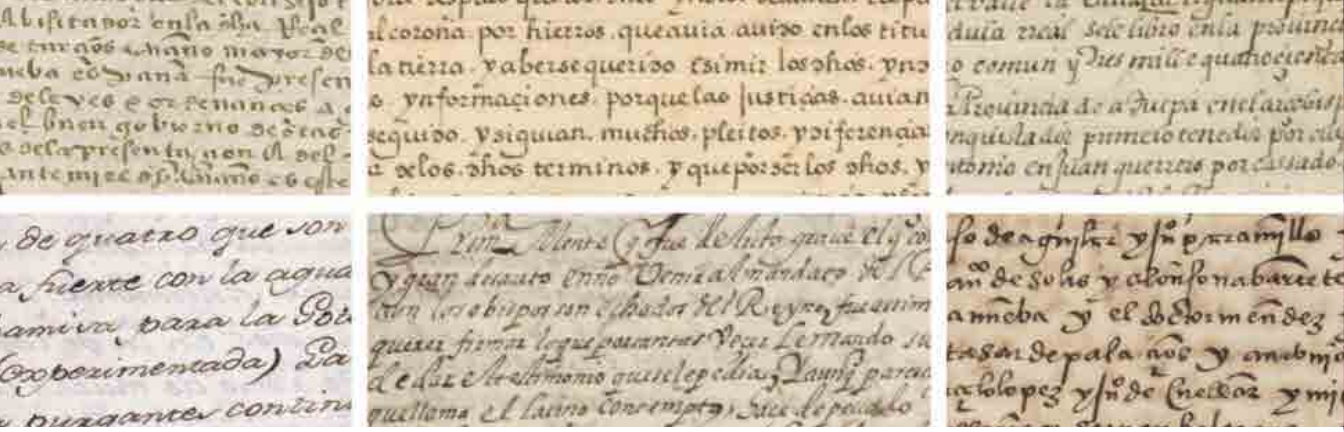
country, as well as the Benson's importance as the hemisphere's premier academic research library focused on Latin America.

"Receipt of this funding will allow us to continue to do meaningful work that has an impact on transnational and regional communities of practice," said LLILAS Director and Project Director Pineda Franco.

"The programs supported by our grant proposal will have long-term and deep impact, encouraging horizontal engagement with Latin American and U.S. partners. Their value extends far beyond the boundaries of Latin Americanists, as they will serve to further position UT Austin as a significant training ground for students and professionals with advanced language knowledge and deep expertise in Latin America."

"The LLILAS Benson partnership has expanded the Benson's role as a hub for teaching, research, intellectual exchange, and outreach," said Melissa Guy, director of the Benson Latin American Collection. "The Title VI grant will support access to these resources to audiences beyond the university through workshops, open-access curriculum, teacher training, and traveling exhibitions."





Latin Americanists Convene to Decipher Texts

It is no secret that the Benson Latin American Collection preserves one of the most important Spanish colonial archives in the United States. Within the pages of hundreds of volumes and archival boxes in its stacks are countless historical gems documenting the lived experience of colonized people, colonizers, and everyone in between. However, these perspectives are largely inaccessible: archaic penmanship and obscure writing conventions encode these histories on brittle paper.

For years, the LILAS Benson Digital Scholarship Office has been experimenting with digital technologies to transform this “unreadable” Spanish colonial archive into accessible humanities data for scholars. However, we tried something new this past year and reversed the equation: We convened colonial Latin Americanists online to transform handwritten words on pages into digital text that they could then use to make the digital humanities (DH) more accessible. This resulted in the “Spanish Paleography and Digital Humanities Institute,” a free online program that provided scholars with practical training in the reading and visualization of 16th- to 18th-century manuscripts in Spanish. The program’s syllabus and logistics were designed by Abisai Pérez Zamarripa, LILAS Benson Digital Scholarship graduate research assistant and doctoral candidate in history, and the Ben-

son’s Digital Scholarship Coordinator Albert Palacios.

Colonial Latin Americanists from all over the world applied. The overwhelming response to our call for applications prompted organizers to expand the program to two institutes – one in the fall of 2021 and another in the spring of 2022. In all, 60 participants, including 35 graduate students, eight junior faculty, eight tenured professors, five archive and library professionals, and four independent researchers participated. By the end of the academic year, scholars in 11 countries and 18 U.S. states who had varying experience in Spanish paleography and the digital humanities had been trained.

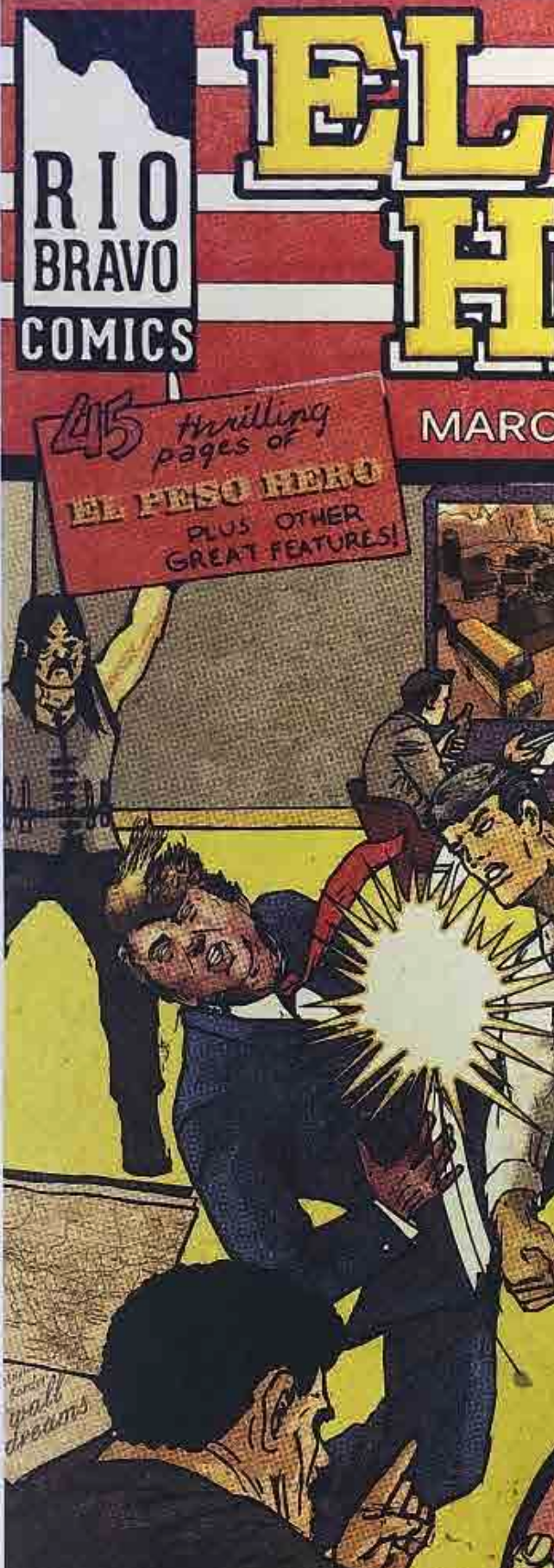
One of the main objectives was to help participants obtain and hone Spanish paleography skills. Experts from Germany, Portugal, France, and Mexico were invited to provide introductions on specific colonial institutions and their records to expose students to specialized writing conventions and abbreviations.

After the collaborative transcription sessions, participants continued to hone their paleography skills through assigned weekly homework. Each scholar transcribed two to four pages in various handwriting styles using the University of Texas Libraries’ instance of FromThePage,

a platform that enables collaborative transcription work and version tracking. Once they were done with a page, work was reviewed and any corrections were made, which FromThePage documented and showed to further the students’ understanding of the scripts and abbreviations.

In addition to learning how to read the archaic penmanship, scholars were simultaneously helping to enhance the accessibility of the Spanish colonial collection. Cohorts transcribed, and consequently made intellectually accessible, over 90 documents (1,000+ pages) preserved in the Benson Latin American Collection. Those are published in the Texas Data Repository and ingested into the University of Texas Libraries’ Collections portal with the images of the original materials to broaden access.

Participants also assisted in leveraging machine-learning technologies to automate this type of work in the future. As part of the “Unlocking the Colonial Archive” NEH-AHRC grant project, these transcriptions are being used to train handwritten text recognition (HTR) models for each of the handwriting styles we commonly find in Spanish colonial documentation. These models are then run on untranscribed materials at the Benson and in other digital archives to obtain usable automatic transcriptions.



Superhero Lands at Benson

It's a bird! It's a plane! It's El Peso Hero!

The Benson Latin American Collection received Héctor Rodríguez III's donation of materials pertaining to his comic series, *El Peso Hero*.

The series was launched in 2011, when Rodríguez saw the need for more Latino representation in graphic novels. The titular superhero, whose name is Ignacio Rivera, fights to uphold justice and morality in the border region. In some issues, Rivera can be seen helping migrants safely across the border. In others, he fights corruption and drug traffickers. Now celebrating a decade of issues, *El Peso Hero* will debut on the silver screen in the near future. While Rivera is the protagonist of the series, perhaps it's his creator who is the real hero.

Héctor Rodríguez is a bilingual north Texas elementary school teacher by day and a comic book creator by night. His commitment to the genre goes beyond his own production: he's also the creator of Texas Latino Comic Con. The mission of his independently owned Rio Bravo Comics is to give the people a "humble hero," someone who is relatable to the audience, some of whom are his students. His inspiration comes from his family as well as his life as a Chicano in Texas.

Rodríguez, who was born in Eagle Pass and grew up in College Station, uses *El Peso Hero* as a means to tell stories about the borderlands, from its hardships to its beauty.

For the author, that beauty is found in the multiculturalism that flourishes in the region, where *El Santo* comics are read while watching *lucha libre*, and English and Spanish are often spoken in the same sentence. It is for this reason that Rodríguez intentionally has *El Peso Hero* only speak in Spanish, while the series itself is bilingual. For Rodríguez, it is important that *El Peso Hero* transcends the U.S.–Mexico border linguistically and culturally to solidify his representation of transnational communities.

The donation features single issues, posters, stickers, storyboards, and a coloring book. One of the many highlights is a rare, signed first issue of the series.

2022 by the NUMBERS

CIRCULATION



83,342
items checked out
33,869
completed pick-it-up
requests

WEBSITE TRAFFIC



459,604
users
1,124,533
website
visits

INTER LIBRARY SERVICES



24,280
requests provided
15,403
requests received



DIGITIZATION

10,405
pages published to the
Collections Portal

INSTRUCTION

587
presentations
13,204
attendees



CHAT

2,426
Ask A Librarian
chat questions
answered



STUDY ROOMS

102,709
study rooms
reserved



RESEARCH CONSULTS

1,584
consultations







The University of Texas at Austin
WHAT STARTS HERE CHANGES THE WORLD

WWW.LIB.UTEXAS.EDU