CLACS Wins Department of Education TICFIA Grant

Indiana University Bloomington’s Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) has been awarded a four-year $600,000 grant for academic years 2005–2008 from the U.S. Department of Education’s Technological Innovation and Cooperation for Foreign Information Access (TICFIA) Program. TICFIA grants support projects that will develop innovative techniques or programs using new electronic technologies to collect information from foreign sources. Typically, funds are used to create, collect, preserve, and widely disseminate digital resources that address teaching and research needs in international education and foreign languages.

The CLACS project, the Central American and Mexican Video Archive (CAMVA), allows IUB to create a repository that will make accessible hundreds of hours of raw footage, videos, and films whose preservation is currently in a precarious state, on the point of irreversible deterioration and destruction. The archive project will annotate, index, and deliver this diverse footage in such a way as to be useful in college and high school classrooms throughout the United States, Mexico, and Central America. These materials will be distributed via the Internet.

IU Bloomington’s partners in Project CAMVA are faculty and

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African Studies Participates in Islamic Resources TICFIA Grant

Three faculty members of IU Bloomington’s African Studies Program are participating in the development of a Web site component that will be part of a larger project, “Diversity and Tolerance in the Islam of West Africa: Creating Online Resources of Peaceful Muslim Practice,” under a Technological Innovation and Cooperation for Foreign Information Access (TICFIA) grant that has been awarded jointly to Michigan State University (MSU) and African Online Digital Library (AODL) at Harvard University.

Its goal is to present the tolerance and diversity of Muslim religious practice and highlight the dominant tradition of incorporation, pragmatism, and mutual respect that has marked many West African Muslim communities, particularly those in Senegal and Ghana. The project will digitally preserve and create accessible archives—to be distributed via Web sites—of currently unavailable materials such as audio interviews, interview transcripts, West African newspapers, photographs, videotapes, and other archival text or image documents. These sources involve several languages (e.g., Arabic, French, Pulaar, Twi, Wolof) and range in content from the religious, cultural, and political history of these two countries, and topics such as peace and dispute resolution, international migration, the impact of globalization on societies, relations between religious and government organizations, and Muslim Sufi networks.

In addition to MSU and Harvard, other African researchers and specialists from Indiana University, Boston University, and University of Florida will participate. From IUB, John Hanson, director of the African Studies Program, will contribute materials on the Ahmadiyya mission and reform movement for a section on Ahmadiyya secondary schools in Ghana, which have a secular Muslim orientation. Gracia Clark will travel to Kumasi, Ghana, to add audio and visual resources about markets and trading, including the spread of Islam along historic trade routes and the roles and dynamics of trade between Muslims and Christians today. Maria Grosz-Ngaté, associate director, will travel to Senegal to document the Qadiriyya spiritual center of Njaassaan, a center for Bamana pilgrims from Mali.

The project will be coordinated by historians David Robinson at MSU for the Senegal component and Emmanuel Acheampong of Harvard for the Ghana component.

For further information on digital preservation of African materials, see: www.aodl.org
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Researchers in CLACS and the Center for the Study of History and Memory (CSHM), as well as technology experts in the Digital Library Project (DLP), itself a collaborative effort of IU Libraries and the Office of the Vice President for Information Technology. The project is working with a consortium of three leading research institutes in Central America and Mexico whose holdings include the film and video materials and footage that the project will draw on: the Institute of Nicaraguan and Central American History (IHNCA, Nicaragua); the Museum of Words and Images (MUPI, El Salvador); and the Center for Advanced Research and Studies in Social Anthropology (CIESAS, Mexico).

Since 1960, radical societal transformations—the growth of agro-export economies, land loss and internal migration, the development of social movements that, following a period of repression, have led to civil wars, etc.–have taken place in the livelihoods and cultures of millions of rural people, approximately 35 percent of the population, in Central America and Mexico. Although many documents have been produced dealing with the conflicts in the 1980s, the more subtle yet crucially significant changes in peoples’ lives, including the linguistic and cultural transformations of the indigenous peoples of Mexico, have left relatively little documentary trace. Because the rural people of Central America and Mexico have not left written records, these audio-visual archives can play a crucial role in allowing scholars and policy makers to understand the cultural roots of the new immigrants, their present cultural universe, and their evolving worldviews and practices.

Specifically, the project in Mexico will focus on videos and raw footage collected through years of anthropological studies at CIESAS dealing with the indigenous peoples, mainly of Oaxaca, Veracruz, and Chiapas. In Nicaragua, Project CAMVA will also work with IHNCA in preserving and making accessible rapidly deteriorating videos, films, and raw video footage stored at the Universidad Centroamericana, the Centro de Historia Militar (Center of Military History), as well as footage from television companies. Most of the videos and television footage deal with rural conditions and conflict during the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, in El Salvador, Project CAMVA will select and process materials from the vast MUPI collection, containing more than 60 reels of film, dealing in large part with the rural-based guerrilla struggle of the 1970s and 1980s among the eastern Salvadoran peasantry of mestizo, indigenous, and hybrid identities.

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says that “the ultimate goal is to provide for long-term storage in a way that uses standards, in a way that ensures that the content does not become obsolete, and in a way that we can exchange preserved content.” To reach these goals, nationally recognized staff already in place at each institution will supervise audio engineers, programmers, and project assistants who will be hired for this project. To ensure that results are broadly applicable to the field, Sound Directions will also convene an advisory board consisting of nationally renowned, technical experts.

—Ryan Piurek
IU Media Relations
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