

Latinos in Rural America (LiRA): A Digital Collection for Community-Engaged Learning

1. Description of the Nature of the Project and Potential for Curricular Integration

Latinos in Rural America (LiRA) is a public humanities project designed to broaden knowledge, engagement and understanding of the Latino experience in rural Ohio. LiRA will achieve this objective by building from past successful efforts, which have served a similar purpose for other ethnic minorities. Working in close collaboration with Kenyon's Digital Initiatives Librarian, Jenna Nolt, and two Kenyon summer scholar students, the project engages members of the Knox County Latino community and local institutions such as the Knox County Health Department, Knox County United Way, Mt. Vernon's St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Church (a pivotal hub for Latinos in Mount Vernon) and other community organizations. In addition, *LiRA* will consult two humanities scholars who specialize in Ohio rural life and Latino immigration, as well as work with Kenyon students enrolled in SPAN 380, *Introduction to Chicano Cultural Studies* (fall 2015) as part of the actual student course activities. This collaboration will culminate in a public bilingual exhibition, *Latinos in Rural America*, which will travel locally and throughout Ohio, December 2015 - March 2016, and which will constitute the primary vehicle to bring visibility and cultural presence to the emerging Latino community in rural Ohio. The funding now being sought from the *Digital Projects Initiative of the Five Colleges of Ohio* will be devoted to digitizing these materials to support the community-engaged learning component of SPAN 380, a core course of Kenyon Latino Studies concentration.

Themes of the exhibition will include: history of the Latino population in Knox County, journey stories (the past), what and where is home (the present), food culture, church, family life, personal and community aspirations, Latino communication norms, contributions to local, state and national life, and perceptions of diversity and inclusion. Based on the collected content, the core of the exhibition will be a series of ten banners depicting the Latino experience in Knox County. Two digital stations will supplement the exhibition. One will project a selection of video interviews onto a screen. The second station will support an online, on-site reflection piece or evaluation to measure the impact of the exhibition on participating audiences. To ensure compliance with applicable regulations and guidelines on research with human subjects, the Kenyon College IRB will review all questionnaires. The oral history project will be reviewed and registered with this body as well. As part of this process, the project director and Kenyon summer scholars already completed the Kenyon IRB's Human Subject training course prior to beginning summer research.

2. A Timeline for Implementation

June and July of 2015 -Project director and Kenyon summer scholars will conduct research on and with local Latino community members to produce the bulk of the materials for the project including: archival work on the history of Latinos in Knox County, video and audio interviews of local community members, short narratives (multigenerational) and photography of community

members. Data collection for this project will begin the first week of June and will continue through the summer. Data collection is already funded by the Ohio Humanities.

August and September of 2015 - With the support of Digital Initiatives Librarian, summer scholars will begin digitizing collected materials and students enrolled in *Introduction to Chicano/a Cultural Studies* course (SPAN 380) will be tasked with editing and translating portions of the collection. As part of the course, students will also be given the opportunity of participating in the exhibition, helping with the set up and reflecting on the stories they encounter. In parallel with data collection and continuing throughout fall 2015, we are seeking funding for the creation and population of a digital archive within Digital Kenyon (digital.kenyon.edu).

October of 2015 - Designer Justin Bryant from *Think Brand Studio* will design the banners using the content edited and translated by students in SPAN 380. He will also design the exhibition, brochure, and primer. Bryant was previously hired to design another Ohio Humanities Council-funded project, *Coshocton Crossroads*, and we envision a similarly dynamic design for this project.

3. Sources of Financial Support other than the Mellon DC grant

Prior stages of this grant have been funded by other sources. The initial stage of the project, consisting of planning and community outreach, was completed in fall 2014 with funding from *Community Foundation*, a local organization. The collection and dissemination of the materials has been funded by a grant from the *Ohio Humanities Council*, and will take place over the 2015-16 academic year. Mellon grant funding is being requested for design, and to support the creation of a digital archive for these materials, creating a meaningful context for them and ensuring their long-term availability to a global audience.

4. A Description of the Role of the Libraries/Librarian(s) and/or Digital Scholar

The Digital Initiatives Librarian will train students on appropriate formatting and workflows from data collection to file transfer and processing to archiving in Digital Kenyon (digital.kenyon.edu). The DIL will then continue to provide technical and workflow support as needed over the course of the project.

5. Venues for Dissemination to a Wider Audience (conferences, publications, websites)

The primary product of this project is a public bilingual exhibition, *Latinos in Rural America*, which will travel locally and throughout Ohio, December 2015 - March 2016, and which will constitute the primary vehicle to bring visibility and cultural presence to the emerging Latino community in rural Ohio. This exhibition will be hosted at: Kenyon College Library, Mount Vernon Public Library, the Center for America and World Cultures at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio and The Ohio State University.

As part of the public humanities goals, we will also produce a brochure with selected images and bibliographical information from the exhibition and a primer, in pamphlet form, to provide background knowledge and information on cultural roots and communication norms for successful interactions with Latinos, including tips to better bridge cross-cultural gaps.

Latinos in Knox County is a member collection of the *Community Within*. The *Community Within* is a toolkit which is being developed by the GLCA's Oral History in the Liberal Arts Initiative to reflect the existence of a demographically small, yet distinct minority community residing relatively unnoticed within the larger majority population, and to create visibility for that population through digital oral history. As an early member of the *Community Within*, this project will function as a pilot to further develop concepts and test workflows within the developing toolkit.

We will leverage Facebook, Twitter, email and the Kenyon College website, as well as digital capabilities of the exhibition venues to maximize awareness of the project. In addition, press releases will be issued to newspapers, radio and television stations.

6. *A Budget*

This project is primarily funded by the existing Ohio Humanities grant; Mellon grant funding is being requested to fund design and complete the archiving and long-term access and preservation portion of this project. Please see Timeline for Implementation (Section 2) for more details on budget lines.

Personnel: Two students @ \$10.41 per hour for 150 hours of work including transcription, metadata creation, uploading, and contextualization of the collection through writing and organization = **\$1570**.

Exhibition Design: Banners, brochure, and primer = **\$1650**.

Total: \$3220.

7. *A Plan to Assess the Effectiveness of the Course Development or Renovation*

The goals of this project are to:

- a. Increase knowledge, engagement and understanding of the Latino experience in rural Knox County;
- b. Develop intercultural exchange and relationships between the local Latino community and other Knox County and Ohio residents;
- c. Increase awareness of Latino contributions to the life of Ohio;
- d. Offer Latino youth new opportunities to interpret their past and articulate their future and, in this way, gain access to relevant educational and social goods;
- e. Establish partnerships with local and state organizations and researchers to support intercultural development between Latinos and other state residents;

d. Integrate community-engaged learning in SPAN 380 in a meaningful way.

The project will be evaluated using the following tools.

- a. **On-site, Online Reflection Piece.** Aiming at community building through the sharing of stories, this tool will enable guests, including students in SPAN 380, to reflect on the oral history they encounter at the exhibition. It will help us understand what Ohioans have learned and interpreted from the journey stories.
- b. **Guest Books at Each Site.** These guest books will keep a record of community members who come to the exhibition and their comments and impressions.
- c. **Outside Evaluator.** Lilleana Cavanaugh, MBA, CPM and executive director of the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission, will serve as the outside evaluator of this project. Given Cavanaugh's qualifications and the mission of the office she represents –“Advice, Connect and Build” Latinos in Ohio, she is optimally qualified for this task. Cavanaugh will issue a summary report containing her assessment and evaluation of the overall project.
- d. **Course Evaluations.** Students will assess the community-engaged learning component of the course through the course evaluation. We will also use Kenyon Survey For Community-Engaged Learning.

8. A Discussion of the Project's Sustainability that Considers, for example, its Imagined Lifespan
The exhibition for this project will take place over the 2015-16 academic year. The archival portion of the project will be maintained in perpetuity by LBIS in the institutional repository, and will be used in future SPAN 380 courses for the foreseeable future.