

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Thomas Leonard. *A Guide to Central American Collections in the United States.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. x + 186 pp. \$69.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-28689-6.

Reviewed by Ralph Lee Woodward (Department of History, Texas Christian University)

Published on H-LatAm (March, 1996)

Not long ago the published research tools for Central American history and social sciences were so sparse as to retard serious research on the isthmus. The conflicts that attracted world-wide attention to the Central American states during the 1980s brought much greater scholarly focus to the region and in addition to a torrent of monographs and memoirs that have begun to appear, there has been a notable increase in guides to resources on the region. Thomas Leonard, Distinguished Professor of History at the University of North Florida, Jacksonville, has added to this growing body of reference works with his *Guide to Central American Collections in The United States*.

Leonard doesn't waste much time in telling us how he compiled this guide to collections of Central American manuscripts, map collections, oral histories, photographs and/or print sources in this country, but it appears he assembled it from his own experience, advice of colleagues, and from an extensive amount of correspondence. He found these collections scattered across 47 states and the District of Columbia. Only Maine, Nevada, and Vermont fail to appear in the table of contents, which is organized by states. Leonard acknowledges that the volume is not a "definitive guide to archival material in the United States about Central America," noting that other materials, "particularly in private collections or in less known repositories, are missing" (p. ix). One obvious example would be the important collection of the Plumsock Mesoamerican Foundation in South Woodstock, Vermont, which would have added another state to his list. Nevertheless, the listing of 774 collections is a substantial aid to Central American research.

Each entry includes a brief annotation describing the collection. The guide does not provide detailed inventories of collections, but the annotations are helpful. En-

tries include the multiple collections at major research libraries like the Library of Congress, Kansas University, Tulane University, and the University of Texas, but it also includes many more less well known collections, such as, for example, the unpublished history of the Catholic Church in Honduras by Joseph Wade, a Jesuit missionary in Honduras from 1947 to 1981 located at the Jesuit Mission Province Archives in St. Louis, Missouri, or the correspondence of Joseph and Henry Bennett describing their passage across Panama in 1851, located at the Library of West Virginia University in Morgantown.

The organization of the volume by states will allow potential researchers to find out what sources might be available close at hand, but it is the excellent topical index that will aid researchers especially in finding the location of relevant materials. Leonard gives the precise address of each repository, but does not provide telephone, fax, or E-mail information. This guide should be useful not only to North American researchers of Central America, but also to Central Americans and other foreign researchers planning research trips to the United States. Identifying the location of research collections could be of particular value to applicants for research grants in their requests for travel assistance. This guide is much more extensive in identifying collections in the United States than is Kenneth Grieb's *Research Guide to Central America and the Caribbean* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). Grieb's guide, on the other hand, provides information on collections in Latin America, Canada, and Europe, whereas Leonard's guide deals only with materials in the United States.

Copyright (c) 1996 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@H-Net.MSU.EDU.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:
<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl>.

Citation: Ralph Lee Woodward. Review of Leonard, Thomas, *A Guide to Central American Collections in the United States*. H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. March, 1996.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=330>

Copyright © 1996 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.