

# The Simón S. Lucuix Río de la Plata Library

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## Abstract

The circumstances of collection development and use vary wildly. The story of the library created between 1919 and 1963 by Simón Lucuix in Montevideo, Uruguay, and then purchased by the University of Texas in 1963, provides instructive scenarios in which to observe the continually changing needs and desires that impact collection development. The scenarios reveal the complex social relationships that created this library and the tumultuous political events that dispersed it. This account of the altered contexts of the Simón Lucuix Río de la Plata Library intends to challenge readers to research this collection and the history of those they steward.

*Keywords:* Simón S. Lucuix; Río de la Plata, Uruguay; private library; political agency; collection development; acquisitions

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In January 2007, the University of Texas Libraries signed an agreement with Google to digitize close to a million books from its renowned Benson Latin American Collection in Austin, Texas. Within months of the agreement, dozens of titles from the Benson began to appear online, some of them bearing a bookplate identifying the titles as belonging to the Simón S. Lucuix Río de la Plata Library. As part of a team tasked to determine the scope of fair use of the texts to be displayed online by Google, I was responsible for investigating copyright laws of various Latin American countries. Already curious about the Lucuix library and encouraged by the equitable copyright framework established by Uruguay, I began my research about these titles, many of them published in Montevideo.

I discovered that very few of the librarians at the University of Texas (UT) knew about the Lucuix collection. Of the two or three that had heard of it, only one librarian had assisted in cataloging the original acquisition. To my surprise, the 1963 acquisition of the Lucuix private library turned out to be a major—but forgotten—purchase by the UT Libraries. The details of the transaction were lost to memory, but were documented in the annual reports of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM).<sup>1</sup>

The Lucuix library represented a phenomenal acquisition for UT Libraries and an incomprehensible feat for a collector in Uruguay. Few libraries of its scope and size existed in Montevideo or anywhere in

1. Reports from member research libraries with Latin American collections, including the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library, appeared regularly in the SALALM Annual Reports.

THE LATIN AMERICAN COLLECTION  
*of*  
THE LIBRARY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN



THE SIMON LUCUIX  
RIO DE LA PLATA LIBRARY  
*Purchased*  
1963

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LATIN AMERICAN COLLECTION

Figure 1. Simón Lucuix Río de la Plata Library bookplate. Photograph taken by author. Image courtesy of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

Uruguay in the 1960s. Of the purchases recorded in research library annual reports, the Lucuix was by far the largest single collection acquired by SALALM members during the 1960s. Other collections acquired by American universities between 1961 and 1971 seldom amounted to more than 2,000 to 3,000 titles, which makes it surprising to find so little information about the 20,000-volume Lucuix library.

In December 2007, when I was immersed in uncovering these details, I read that the Supreme Court of Uruguay indicted their ex-President General Gregorio Alvarez for human rights violations committed during his dictatorship. To exiles from Latin American countries like myself, who have given up language, culture, family, and home—and yes, sizable libraries—to escape totalitarian governments, these were potent words. The trial of General Gregorio Alvarez would cast a bright light on the rationale for dismembering a nation, specifically its artists and intellectuals. For me, the conjunction of our digitizing project and events half a world away opened up new dimensions about the dislocation of the Lucuix collection. Why had Lucuix given up this magnificent library? Why did no institution in Uruguay acquire it? What circumstances propel individuals, institutions, or nations to part with collections acquired over decades?

Over the years, the narrative that follows has taken form. Much remains unexplained, and a biography of Simón S. Lucuix, once an influential educator in schools for the elite, is still unwritten. His friends and protégés are long dead or passing; no one I have contacted in Uruguay can recall him. One historian remembers visiting the Lucuix



Figure 2. Lucuix Library books recognizable on the shelves of the circulating stacks. Photograph taken by author. Image courtesy of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

library as a young student. The building that housed the library then is the current location of the Embassy of Lebanon.

## Present Day Uruguay

On October 22, 2009, the Supreme Court of Uruguay convicted former Uruguayan dictator Gregorio Álvarez (1981–1985) of thirty-seven counts of murder related to clandestine prisoner transfers. On February 10, 2010, the same court sentenced ex-President, turned dictator, Juan María Bordaberry (1972–1976) to thirty years in prison for two murders and nine forced disappearances. On May 8, 2013, military careerist Miguel Dalmao (1971–2010) was sentenced to twenty-eight years for the torture and murder in 1973 of an avowed left-wing academic. Thus continues a litany of sentences for crimes committed by the highest-ranking elected officials and military officers in Uruguay between 1973 and 1985.<sup>2</sup> Many more cases are pending.

The crimes committed include murder, extreme psychological and physical torture, indefinite incarceration without cause, and the removal of children from politically suspect families. Night arrests, interrogations, and lesser human rights offenses were committed with the intention of intimidating all citizens. At one point, the military rounded up and imprisoned thousands of individuals for their “unorthodox” political beliefs. To escape the threat, about ten percent of the population went into exile, including Uruguay’s artists and literary figures.

An unprecedented wave of political repression swept through Uruguay after June 1973, when President Bordaberry dissolved the Parliament, suspended the Constitution, and began to rule by decree, in effect putting the military in charge. Not long after, a military council in turn deposed Bordaberry and began a systematic purge of newspapers, publishing houses, schools, universities, and public agencies. The military effectively suppressed labor unions and all opposition political parties by imprisoning or disappearing left-leaning political figures.

To defend their actions, officials—then in charge—now claim that the country had been at war with internal enemies, communists, Marxists, and insurgents like the Tupamaros, an urban guerilla group. The military councils had sought to stem the “red tide” emboldened by the revolution in Cuba. The Uruguayan Tupamaros had gained prominence with the 1970 murder of United State Central Intelligence Agency adviser Daniel Mittrione, and a defiant escape from the Punta Carretas prison in September 1971.<sup>3</sup>

2. Comprehensive documentation about the state crimes perpetrated in Uruguay during this period has been catalogued in *Investigación histórica sobre la dictadura y el terrorismo de estado en el Uruguay, 1973–1985*. The three-volume set was published in 2008 by the Comisión Sectorial de Investigación Científica of the Universidad de la República Oriental del Uruguay.

3. The “Dirty War,” a deadly game of cat-and mouse escalated in Uruguay after July 1970, when the Tupamaros drugged Mittrione, shot him, and left his body in a car, later found by the authorities.



## Prelude to Repression

How could Uruguay, a country that had been free of political violence for decades, have become a site of such self-destructive, criminal animosities? Up until the late 1950s, the people of Uruguay had considered themselves positively as the “Switzerland of Latin America” and Montevideo nothing short of a “new” Athens. Prosperity based on the export of meat, leather, and wool to nations engaged in two World Wars and the Korean War had sufficed to extend a progressivist vision promulgated by the Colorado Party. For the first six decades of the 20th century, Uruguayan society had been characterized as homogeneous, middle-class, urbane, liberal, modernizing, and well-educated. Citizens were supported by a wide coverage of services, including public education and health. One of the resounding myths echoing through years of incredulity and now nostalgia is the refrain, “Like Uruguay, there is no other.”

## Fragmentation and Paralysis

After the end of the Korean War in 1953, Uruguay’s economy began to stall. Economic reforms failed. Wages and pensions plummeted; prices began to rise. Rural and labor associations began to agitate for better conditions and to hold on to hard-fought gains. In 1958, voters ejected the Colorado Party from the highest levels of political power the party had held for ten decades. The opposing Partido Nacional parlayed a mismatched coalition of rural representatives onto the national political stage, emphasizing decentralization and highlighting the interests of the agricultural interior. However, not long thereafter, workers noted that the capital needed to enlarge their sectors, to make them competitive in world markets, was instead going into speculative ventures. Popular discontent was growing into rebellion.

The already swollen public sector could not accommodate the growing number of unemployed. Many jobs had become sinecures offered by the politicians of both parties as favors in exchange for votes. In the capital city of Montevideo, as in the interior, unions of workers accompanied by students began to demonstrate publicly. Meanwhile, the United States was pressuring Uruguay and other countries in Latin America to professionalize their armed forces in order to integrate as a hemispheric Cold War force against incursions by the Soviet bloc.

## Disillusionment

To date, many still claim that the failure was one of political imagination. A critical aspect of the disillusionment many felt centered on the failure of secondary education (high school) to propel young people into improved positions in society. Young people from the middle and lower-middle classes were seldom able to attend the higher levels of education that were previously open to them during the years of prosperity. A larger number of young women also began to attend the higher grades, raising expectations of employment in positions that would not be available to them without the requisite political patronage.

The so-called failure of political imagination may well have been a result of an inadequate education, but at higher levels of society. As much schooling as the ruling elite received, the training did not adequately prepare leaders to manage the changes brought about by technologically advancing markets and global finance. Reforms to make courses and schools more “practical, stimulating and efficient” did not begin until the early 1960s. The new diversified curricula finally allowed flexibility for students to pursue their interests and aptitudes with the assistance of the instructor, who functioned more as a tutor than an examiner.<sup>4</sup> Before then, however, the curriculum was rigorous, but depended on rote learning of classic works. After the required thirty plus hours of class, students had to complete prescribed homework assignments. A national directorate structured assignments to prepare students for the exams required to gain admittance to advanced studies into select professional specializations.

An early critic of the intellectual and artistic environment of mid-century Uruguay, author and publisher Angel Rama, found fault with the long-term consequences of the education dispensed to his generation. In *La Generación Crítica: 1939–1969*, Rama (1972) noted that the education on offer to students was not only dull but also incoherent. The reality that surrounded young people was alive with film, radio, television, intercontinental flight, and the heady solidarity of Spanish exiles from fascist Spain. Young people of Rama’s generation, who were born around 1920, produced mature work around the 1940s, and attained some sort of prestige in the 1960s, confronted as he did, a society that was dynamic but fracturing. Perhaps more disturbing was the fact that the young saw no way of integrating themselves into the dominant classes or of making a living as creative people.

Rama also noted that many members of the educated middle classes of his generation moved into the less prestigious, but remunerative social sciences and technical fields. He thought that because of these choices,

4. Carolina Greising provides a general overview of education during and after 1950 in “La educación Uruguaya, 1960–1984,” an essay that appears in Bejamín Nahum’s compendium *Medio siglo de historia Uruguaya, 1960–2010*, published in Montevideo by Banda Oriental in 2013.



they no longer were active agents of their culture and had become instead functionaries, mere spectators. Their role as spectators—or at best—as critics, created an untenable anxiety. As critical spectators, they could more easily see the nepotism, the self-dealing, and the corrosion of democratic values. Relatively marginalized as intellectuals, his generation, la Generación Crítica, was no longer in a position to mediate or challenge conventional wisdom. The splintering of political parties and the emergence of new radical associations on the right and left indicated the need for additional outlets to exercise leadership, gain influence, and take corrective action.

## Education in Uruguay, 1950s to early 1960s

Simón Santiago Lucuix (no dates available), a teacher and official examiner during the period in question, provides a singular opportunity to see if Angel Rama's critique was apt. Between the mid-1930s and late 1950s, Lucuix taught several courses in history and literature at the Instituto Alfredo Vazquez Acevedo (IAVA). The IAVA was a prestigious college preparatory school, sometimes called the “school of presidents,” because so many of Uruguay's top officials enrolled there. Prior to his service at IAVA, Lucuix also had served as an examiner for the Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza as well as a docent at the venerable Liceo Francés.

The topics Lucuix covered and his teaching style become apparent from the lecture notes and notebooks remaining in his small archive. His notes cover complete courses on European literature, colonial history of the Americas, the French Revolution, and the Gaucho and customs of the Pampas. The literature course included an overview from Greek tragedies and Roman speeches to the plays of Racine and the essays by Voltaire. Lucuix organized the notes in chronological order, with



Figure 3. Simon S. Lucuix, 4th from the right in rear, with other educators at Tienda Inglesa, no date. Detail of a photograph in the Simon S. Lucuix Papers. Image courtesy of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

preambles punctuated by bullet points. He set up each section as a series of probing questions with corresponding answers, much like a catechism. Undoubtedly, these were the “correct” answers which the student then had to absorb and, hopefully, be taught to challenge.

The otherwise secular curriculum emphasized logical reasoning and critical thinking as well as character building. The presentation of the material projected a historical continuum of social betterment, a positivist perspective. Even the evolution of vernacular languages from the Latin was posited as a cultural improvement. Lucuix assumed all students shared the same values and ethics and believed the intention of study was the development of a young person’s abilities and talents to become decent, measured, and honest for the benefit of democratic society. Historical figures, invariably male, were described as “glorious,” valiant,” “decorous,” or “indefatigable,” and always in action.

Undoubtedly, Lucuix fulfilled his role as teacher and examiner satisfactorily. He regularly received requests to serve various institutions as examiner and as far as the record of his public activities shows, he consistently sought posts as director of conferences and as head of educational programs. Rama may have been right about many of the shortcomings of education in Uruguay, but he was writing in 1971 and 1972, with the advantage of many years of hindsight.

In many ways, Lucuix was very much a man of the receding past. Up until the early 1960s, Uruguayan scholars felt that they were collecting and organizing documents and artifacts that would eventually yield useful truths about the country, its peoples and history. His generation had been tasked with revising myths and national identities; they had not been charged with preparing youth for a technologically advancing future, nor to prepare masses of students for jobs.

Critical studies in Uruguay also were hampered by the lack of basic research materials. Vital documents had been taken to Spain in colonial times or misplaced during the wars for independence. Even the seminal publication of what became the National Archives of Uruguay, *Revista del Archivo Administrativo*, consisted of compilations and transcriptions of 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century documents that had been retained in the government building in Montevideo during colonial times. In the early 1930s, Elzear S. Giuffra personally had to consult sixty-seven cartographers, engineers, geologists, historians, and naturalists to compile his geography of Uruguay. The social sciences and related methodologies were not institutionalized in Uruguay until the late 1950s. No demographic census had been taken between 1908 and 1963, making collective self-awareness almost impossible. To what extent all these

factors played in the debate that befell Uruguay continues to be a topic of contention, but the analysis is instructive.

## The Personal Papers of Simón Santiago Lucúx

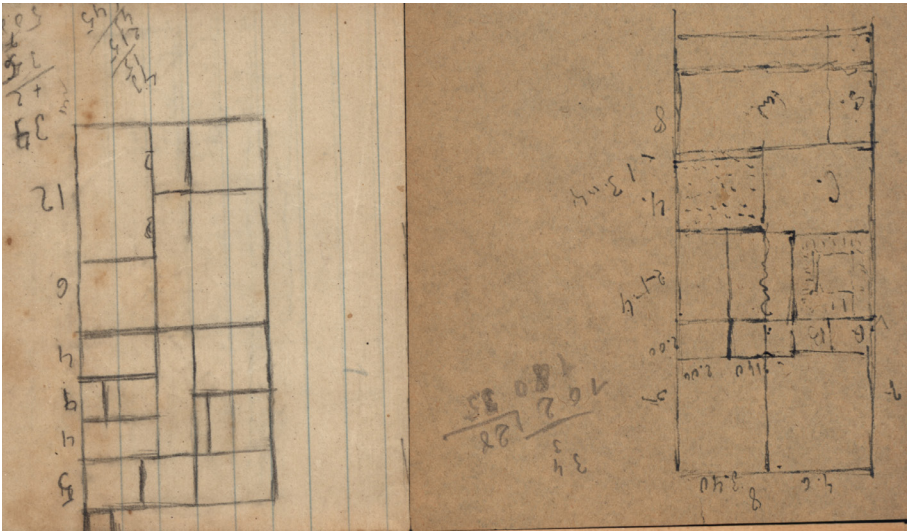


Figure 4. Lucúx sketches of bookcases. Details from loose sketches in the Simón S. Lucúx Papers. Image courtesy of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

Simón S. Lucúx seems to have been a person of status and privilege, but neither the briefest biographical note nor a necrology is available. It is a misfortune that what little is known about this complex man can only be deduced from the haphazardly saved items now stored in seven archival boxes. The boxes hold unsorted personal correspondence, mounds of newspaper clippings, notebooks, class materials, political broadsides, invoices, receipts, advertisements and promotional literature about men's fine clothing and liquor, photographs, event programs, student examination papers, pamphlets, and sketches of bookcases.<sup>5</sup>

He was well connected. Lucúx became involved in politics between 1916 and 1922, when he appeared as a candidate for the national assembly. He was a compatriot of Juan Campiisteguy, who eventually became president of Uruguay in 1927, as a Riverista (conservative in the nationalist, progressive party) in the Colorado Party. Lucúx admired Campiisteguy, whose political career he followed closely. In addition to his political affiliations, Lucúx attended affairs of state and educational functions as well as social events at the Yacht and Jockey Clubs in Montevideo.

Lucúx joined the Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay in 1925; served as director of Programs and Conferences during the 1940s; and was the director of the Revista at least until the mid-to-late 1950s. He was a founding member of the Sociedad de los Amigos de Arqueología,

5. All Lucúx papers referenced here are available in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division of the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. None of the material has been processed at the time of this writing.

where he cemented his relationships with Felipe Ferreiro y Horacio Arredondo. Among his bibliophile friends are many distinguished Uruguayan educators, historians, bibliographers, and ethnologists such as Fernando O. Assunção, Carlos Real de Azúa, Juan Carlos Gómez Haedo, Luis A. Musso, Eugenio Petit Muñoz, and Juan Ernesto Pivel Devoto.<sup>6</sup>

Between 1917 and 1963, Lucuix lived at five different addresses, all within a kilometer of the axis created by Bulevar Artigas and Avenida General Rivera. From there, his longest walk, of about four kilometers, would have been to Barreiro y Ramos, booksellers, and to the Bazar del Japón, a close by haberdashery. The places he frequented—the various institutes, the university, art galleries, observatory, national archives, and the national library—were located much closer; most were within one to three kilometers of his home. Along his path, he would encounter the countless monuments he diligently studied.

Lucuix's newspaper clippings revealed his penchant for considering multiple sides of an issue. For two major events in the diplomatic affairs of Uruguay, Lucuix collected articles from media presenting distinct perspectives. About the "Pacto de Paz y Seguridad" signed in April 1948, he collected articles from *La Prensa*, *El Diario*, and *El Día*. About the "Tratado de ayuda militar" signed on June 26, 1952, he clipped from *El Diario*, *El Día*, *Marcha* and *El Debate*, unaffiliated right, Colorado Party, unaffiliated left, and Partido Nacional, respectively.

Another telling item is a request from Conrado F. Monfort, dated June 26, 1957, entreating Lucuix to provide him with materials about the French biologist Étienne Saint-Hilaire and other explorers who had passed through the Río Negro basin. Monfort, editor of *El Litoral*—an independent newspaper published in Fray Bentos, Uruguay—was planning a surprise commemorative issue of the newspaper.

Lucuix received many letters like Monfort's, requesting books or thanking him for his bibliographic assistance and solicitudes. Often, grateful authors would send copies of their books in return; among these authors were literary critic Enrique Bianchi, architect Alfredo R. Campos, Franco-apologist Tomás Boada, and Uruguayan military Major Horacio J. Vino, a bewildering representation of political orientations and professions.

## Don Lucuix's Río de la Plata Library

Between 1920 and 1963, Lucuix amassed a library of 18,000 titles in over 21,000 volumes. Current catalog records of the books in his library show titles published between 1698 and 1963 in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, France, Italy, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and Uruguay as well as in the United

6. Although many years his junior, Pivel Devoto's life parallels Lucuix's trajectory as an educator, bibliophile, and public figure. Like Lucuix, Pivel Devoto taught at the prestigious Instituto Acevedo and helped shape several members of the military. Pivel Devoto also built a sizable library, which he and his family donated to the University of Montevideo. The Archivo General de la Nación [Uruguay] houses his extensive archives. For some insight on the pedagogical concerns and the economic life of Pivel Devoto, see the text of an interview carried out by Alicia Vidaurreta and published in the February 1989 issue of *The Hispanic American Historical Review*.





Figure 5. Lucuix collection of business cards sent by friends with notes. Composite from various business cards in the Simón S. Lucuix Papers. Image courtesy of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

Kingdom and the United States. The books, printed in English, French, German, Latin, and Spanish, covered subjects from art, archeology and architecture to folklore, history, jurisprudence, law, literature, philosophy, political science, and religion as well as chemistry, natural history, and medicine.

His assiduous collecting included the purchase of new and used books at major bookshops in Argentina, Brazil, Spain, and Uruguay. In Montevideo, he relied on the services of Barreiro y Ramos, Adolfo Linardi, Palacio del Libro, and El Librero de la Feria. In Buenos Aires, he dealt with Benito and José Tiscornia, El Ateneo, Librería La Incógnita, and Librería del Plata. He did business with many other dealers and auction houses internationally. He purchased entire libraries or parts of them.

Lucuix also maintained an extensive program of exchange. From his position as editor of the *Revista* of the Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay (IHGU), Lucuix sustained a fruitful correspondence with directors of various research centers, embassies, and the ministries of several countries who provided him with current publications.

He often received hard-to-get books through diplomatic pouch from friends located in far-flung Uruguayan embassies in Brazil, Peru, and the United States. He was a close friend of José A. Mora, Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, D.C. between 1956 and 1968. Mora became a loyal correspondent with whom Lucuix could discuss books, current events, and political observations. In one of his letters, Mora mentions how impressed he had been by one of the programs broadcast by Radio Ariel; the program featured a talk by Juan José Carvajal, a political scientist active in the 1950s.

## Correspondents, Borrowers, and Visitors

Lucuix's library satisfied his need to collect, his bibliophilia. It also satisfied his need to organize knowledge into some aesthetically pleasing and useful resource. His many scaled drawings of bookcases attest to that. He was a fastidious indexer and gloried in the work of Estanislao Zeballos, director of *Revista de Derecho*; and Alfredo Bianchi and Roberto Giusti, who edited *Revista Nuestros*. Lucuix respected Franco-Argentine librarian Paul Groussac, whom Lucuix considered a severe teacher.

The library served Lucuix as a resource for the many speeches he presented. He served as the master of ceremonies when the Amigos del Arte exhibit "El Gaucho y Su Medio" opened to great fanfare in May 1962. Lucuix was sought out to praise many Uruguayan intellectuals and to assist in paying homage to them at their funerals. He wrote the necrologies for bibliographers, historians, and geographers such as Carlos Ferrés, Silvestre Mato, José Toribio Medina, Francisco J. Ros, Julio María Sosa, José Pedro Varela, and Orosman Vázquez Ledesma. His words appeared as prologues in books; none have been collected in a single book edition or studied.

He lent his books and welcomed many to his library. Bibliographer Luis Musso consulted with Lucuix frequently in preparation for his long list of works which included library cataloguing works as well as annotated bibliographies of Uruguayan librarians and of journalists. Lucuix collaborated with Eduardo Gomez in elaborate searches about Artigas' decision-making and governance, when Gomez was writing an article about the applicability of Artigas' strategies to current events. He helped Francisco Oliveres hatch ideas for what became the historical museum in the capital of Treinta y Tres province. The library became an intimate extension of Montevideo's scholarly and intellectual life, but it provided Lucuix an opportunity to make protégés out of his more distinguished contemporaries. Lucuix only completed the equivalent of high school. Many of his colleagues had doctorates.



Given his contacts and resources, could Lucuix have acted any differently? Even if he could have foreseen what befell Uruguay within the decade or sensed that political and economic events were leading into a catastrophic situation, what changes could he and his colleagues have brought about to avert the dictatorship? Was the violent dictatorship inevitable?

## **Language and Area Studies in the United States**

Circumstances in the United States differed at the time. Violence at the national level had not yet erupted nor had Vietnam drained its coffers. In 1963, the United States was expanding culturally, establishing federal agencies to fund the arts, humanities and international exchange. The Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller, and Ford Foundations were investing substantial sums to reinforce Latin American area studies and research centers. Sputnik and the Cuban Revolution had motivated the U.S. Congress to develop American expertise in Latin America and to fund language and area studies through the National Education Defense Act.

Unnerved by the lagging recognition of the Latin American research programs at UT, Humanities professor Harry H. Ransom persuaded university administrators to pursue the new funding to enhance the existing library collections. Ransom emphasized that UT once had led area studies when history professors Herbert Bolton and Eugene Barker were pioneering the field at the turn of the century. In the 1940s, the university had pursued funds aggressively to develop the Institute for Latin American Studies. Regents, administrators, librarians, and students had worked in concert to acquire significant collections like the Bexar Archives, the Genaro García, the Miguel Gondras, and the Arturo Taracena collections. Acquiring efforts then slowed. Ransom explained that these collections were essential, but had to be supplemented with grander acquisitions to attract researchers and serve their unique needs.

## **The Latin American Cooperative Acquisition Program**

A handful of librarians and booksellers who understood the difficulties of locating and obtaining materials from Latin America formed into a specialized organization, the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM). A group within that organization formed what became the Latin American Cooperative Acquisition Program (LACAP). Members of LACAP included former Librarian of Congress Luther Evans, OAS Librarian Marietta Daniels Shepard, UT

Librarian Nettie Lee Benson, New York Public Librarian Robert Kingery, and international bookseller Stechert-Hafner representative Dominick Coppola. The group installed Shepard as Secretary and dispatched Benson, on leave from UT, as the first purchasing agent for Stechert-Hafner on behalf of LACAP.<sup>7</sup>

When he became UT President and then Chancellor, Ransom actively supported the acquisition plans laid out by Nettie Lee Benson. Benson had drawn up detailed plans for developing a comprehensive Latin American collection and bolstered her ambition with an unarguable rationale. Ransom too was a bibliophile and an advocate for large-scale library acquisitions. Both understood the role that the purchase of private libraries played in developing first-rate research collections and acquired them in large numbers. They also understood that to create truly great research collections, purchases had to be enriched with additional materials. Space, staff, and time were also needed.

Benson scoured bookshops, printing presses, private libraries, government agencies, and universities all over Latin America during three trips that occupied her for fifteen months. Her reports from the trips do not provide details about the individuals she met. However, in a 1983 article that appeared in the UT publication *Discovery*, Benson disclosed that of all the private libraries she examined, the Lucuix collection was the only one she thought worthy of acquisition by UT. She wrote to Ransom urging its purchase.

## The University of Texas Advances

Stechert-Hafner, Inc. completed the purchase of the Lucuix library on behalf of UT on November 1, 1963. According to the bill of sale signed by Lucuix, his library of 21,363 volumes was packed into 604 boxes, and bailed into 10 shipping containers. The purchase amount was US\$40,000.00—the equivalent of at least US\$300,000.00 today.

It is likely that economic circumstances forced Lucuix to sell his books. The inflation rate was about 44% in Uruguay when the sale was complete in 1963; inflation then rose to 88% in 1965; and 135% in 1967. There is also a chance that Lucuix foresaw the need to get rid of his collection. He owned books fated for destruction under the harsh censorship enforced by the dictatorship.

## Delays...

Formalities in the transaction between Stechert-Hafner and UT delayed the arrival of the books until 1966. By then, the UT collections had

7. The published literature about Latin American acquisitions made through the Farmington Plan and through LACAP is scattered, but discoverable. A singular book by M.J. Savary, *The Latin American Cooperative Acquisitions Program: An imaginative venture*, sketches LACAP's activities up until the time the book was published by Hafner in 1968.

swollen to 2 million volumes and countless manuscripts, maps, images, and recordings. The materials were overflowing in the stacks of the central library. Plans were drawn up to build three new libraries on campus. One of the buildings, inaugurated in 1971, now houses the Latin American Collection and is named after its leader, Nettie Lee Benson.

Cataloging of the Lucuix books continued through the 1970s as did the ruthless weeding. Individual titles that did not fit the Benson collection profile were sent to other libraries on campus. As of this writing, only 4,029 of the original 18,000 titles remain on hand. Of these, 1,100 are ensconced in the Benson's Rare Book Room and 194 still circulate from the main campus library. The balance is listed under the Benson's circulating collection, but an untold number of these are kept in offsite storage.

Over the years, the Lucuix library has been lauded variously for its size and quality; as a companion to the Miguel Gondras collection of manuscripts about colonial Paraguay; or as the bearer of several original editions of *Martin Fierro*. The Lucuix collection has been groomed, picked over, scattered, and almost forgotten as interests, needs, and modes of research have changed.

The bookplate designed to identify individual items from the Lucuix Collection reveals how UT administrators and librarians understood this treasure trove. The bookplate displays a simple silhouette of the ombú tree, with its abundant crown and immense, gnarly roots. Symbolically, the ombú appears repeatedly in the literature of Uruguay as a “place” of



Figure 6. Variety of Lucuix Library materials available to researchers. Photograph by author. Image courtesy of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

refuge, a marker in the vast landscape. The ombú is uniquely associated with the figure of the gaucho and is the only tree that grows in the pampas. Indeed, the ombú is not a tree, but a giant weed that grows from thirty to forty feet in height and may live for centuries. The ombú accumulates water in its capacious trunk so it can survive through many punishing droughts.

Despite the deaccessioning that has reduced the total number of titles to less than a third of the original count; the Lucuix collection still nourishes researchers. For instance, early editions of many Uruguayan classics are still to be found in their original bindings. Any search of the UT Library catalog yields the names of little studied publishers in connection with well-known authors and titles; a paradise of sorts for print culture and history of the book researchers. Significant bibliographies may be prepared on subjects ranging from Antarctic exploration and natural history of the pampas through the folklore that is at the root of contemporary rioplatense music.

At another level, the close study of the formation and sale of the Lucuix library reveals the actions and values of individuals who peopled the overlapping knowledge networks that still influence Latin American studies today. The dislocation and dismembering of the collection itself, as well as the persistence of its core, serve as a rich case for the study of the formation and deformations of collections and the effort necessary to reestablish educational and intellectual infrastructures after a period of suppression and systematic destruction.

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