CRL Primary Source Awards

CRL Primary Source Awards for 2019

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In This Issue

This issue of FOCUS on Global Resources highlights the projects selected for recognition in 2019 by the Center for Research Libraries Primary Source Awards program. CRL created the program to promote understanding of the role primary historical documentation and evidence play in research and teaching. Identifying and recognizing innovative uses of primary sources helps CRL better support the practices and the needs of scholars today.

The projects featured here were selected from a competitive pool nominated by faculty and librarians at CRL institutions. CRL’s Collections and Services Policy Committee reviewed all submissions and selected projects this year that stand out in two areas: access and research. The projects cited illustrate a variety of approaches to mining the primary evidence of history.

We hope that the projects described here better enable librarians to support in-depth research and inspired teaching in the CRL community. CRL welcomes nominations of deserving colleagues (and self-nominations) for the 2020 awards. Nominations are now open.

— Bernard F. Reilly
President

Selection of digitized titles from The Texas Borderlands Newspaper Collection, available on The Portal to Texas History. Courtesy of University of North Texas Libraries.

The Center for Research Libraries first created the CRL Primary Source Awards in 2009 to recognize innovative uses of primary source materials by faculty, librarians and library staff, students, and other researchers in the CRL community. Nominations are accepted in three areas: access, research, and teaching. This year the CRL Collections and Services Policy Committee recognized noteworthy work in only two of the categories, access and research, because no entries were received in the teaching category. The following were selected for recognition.

2019 Award for Access
Texas Borderlands Newspaper Collection

Mark E. Phillips, Associate Dean for Digital Libraries, University of North Texas Libraries
Nominated by: Dreanna Belden, Assistant Dean for External Relations, University of North Texas Libraries

2019 Award for Research
Mapping Consumers in the Black South African Press

Katie Carline, PhD Candidate, Michigan State University
Nominated by: Ethan Watrall, Assistant Professor/Associate Director, MATRIX: The Center for Digital Humanities & Social Sciences, Michigan State University

2020 CRL Primary Source Awards
Nominations for the 2020 awards are now open; the CRL website has details. Faculty and staff at CRL libraries are encouraged to consider nominating staff, faculty, or researchers as candidates for these awards; self-nominations are welcome.
2019
Award for Access

Revista Del Valle, a daily Spanish-language newspaper from Edinburg, Texas, June 8, 1915. Courtesy of University of North Texas Libraries. The Portal to Texas History.

“Texas Borderlands Newspaper Collection”
Mark E. Phillips, Associate Dean for Digital Libraries, University of North Texas Libraries
Nominated by: Dreanna Belden, Assistant Dean for External Relations, University of North Texas Libraries

The Texas Borderlands Newspaper Collection provides public access to a significant piece of Texas history and culture. This digital collection spans from 1859 to 1997, representing nearly 66,000 pages of historical newspapers from 18 counties near the Texas border, accessible through the University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries’ Portal to Texas History (the Portal). These newspapers provide researchers a window in time during a turbulent but brave period in Texas history. The Texas State Library and Archives Commission awarded the UNT Libraries three TexTreasures grants to fund the project. Mark Phillips, the project’s primary investigator, has received the 2019 CRL Primary Source Award for Access.

Falfurrias Facts (Falfurrias, Tex.) weekly newspaper, June 25, 1937. Courtesy of University of North Texas Libraries. The Portal to Texas History.
Before this project, the Portal hosted a large quantity of content from the border cities of Brownsville and El Paso; however, newer collections add representation from rural inhabitants along the Texas border. When the project started, materials from these rural counties were scant in the Portal, consisting primarily of maps. There was practically no free access anywhere to historical newspapers of the region.

The counties whose newspapers are being digitized form a solid ribbon up the southwestern Texas border, starting from just north of Cameron County and moving to Reeves County. Each of these counties, though not necessarily heavily populated, has a unique narrative, and the newspaper of each county speaks for the ancestors of the current inhabitants, who come from multiple cultures, primarily Latino and Anglo.

A reviewer for this project said, “Any state would be fortunate to have such a resource for the study of its history. The interface is straightforward and provides visually appealing summaries of the content.” All materials digitized for this project are freely accessible through the online Portal. Users can discover the newspapers through internet search engines, and search the full text of issues in the Portal interface, which has seen enhanced functionality.

Since the Texas Borderlands Newspaper Collection came online, it’s been accessed over 67,000 times. When the final stage of this project is complete, over 75,000 pages will be available.
“Mapping Consumers in the Black South African Press”

Katie Carline, PhD Candidate, Michigan State University
Nominated by: Ethan Watrall, Assistant Professor/Associate Director, MATRIX: The Center for Digital Humanities & Social Sciences, Michigan State University

During the 1930s, in a significant cultural shift, white-owned consumer products companies in South Africa began sustained advertising campaigns in newspapers for black African readers. One popular type of advertisement was a testimonial endorsement of the product from a “real” person. Mapping Consumers in the Black South African Press is a digital map of these advertisements, created by Katie Carline, PhD student in South African history at Michigan State University. She is the recipient of the 2019 CRL Primary Source Award for research.

Two newspapers from the Eastern Cape region of South Africa in the twentieth century were central to Carline’s research. “This is a region that has a vibrant African intellectual and political tradition, where many of its leading figures wrote for newspapers. However, these papers had small circulations, and many were short-lived, so it is often difficult to locate copies,” she notes. She accessed the materials from CRL, having learned about the rich assortment of African newspapers available in the Cooperative Africana Materials Project (CAMP) collection from Peter Limb, Africana librarian at MSU (now retired).

Carline was particularly intrigued by a bilingual Xhosa-English newspaper called Umlindi we Nyanga (The Monthly Watchman), published in East London (Eastern Cape) between 1934 and 1941. “Reading this paper changed my understanding of the geographic dynamics of black consumer culture in South Africa, and the role of women in shaping it,” she explains. She was surprised by the frequency of the testimonial-type advertisements, with most of the testimonials attributed to women from rural areas of the Eastern Cape.

On Carline’s Mapping Consumers website, she notes that “Much of the scholarship has focused on how white-owned companies marketed products to consumers in ways that reinforced racial, economic, and gender hierarchies in South Africa. Testimonial advertisements are an opportunity to see who consumers themselves were, and how they spoke about themselves and the products they bought—always filtered, of course, through the lens of advertisers and newspaper publishers.”

A reviewer of Carline’s project stated, “It’s difficult enough to analyze one newspaper, but this is evidence that more than one newspaper can be used for...
deeper analysis." Carline’s project website includes extensive documentation allowing the viewer to reference all the data used to construct the map of consumer endorsers. She only tracked advertisements that gave specific address locations for the testimonial writers (a typical feature). For each person cited she provides the name, address, gender (if evident), product advertised and a short excerpt of the testimonial.

Two additional nominated projects are recognized for their outstanding qualities:

**2019 Honorable Mention for Access**

The Albert Johannsen Project: Digitizing the House of Beadle & Adams and Its Nickel and Dime Novels

Mathew Short, Digital Collections & Metadata Librarian Digital Scholarship Librarian, University Libraries, Northern Illinois University

**2019 Honorable Mention for Research**

The Age of the Kampuchea Picture: A Video Installation

Adrian Alarilla, Graduate Student, University of Washington

Nominated by: Judith Henchy, Head, Southeast Asia Section, University of Washington