

Notes on Operations

A Holistic Assessment of Spanish Gift Books

Meredith Giffin

Library gifts-in-kind are a mixed blessing; their potential utility must be weighed against the resources required to add them to a collection. Understanding the value such materials can bring to the library is essential. In academic libraries, donations from faculty members may be assumed to be more appropriate and useful additions to the collection. This evaluation used multiple methods to assess the value of several hundred gift books donated by a professor in support of the Spanish program at Concordia University. Parameters examined include age, language, subjects and their relation to the curriculum, usage, and availability in other libraries.

The value of gift materials to a library is not a given: their worth to the institution should be assessed before a decision is made to accept them. In an era where physical collections in general are increasingly under scrutiny for their utility in all types of libraries, donated items should be subject to a similar level of evaluation. Such assessment usually begins when materials are first offered to a library. Library gift policies can prevent donations of unsuitable materials or ensure that the library is not obligated to keep donated items.¹ For academic libraries, it is fairly simple to specify what types of material will not be accepted, such as textbooks, popular fiction, and magazines and journals. Many gifts-in-kind, though, are less easily categorized as appropriate. While some will prove to be desirable and useful supplements to the library's own purchases, others are less useful due to factors such as age, audience level, format, duplication of existing holdings, language, subject areas, and alignment with the organization's needs and collection development strategy. It is not always straightforward to determine the potential value of gifts to an institution at the time of donation.

A particular source of gifts-in-kind in academic libraries is donations made by faculty members, both current and retired. Given the importance of maintaining good relationships with faculty, such gifts may require tactful negotiation and communication of gift policies to ensure that only materials that fall within the scope of library collections and are in appropriate formats and condition are accepted. However, gifts from faculty that do meet such conditions may well fill gaps and contribute useful works to the library, due to their subject expertise and understanding of curricular and research needs. At Concordia University, many faculty members periodically donate materials to the library. This inquiry has been undertaken to evaluate a large quantity of book donations made over a number of years by an individual faculty member from the Spanish program, with the goal of determining the value of these gifts to the institution, using multiple assessment methods.

Background

Concordia University is a large research institution located on two campuses in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, with over 36,000 undergraduate and nearly 10,000

Meredith Giffin (meredith.giffin@concordia.ca) is Collections Coordinator at Concordia University Library in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Manuscript submitted June 30, 2021; manuscript returned to author for revision November 9, 2021; revised manuscript submitted December 3, 2021; accepted for publication January 1, 2022.

The author wishes to acknowledge the generosity of Dr. Catherine Vallejo, whose passion for the literature and culture of Latin America led to the development of this unique collection.

graduate students. Concordia's two libraries provide access to over 1.6 million unique titles, including 1.2 million print volumes. Through its Department of Classics, Modern Languages, and Linguistics (CMLL), the university offers undergraduate degree programs in Spanish, Hispanic Cultures and Literatures, plus programs in Italian, German, Arabic, Chinese, Classics, and Linguistics. The majority of students in the department are enrolled in the Spanish stream or in Linguistics. The department also offers a Master's degree in Hispanic Studies, although new admissions are currently suspended, and individualized graduate programs may also be pursued in the research areas of CMLL faculty. With an enrollment of 600 undergraduate students and a small number of graduate students, it is a medium-sized department within the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Since the implementation of a revised budget formula in 2018, the department has received an average allocation from the library's collections budget for the Faculty of Arts and Science. For at least ten years previously, the annual budget assigned for book and e-book purchasing in support of this department was relatively low. The number and diversity of programs offered, and the multiple languages taught, have made collection development for this department challenging. Most library materials are purchased from major North American vendors and large European suppliers such as Casalini Libri and Puvill, which are used for books in Italian and Spanish. Latin American materials must often be acquired from smaller providers in the Americas. Another challenge for CMLL collection development has been regular turnover in subject librarians supporting this department over the past fifteen years.

However, print acquisitions supporting the Spanish programs have been augmented by donations made during the past twenty-five years, particularly by faculty members. One retired professor regularly travels to Cuba and other Caribbean countries plus Colombia and Mexico, and acquires books primarily in the areas of Hispanic literature and history. These are then often donated to the library. Very occasionally, purchases made at book fairs have afterwards been reimbursed from library funds, but the majority are donated. The goal of these gifts was to further develop the library's collection of works from Latin America to support the Spanish program. It was initially estimated that this faculty member has contributed at least 500 volumes to the library's collection.

An analysis was conducted to quantify and describe these gift books, and to apply several methods to assess their value to the library, considering factors of age, usage, relevance, and uniqueness. Despite being free, gifts-in-kind require time and effort from library personnel to deal with donors and manage the donation process, to catalog the materials, and to maintain them as part of the collection. Gifts have little value if items are dated, inappropriate for

an academic collection, or do not support the curriculum and institution's research directions. Gifts made by faculty would seem more likely to be relevant and useful; this paper investigates this assumption using the case of the Spanish gift books.

Literature Review

Discussions of gifts-in-kind, their management, and their utility—or lack thereof—to libraries appear regularly in the professional literature, so much so that Carrico in 1999 published an eight-page annotated bibliography on the topic of gifts in academic and special libraries.² In their paper describing the use of cost-benefit analysis to assess a large gift collection, Ballestro and Howze point out that library gifts are not free, as they require staff time to evaluate, obtain, process, and even discard; with this in mind, their worth is often debated by librarians.³ As Thomas and Shouse mentioned in their analysis of the utility of gifts, older works, books in poor condition, and materials that are out of scope for the library's collection are not worth accepting.⁴ However, even after using an initial assessment to remove inappropriate materials from consideration, concerns remained at their institution over the time and space required to evaluate, accept and process a relatively small number of relevant gifts.

Published studies on gifts in academic libraries have approached the issue of how value is determined in different ways. Several authors have examined usage of gifts, determined by circulation and in-house use. Diodato and Diodato in 1983 analyzed checkouts as a measure of the utility of a gifts program, finding that non-gift materials were borrowed four times more often than gifts.⁵ Kairis compared use data (loans, renewals, and in-house uses) for gifts and a sample of non-gifts during a one-year period to provide statistically valid data on the relative use of gifts versus selected and purchased materials, and found that 55 percent of non-gifts were used versus 43 percent of gift books. Additionally, Kairis found that the average use per book was 1.38 for non-gifts and 0.87 for gifts.⁶ In reviewing and adjusting their gifts program, Bishop, Smith and Sugnet compared circulation statistics for gift and non-gift materials, which was deemed the primary criteria in determining value by their administration. They found that 60 percent of non-gifts circulated in the past five years, while only 34 percent of gifts had circulated.⁷

Thomas and Shouse's study took a more detailed look at the use of gift books. They examined circulation for items in Library of Congress (LC) classes P and H and by subclasses for the latter, and to what extent interlibrary loan (ILL) accounted for gift circulation, and whether gift books were required reading for courses.⁸ Their study showed that

gift books were used less: only 26 percent of books added in class P (Language and Literature) were borrowed, and these gifts had a use rate of 0.87 versus a rate of 1.64 for non-gifts. In class H (Social Sciences), 37 percent of the gift books were borrowed, and the use rate was 1.32 compared to 1.82 for non-gifts. Gift books that were on course readings lists had much higher use rates, ranging from 3.29 to 5.4 depending on the year and semester. In a six-year retrospective analysis of donated book use presented at the 2020 Charleston Conference, Cross examined patterns of usage by subject and age, and noted that items classed under English or History and those published in the past twenty years received the most use.⁹

However, circulation is not the only indicator of value for donated library materials, particularly for academic research libraries. Ballestro and Howze assert that the criteria for gifts acquisition “requires that the items selected build on the already existing strengths of the library’s collection, and meet the institution’s programmatic needs.”¹⁰ In her paper on the role of the subject specialist librarian in gifts management, Norris pointed out that “Often books that do not circulate frequently can be of extreme value to research, which has a narrower focus and subsequently a smaller user group.”¹¹ This paper also described the benefits of outreach activities by liaison librarians in facilitating donations from faculty members, resulting in books which are valued by faculty being added to the library collection.

Kohl described the University of New Mexico’s gift review process, which considers multiple factors.¹² In addition to excluding popular (non-academic) titles, textbooks, reprints, and items in poor condition, works must fall within the library’s collecting scope. Language of gift items is considered in light of the institution’s degree programs; the library actively acquires works in Spanish and Portuguese. Particular consideration is given to developing existing collection strengths, in this case their institution’s concentration on New Mexico, the Southwest, and Latin America.

Ballestro and Howze noted that one benefit of donations may be to significantly enhance holdings in a subject area, or to fill gaps, which typically result from budgetary constraints.¹³ At Concordia University Library, the relatively low budget allocations to support the CMLL department for many years may well have had such an impact on the collection. Other issues with library acquisitions, such as those associated with obtaining foreign language and area studies materials, can also result in uneven subject coverage. Ward described some of the challenges inherent in acquiring such materials: the need for foreign language skills, the use of diverse (and not always automated) resources for selection and ordering, particularly from multiple countries, relatively short print runs, cost and currency fluctuations, and delays or other problems with shipping.¹⁴ One approach used to obtain such materials, as described by Thacker, is

the overseas buying trip to purchase books directly from publishers, vendors, or at book fairs, an endeavor typically embarked upon occasionally by subject specialist librarians employed by larger academic libraries.¹⁵ When the size of the department or program and the diversity of regions and languages represented does not warrant librarians undertaking such trips, donations from an academic travelling to a region and occasionally attending book fairs may be an effective proxy means to augment the library’s collection of foreign materials.

For North American libraries, acquiring books from Latin America has been assisted by improvements in communication technologies and the organizational support and cooperative activities provided by the US-based Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM), which has enabled Latin American vendors to work more closely with the North American library market.¹⁶ Nevertheless, in their recent paper, Ibacache et al. investigated the acquisition in US university libraries of Spanish-language books, and found the majority of these were published in Spain or Mexico, far more than from any other Latin American country.¹⁷ Due to the US embargo against Cuba in place since 1958, the acquisition of materials from Cuba in particular has been challenging for American libraries and even for libraries in other countries, given the relative isolation of the Cuban publishing industry compared to Latin American countries with readier access to international markets. Prefacing his account of a buying trip to Cuba, Alonso-Regalado of SUNY-Albany University Libraries mentions the difficulties and expense of purchasing Cuban books even through vendors from other countries.¹⁸ Books published in Cuba may therefore be less frequently found in North American libraries, and the donations from a professor who regularly buys books in Cuba may have contributed to building a more robust and unique collection of these works at Concordia University.

In their paper on data-driven decision-making for gifts, Swanson and White discuss the potential for gifts-in-kind to provide “materials of unique, rare, or significant value to libraries,” focusing on the concept of rarity and geographic scarcity.¹⁹ Determining the existence and quantity of other holdings locally or nationally through WorldCat is a useful method to assess the availability or scarcity of works being offered. It may also be used to identify gift books already acquired that are rare or not readily available within a region. The Spanish-language books donated to Concordia University Library that were published and acquired abroad, particularly those from Cuba, may well include such items that could be identified using this approach.

In recent years, holistic collection assessment has become an increasingly popular approach to evaluating library collections: using multiple methods and varied types of data to better understand the breadth and composition

of a collection and its relevance and usefulness. This methodology may be applied to entire library collections or to specific formats, subject areas, or special collections. In her recent manual on collections assessment, Kelly asserts, “No single metric can adequately reflect a collection’s value within our complex and evolving landscape and no assessment method or tool is so airtight that it could provide the sole basis for anything but the simplest assessment-related projects.”²⁰ Assessing gift books using multiple measures can accomplish the same purpose as any collection assessment: to describe the collection in terms of scope—size, age, subjects, relative strengths—and to determine the value of the materials to the institution. For this collection of gifts donated to Concordia, value will be assessed through comparing usage with that of non-gift books, as has been done in previous research into gifts-in-kind; by examining the alignment of subjects covered with the relevant course curricula; and by ascertaining the uniqueness or availability in other libraries of the gift books.

Method

For this assessment, a combination of collection- and use-based techniques were used to review the gift books. Library system records and documentation of gifts-in-kind were first used to identify the donations made by the faculty member. From 1992 until mid-2020, the library used Innovative’s Millennium and Sierra integrated library system products. Although the library migrated in July 2020 to OCLC’s Worldshare Management System, bibliographic and usage data were extracted from Sierra in fall 2020 to ensure that all circulation and internal use data from 1992 to July 2020 were provided in a consistent format. Since gifts were identified in Millennium and Sierra with a note that included department code, a list of all gift books for the CMLL department was generated, and bibliographic and usage data for these were exported into Excel. Data fields included LC call numbers, title, author, year of publication, publisher and place of publication, language, ISBN(s), OCLC number, date of record creation, checkout and internal use data, notes, and record identifiers.

Using electronic and print documentation on library gifts-in-kind, all volumes donated by the faculty member were found and coded in the Excel file. Records for a handful of additional titles identified from the donation lists, but lacking the gift note, were also added to the file, as were records for approximately 100 books purchased by the professor in Latin America and reimbursed by the library. Finally, another seventy items in the file of gift books that shared record creation dates, publishers and place of publication, and authors with already documented donations from the faculty member, were coded as their gifts. These

additions were confirmed through correspondence with the professor, who routinely included extra items not on the donation lists when depositing books at the library. In all, 814 volumes were identified as gifts made by the faculty member between 1995 and 2019. The data in this file were used to determine the publication date ranges, average age, and average time between publication and cataloging for all the gift books, as well as the proportion of books in Spanish, and the main subjects as identified by LC call number.

An initial review of the file revealed that 99 percent ($n = 806$) of the gift books were added to the main circulating collection, and 80 percent of all gift books ($n = 650$) are found in the LC Classification ranges for Spanish American literature (PQ7081-8560) and Latin American history (F1201-3799).²¹ Bibliographic and usage data for all volumes (gifts and non-gifts) in these two LC ranges of the main collection were therefore extracted from Sierra, and the faculty member’s gifts identified in these two spreadsheets using Excel’s VLOOKUP function. This function allows data from separate sources to be matched using a common value, in this case the unique item record number from Sierra. The data sets were generated to identify the relative proportion of the gift books in these two subject areas; to conduct a more granular categorization by subject using LC call numbers; and to enable a comparison of usage between the gift books and non-gift items acquired during the same period. For the usage comparison, loans, renewals, and in-house use (which has been collected at Concordia for at least ten years by staff scanning all books picked up in the libraries for reshelving) were each counted as a single use and totalled for each volume. As 96 percent of the books donated in these two LC ranges are in Spanish, the usage comparison with non-gift books was limited to Spanish-language materials, as that would be more meaningful than including English-language or French-language works, which are far more likely to be used by the Concordia community. The usage data generated was compared with results from other published studies of gift book use.

All books in the PQ and F files were then coded by subject, mapping LC call numbers against the LC classification headings. This approach enabled the books to be categorized by geographic regions and countries, and by some specific literary topics, such as women authors. The goal of this subject mapping was multiple: to facilitate a comparison between the subject areas of gift items and the department’s curriculum and research focus; to enable an analysis of usage data at a more granular level than by LC class alone to discover any subject areas where usage is particularly high or low; and to identify any subject clusters that are more unique in terms of holdings elsewhere in Quebec, Canada, and the US. These two files were also analyzed using record numbers, call numbers, titles/

authors, and date created to identify any duplicate copies or variant editions of works already held. Gift volumes from other call number ranges in the master Excel file of donations were checked individually against the catalog for duplicates and variant editions. Within this context, versions in other languages were not counted as variant editions.

All gift books in the PQ and F files were searched for holdings elsewhere in Quebec, Canada, and the US, using OCLC's WorldCat database. Determining whether donated titles are held elsewhere in Quebec or in Canada and the number of copies available in North America provides an indication of the collection's uniqueness, since one of the donor's goals was to develop a collection of materials not otherwise found locally to support the curricular and research needs of the Spanish program.

In a recent paper, Swanson and White describe using the WorldCat API to automate the process of obtaining holdings data for potential gifts-in-kind to assess rarity and availability within various geographic distances.²² Using the WorldCat API would have significantly reduced the time required to compile holdings data. However, this method relies on using a unique OCLC record number for each work. For this assessment, such an approach would not have captured holdings for the same works from French-language institutions in Quebec and Canada, which use different OCLC records with French descriptions and subject headings from the English-language OCLC records used by Concordia and other English-language institutions in North

America. Additionally, a single-record search would not provide holdings for variant editions or reprints. For works of literature in particular, counting holdings without considering alternate editions would present a very limited picture of the availability of the content elsewhere. For these two reasons, the gift titles were checked manually for holdings in WorldCat by searching OCLC record number. When holdings in Quebec, Canada, and the US on the matching record were counted, OCLC's "Search for versions with same title and author" function was used to identify additional holdings in the same geographic regions for French-language catalog records and for alternate print editions. Holdings with the University of Florida's code BNCJM (Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí) were not counted, as these are in fact items from Cuba's national library that have been added to WorldCat through a partnership with the University of Florida and OCLC. Holdings in Puerto Rican libraries were also excluded from the counts for US holdings, as works on Spanish American literature and Latin American history are both much more likely to be found there and less easily accessed by users elsewhere in the US and Canada.

Finally, the data in these two files were analyzed using filters, pivot tables, and charts to quantify the distribution of gift books across more specific subject areas; to calculate measures of usage and investigate relationships between subject and usage; and to ascertain the quantity and subjects of the donated works which are commonly held in other libraries.

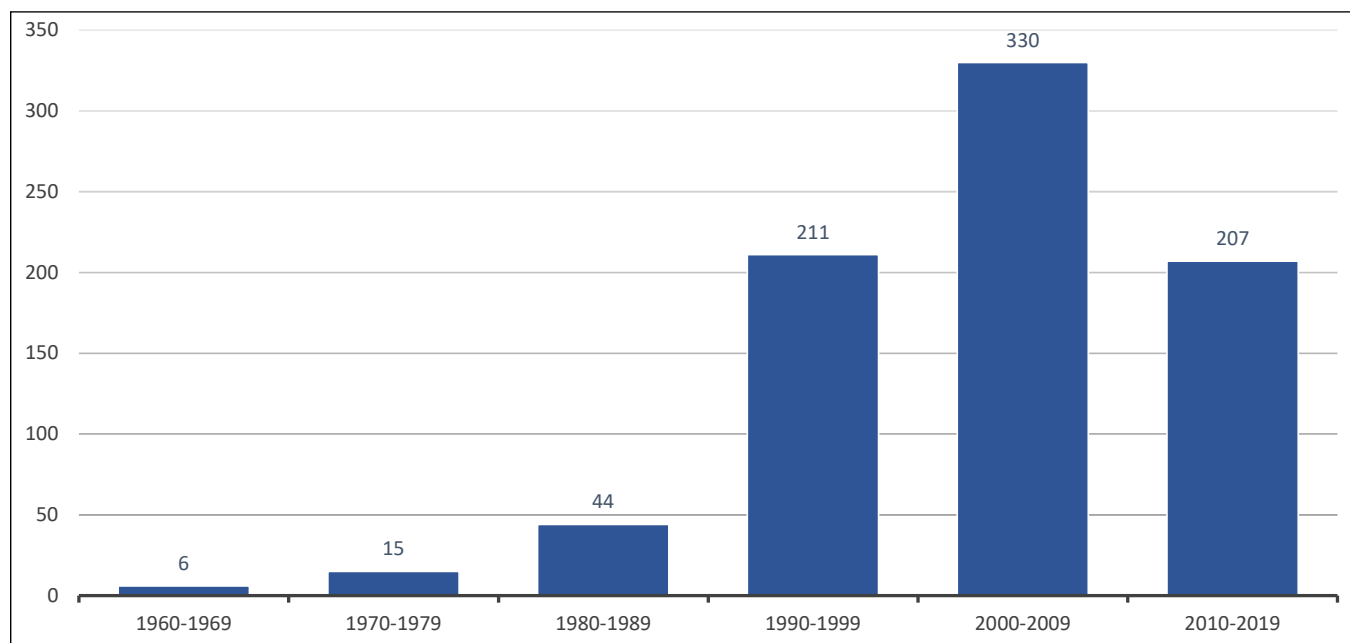


Figure 1. Gift books by year of publication

Findings

Age and Duplication

The age of gift books may be considered as an indicator of potential value. In their examination of gift book usage, Cross stated that “items with use were largely published within the last 20 years.”²³ An analysis of the publication dates of the faculty gifts reveals that with the exception of one book published in 1926, the gift volumes were published between 1964 and 2019. Grouped into ten-year date ranges, 41 percent of the books were published between 2000 and 2009; 26 percent were published between 1990 and 1999; 25 percent between 2010 and 2019; and the remaining 8 percent were published between 1960 and 1989, excluding the 1926 outlier (see figure 1). Nearly two-thirds of the gift books were thus published between 2000 and 2019.

However, a more meaningful indicator for the potential utility of gift books may be the delay between the year when the book is printed and the date when the book is received by the library and added to the collection, which Diodato and Diodato refer to as “gift time lag.”²⁴ Excluding the 1926 outlier, the average difference between year of publication and year added to the catalog for the 813 gift books is seven years, and the median difference is five years. In fact, 77 percent of these gifts were added to the catalog within ten years of being published. This is a far shorter time lag than that identified by Diodato and Diodato, who found that 88

percent of their gift books in subclass PS (American literature) were added more than ten years after printing.²⁵

Another consideration in assessing the value of gift books is whether they duplicate existing library holdings. A review of all 814 volumes donated by the faculty member revealed that twelve items were second copies of works already acquired by the library, twenty-five items were more recent editions of works already held by the library, and one volume was a second copy of a work for which older editions were also owned. These thirty-eight duplicate items represent less than 5 percent of the total volumes donated.

Subjects and Curriculum

As previously mentioned, 806, or 99 percent, of the 814 donated volumes are found in the main circulating collection. The remaining eight books are in the non-circulating Reference collection, the Curriculum Collection of children’s books and works on primary education, or on course reserve. In terms of subject classification, 80 percent of the 814 donated volumes are found in two specific subject ranges: 521 items in Spanish American literature (PQ7081-8560), and 129 items in Latin American history (F1201-3799). Of the remaining 164 items, twenty-three are in PQ6000, peninsular Spanish literature; twenty-one in HQ under Women—Feminism—Latin America; sixteen in PN, Literature (General); and the other works are scattered throughout the LC classification from AC75 (Collections

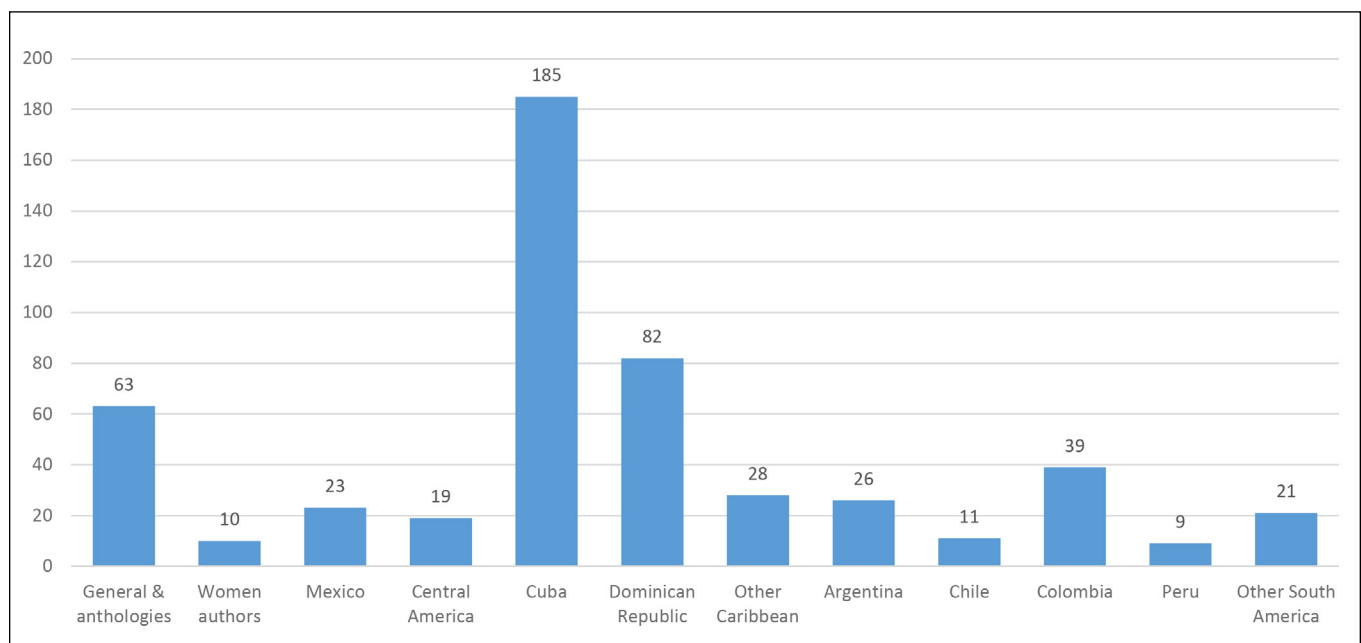


Figure 2. Gift books by subject: Spanish American literature (PQ)

of monographs, essays etc. in other languages) to Z1003 (General bibliography).

Regarding the 814 donated items, 770, or 95 percent, are in Spanish, forty-three are in English, and one is in Catalan. The proportion of Spanish-language gift books varies among the main subject areas identified above: 100 percent of the gift books classed under women's studies are in Spanish, 97 percent of the books on Spanish American literature, 94 percent of those on general literature, 91 percent of those on Latin American history, and 87 percent of the items on peninsular Spanish literature.

The LC classes for literature and history both use geographic divisions to further classify works. In subclass PQ, there are also sections for general works on literature and anthologies grouped by genre within the larger linguistic or regional sections. For the items held in the library's main circulating collection classed in Spanish American literature ($n = 516$) and Latin American history ($n = 129$), a further analysis of call numbers using the section headings of LC classification thus reveals the regional distribution of the gift books.

Figure 2 shows the gift books on Spanish American literature further grouped by these subject categories. Of those 516 items, 185 items, or 36 percent, are classed under Cuban literature, and eighty-two items (16 percent) are on the literature of the Dominican Republic. The literatures of Spanish-speaking South American countries account for 21 percent of the gift books ($n = 106$), while general works

on Spanish American literature and anthologies, including those on specific genres such as novels, poetry, and prose, make up another 12 percent of the gifts. The remaining 15 percent are classed under Mexico, Central America, or other Caribbean countries, with ten books on the specific topic of Spanish American women authors.

The regional distribution of the 129 gift books on Latin American history in the main collection is somewhat different, as shown in figure 3. Here, thirty-six works on Mexico account for 28 percent of the donations, while thirty-one (24 percent) are about Cuba, and twenty-four (19 percent) are on the region of Latin America in general. Fewer of these books are on South American countries ($n = 15$, 12 percent) and the Dominican Republic ($n = 14$, 11 percent) than the literature gifts. Works on Central American and other Caribbean countries account for the remainder, nearly 7 percent of the total.

Given the differing emphasis on countries and regions within Latin America displayed by the numbers of books donated, the course listings and descriptions for the university's programs in Spanish and History were consulted to see how the focus on particular countries aligned with the curriculum. In addition to twenty-two courses on language and translation, and eleven on peninsular Spanish literature and culture, the Spanish curriculum includes ten courses focused on Spanish American literature and culture, and nine courses on topics in Hispanic literature and culture covering both Spain and the Americas. Among the courses on Spanish

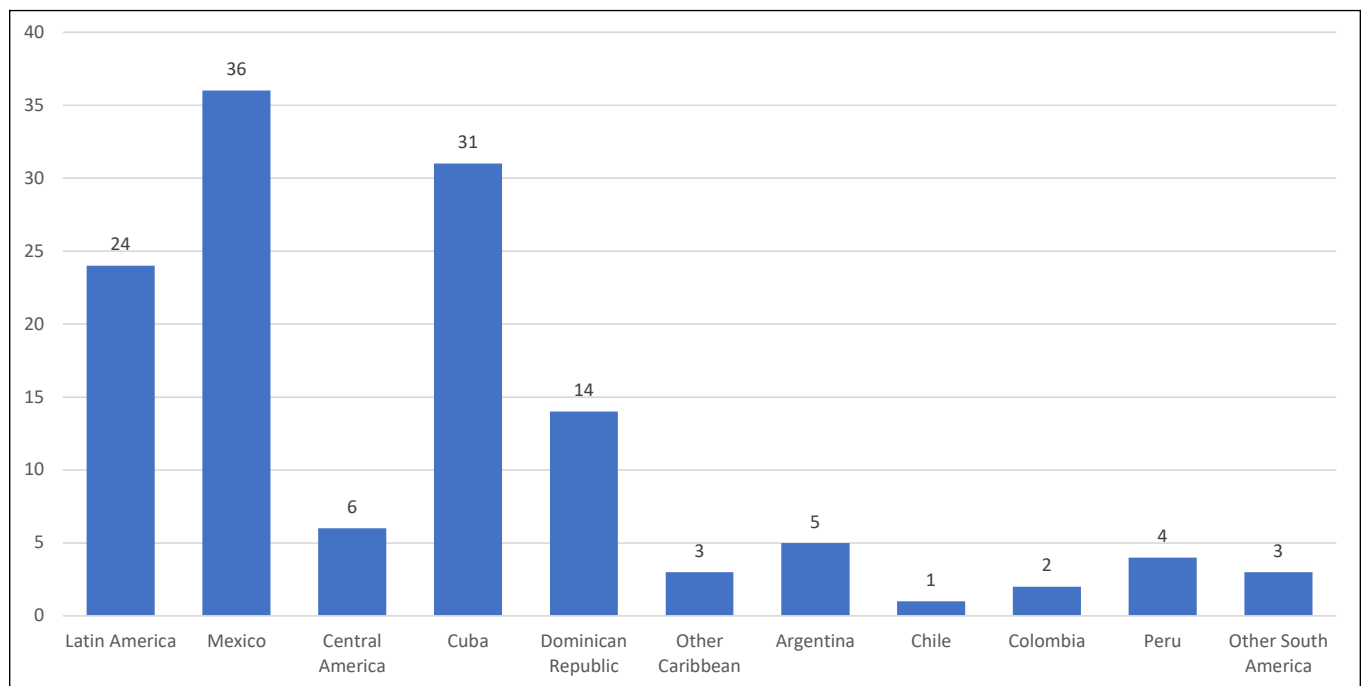


Figure 3. Gift books by subject: Latin American history (F)

America, the description for “Cultures of Mexico, the Central American Region, and the Spanish Caribbean” states that “Mexico, Cuba, and Colombia are given special importance; the history and culture of the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and the Central American countries are also highlighted,” while for the course “Cultures of the Southern Cone and the Andean Region,” “Argentina, Peru, and Chile are given special importance.”²⁶ Among the literature courses, descriptions specifically mention the following Spanish American writers: Heredia (Cuba), Sarmiento (Argentina), Gómez de Avellaneda (Cuba), Martí (Cuba), Gutiérrez Nájera (Mexico), Darío (Nicaragua), Lugones (Argentina), Carpentier (Cuba), García Márquez (Colombia), Puig (Argentina), Allende (Chile), Burgos and Menchú (Guatemala), Barnet and Montejó (Cuba), Sor Juana (Mexico), and el Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (Peru). The prominence of Cuban writers is notable. However, the disparities in the geographic coverage of the literature books are greater than one would expect from the curriculum, with books on Cuba and the Dominican Republic accounting for over half of the donations while works on South American countries make up less than a quarter and those on Mexican literature less than 5 percent of the gift items.

The History department offers eight courses focused on Latin America or the Caribbean, and three others covering the history of the Atlantic world (Africa, Europe, and the Americas). Of these eleven courses, one is devoted to Mexican history. Another addresses US, Cuban, and Mexican relations. The course “History of Latin America: The Modern Period” covers “the social and economic roots of political instability; Mexico under Porfirio Díaz; the Mexican Revolution; Argentina and Brazil under Perón and Vargas; US-Latin American relations; Castro’s Cuba; revolution and counter-revolution in contemporary Latin America.”²⁷ There is a clear focus on Mexico among the Latin American countries studied, although there is also a certain emphasis on Cuba. The higher proportion of books on Mexico among the gift books on Latin American and Caribbean history (as compared to the literature gifts) thus appears to align with the focus of the relevant courses offered by the History department. In comparison, the number of books on Cuba is again particularly high, while works on South American countries are once more underrepresented among the gift books.

Usage Analysis

The two files of books on Spanish American literature (PQ7081-8560)

and Latin American history (F1201-3799) were further analyzed to examine usage in comparison with non-gift books, patterns of usage by subject, and the availability or uniqueness of the gift books based on holdings in other libraries. The usage comparison was limited to Spanish-language works, although holdings were checked for all gift books in these two subject areas.

For the usage comparison, two measures found in previous research on gift books were used: the number and percentage of items borrowed or used in-house at least once, and the average uses per item (calculated based on total uses divided by total used and not-used items). In addition to comparing data only for Spanish-language works, this analysis was restricted to non-gift books added to the collection during the same timeframe as the donated items. For books in the PQ subset, this range included volumes added between 1995 and 2019; for the books in class F, volumes added between 2000 and mid-2020. These parameters resulted in a data set for PQ7081-8560 of 500 gift volumes and 692 non-gift volumes, and 118 gift volumes and 191 non-gift volumes in F1201-3799. As the numbers demonstrate, the books donated by the faculty member make up a relatively high proportion of the library’s more recent works in Spanish in these two areas: 42 percent of the 1,192 books acquired since 1995 on Spanish American literature, and 38 percent of the 309 books acquired since 2000 classed under Latin American history.

As illustrated in table 1, the results for books in PQ7081-8560 (Spanish American literature) demonstrate a usage pattern somewhat similar to those found in other published research on gift book usage. Books donated by the faculty member were used less than library-purchased items: while 63 percent of non-gift books had been used at least once, only 47 percent of the gift books had been used. This level of usage is slightly higher than the 43 percent of gift books in LC class PS (American literature) with at least one use identified by Diodato and Diodato between 1964 and 1982 and the 43 percent found by Kairis in his one-year examination of use.²⁸ It is higher still than the 34 percent of gift books used found by Bishop, Smith, and Sugnet over a five-year period, the 30 percent found by Cross in a six-year

Table 1. Usage of Spanish Gift and Non-Gift Books

LC call number range	Number of books	Number used	Percentage used	Use rate per item
PQ7081-8549 Spanish American literature				
Gifts	500	236	47%	1.26
Non-gifts	692	437	63%	2.77
F1201-3799 Latin American history				
Gifts	118	69	58%	2.09
Non-gifts	191	89	47%	1.52

period, or the 26 percent found by Thomas and Shouse over seven years for books in the LC class P.²⁹ Given that these proportions were found in examinations of predominantly English-language gift books at other institutions, the higher percentage of items used for these Spanish-language gift books at Concordia is an unexpected finding.

Turning to the measure of average use per item, or use rate, for gift books in literature, the use rate is 1.26, while for non-gift books the rate is 2.77 uses per item, or slightly more than twice that of the gift books. Again, this lower level of usage for the gift books reflects the findings from other usage studies of gift books, although the relative difference is much less than that found by Diodato and Diodato, whose non-gift books in LC class PS had over four times the use rate of the gift books. The difference comes closer to Thomas and Shouse’s use rate of 0.87 for gift books in LC class P versus 1.64 for non-gift books, or Kairis’s finding of 0.87 uses per item for gifts versus 1.38 uses for non-gifts. Given, however, that these other rates of use were for predominantly English-language works, the use rate found here for the Spanish gift books is again higher than anticipated.

A very different picture emerges for books in LC class F1201-3799 (Latin American history). The percentage of Spanish-language gift books used once or more is 58 percent, whereas of the non-gift books only 47 percent have

been used—the inverse of the typical difference in usage between gifts and non-gifts. The fact that the percentage of gift books used in this subject area is higher than the percentage of non-gift books used is very surprising. The average use per item for the history books is 2.09 for the gift books and 1.52 for the non-gift books. As with the measure of percentage of items used at least once, this data demonstrating higher use for the gift books is a striking difference. Not only have the gift books on Latin American history had higher usage on average than the gifts on Spanish American literature, but they are receiving over 35 percent more use on average than the Spanish-language books in this subject area purchased by the library.

Usage by Subject

Delving deeper into usage of the literature and history gift books by separating them into the subject categories based on LC call number as described above illustrates some variance in usage according to topics by region. For Spanish American literature, works on the literatures of Peru, Argentina, Chile, and Colombia have the highest percentage of items used at least once, followed by books on Mexico and general works and anthologies. Works on women authors, on Cuba, and on other South American countries have a slightly lower proportion of items used

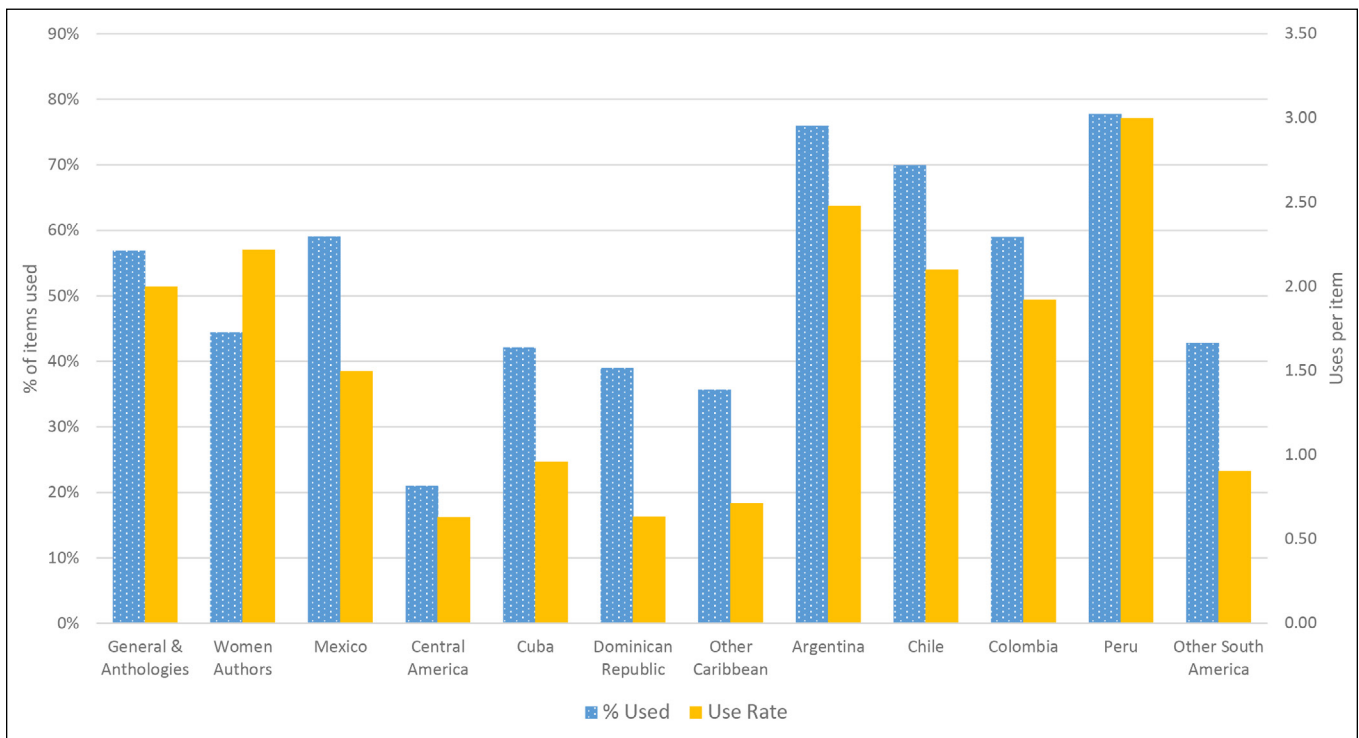


Figure 4. Gift book usage: Spanish American literature (PQ)

than the average of 47 percent, and those on the Dominican Republic, other Caribbean countries, and Central America have the lowest percentage of items used (see figure 4). The use rate shows similar geographic variations with books on the major South American literatures receiving the highest rates of use, although books on women authors have a higher use rate than the general works or those on Mexico. Works on Cuban and other South American literatures have use rates slightly lower than the average rate of 1.26, and again those on the Dominican Republic, other Caribbean countries, and Central America have the lowest rates of use.

There is a different pattern of use by region, as shown in figure 5, for the gift books on Latin American history. Here, 100 percent of the donated items on Argentina, Central America, and the Caribbean other than Cuba or the Dominican Republic have been used. Approximately two-thirds of the items on Latin American in general, Peru, and other South American countries have been used, with a slightly lower percentage of books on Mexico receiving use. Works on the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Cuba have the lowest percentage of items used. The use rates broken down by country or region vary somewhat from the percentage used, with the highest rates found for books on Central America, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and Latin America in general; books on Mexico, Peru, and Colombia demonstrating average use rates; and those on

Cuba, other Caribbean countries, and other South American countries showing the lowest rates of use.

Holdings Elsewhere

After holdings in Quebec, in Canada, and in the US for the gift books on Spanish American literature and Latin American history were identified using WorldCat and tabulated, the results were compared to determine the availability or scarcity of these items. As previously mentioned, related editions and reprints were included in the tabulation; however, translations in other languages were not.

For the 516 literature books, 174 works were also found in other Quebec libraries, but 342 items, or 66 percent, were not. Looking at availability across Canada, 415 books or the majority were held elsewhere, but 101 books (20 percent) were unique within the country. A total of thirty-two items (6 percent) of these books were quite rare: held in nine or fewer other institutions in the US or Canada. However, when counting only holdings of the same edition as that given to Concordia—not variant editions—ninety books (17 percent) of the gifts on Spanish American literature had nine or fewer copies elsewhere in these two countries.

Examining the literature books not held elsewhere in Quebec or Canada reveals a certain pattern regarding subject. Out of the 342 gift books not found in other Quebec

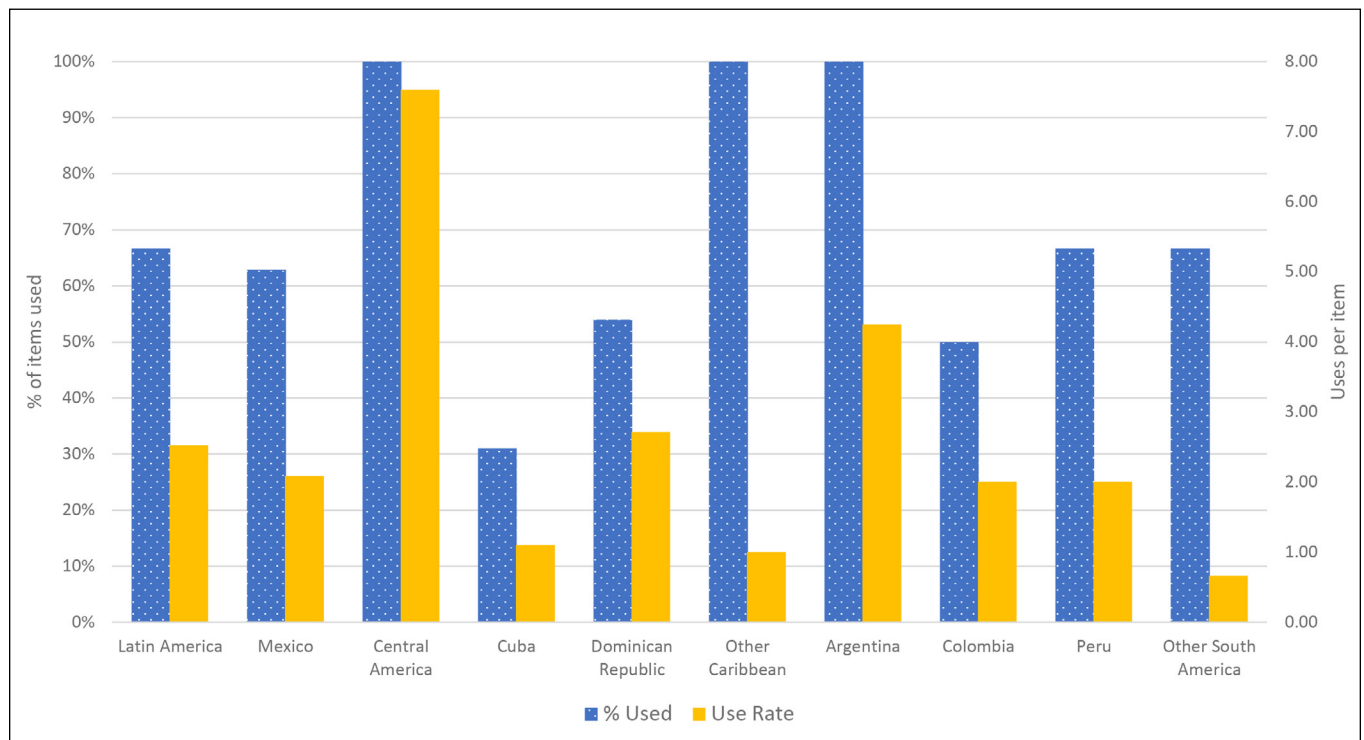


Figure 5. Gift book usage: Latin American history (F)

libraries, 121 items (35 percent) are on the literature of Cuba, and 71 items (21 percent) are on the Dominican Republic. The same two countries are the subject of two-thirds of the books that are unique within Canada: 34 percent of these are on Cuba and 33 percent on the Dominican Republic (see figure 6). Finally, of the thirty-two items that may be considered rare within the US and Canada, nine are on the literature of Cuba and nine on Dominican literature (28 percent each); of the ninety books where the exact edition is scarce in these countries, 21 percent are classed under Cuba and 20 percent under the Dominican Republic. To a certain extent, the predominance of works on Cuba among the less-held titles reflects the overall distribution of gifts in this call number range, as 36 percent of the donations are on Cuban literature. However, only 16 percent of the donated literature books are on the Dominican Republic, yet they account for a larger proportion of those works which are less widely available.

Regarding the 129 gift books on Latin American history, the availability of these works elsewhere at the regional and national levels is quite similar to that of the literature gifts. Only 41 of these books were found elsewhere in Quebec in WorldCat; eighty-eight items (68 percent) are unique within the province. Within Canada, ninety-eight of these works are found elsewhere, while thirty-one items (24 percent) are not. A total of nine books, 7 percent of the history donations, had nine or fewer holdings elsewhere in the US or Canada; again, though, when considering only identical editions, twenty-six books (20 percent) of these gifts were held in nine or fewer other institutions.

In terms of subject, the less widely held gift books in history are on slightly different countries and regions than the literature gifts. Of those not held elsewhere in the province, 28 percent ($n = 25$) are about Cuba, and 15 percent on the Dominican Republic. However, 23 percent are about Mexico, and 17 percent are about Latin American in general. For the thirty-one works not otherwise found in Canada, though, 36 percent are on the Dominican Republic while 23 percent

are on Cuba, 19 percent on Latin American in general, and 13 percent on Mexico (see figure 7). Finally, the nine scarce history titles include four on Mexico, four on Latin American, and one on Cuba; of the twenty-six books where the exact edition is held in fewer than ten other libraries, half are on Mexico while only three are on Cuba or the Dominican Republic. Here as well, the higher numbers of works on Cuba or Mexico among the less-commonly held items mirrors the greater number of history gift books on these two countries. Just as with the literature donations, though, works on the Dominican Republic make up a higher proportion of these less commonly found books than they do as part of the history gift books overall.

Discussion

The donations made over the years by this faculty member have made a sizeable contribution to the library's holdings on the literature and history of the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America and significantly increased the number of Spanish-language works in the collection. Unlike many gift books received by libraries, these are relatively recent, as nearly two-thirds of the donated works were published in the past twenty years. Additionally, the gifts have typically been added to the library's collection relatively soon after publication: half were added five years or

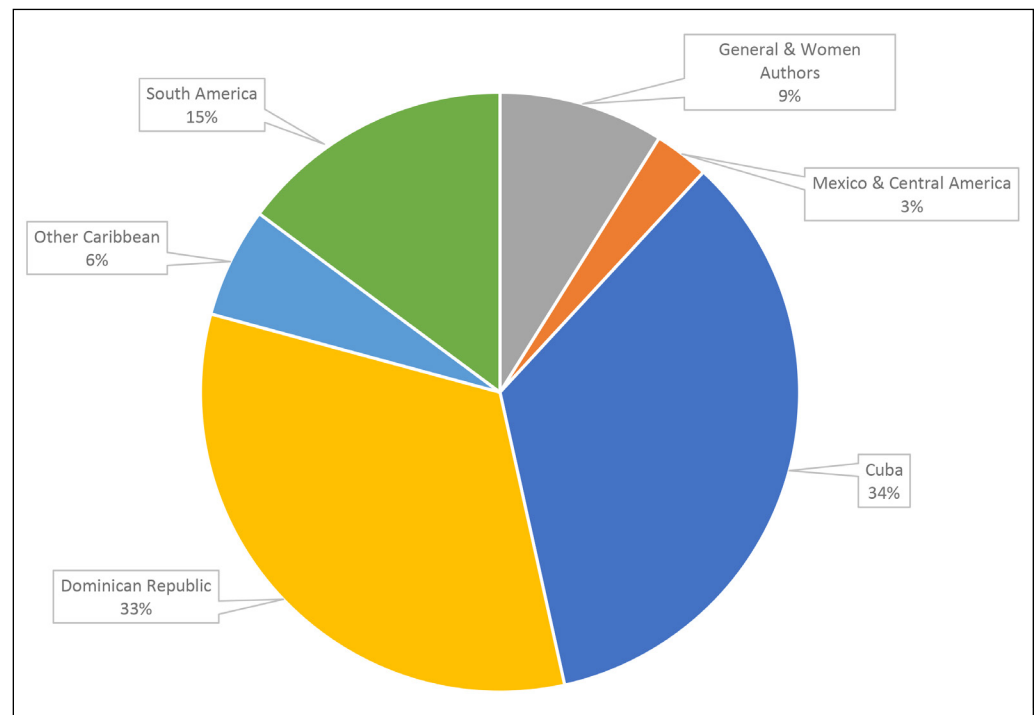


Figure 6. Gift books which are unique within Canada, by subject: Spanish American literature (PQ)

less after publication, and over 75 percent within ten years. From this perspective, the books are desirable and timely additions to the library. This is not an instance of a faculty member regularly clearing personal bookshelves of older material by donating to the library, but rather acquiring books with a view to adding them to the library's collection. The donations have also contributed unique titles to the collection, with fewer than 5 percent consisting of extra copies or related editions of works already held and most of these thirty-eight items being more recent editions of works held.

The general geographic distribution of the gift books in literature reflects to some extent the priorities of the curriculum for the Spanish program, except for a clear emphasis on literature from the Americas as opposed to peninsular Spain. In fact, the gift books make up a surprisingly large proportion of the Spanish-language works in this subject area that were added to the library over the past twenty-five years, with 500 items donated compared to 692 items purchased by the library. However, the library's overall holdings in PQ6000, Spanish literature, are still approximately 10 percent larger than the holdings in PQ7081-8650, Spanish American literature. The department's curriculum gives nearly equal weight to the two Spanish-speaking regions, but without these gift books, the collection of the literature and culture of peninsular Spain would be 30 percent larger than that about Spanish America. In this instance, the gift books have definitely filled a gap in the library's holdings.

For the history books, 118 Spanish-language books on Latin American history were donated since 2000, compared to 191 non-gift items acquired by the library; the donations thus make up a sizeable proportion of the library's more recent acquisitions in this area.

Considering the specific geographic areas represented by the gift books in literature and history, works on Cuba clearly predominate, as was suspected due to the faculty member's regular trips to that country. However, the quantity of books on Cuba appears to outweigh what the curriculum would suggest is needed. Among the books on Spanish American literature, the Dominican Republic also appears overemphasized while Argentina is underrepresented. For Latin American and Caribbean history, the higher proportion of gift books about Mexico does align with the focus of courses offered, based on their descriptions. However, in addition to the number of books on Cuba being disproportionately high, works on South American countries also appear underrepresented among these donations. This may be somewhat mitigated by the works on Latin America in general which account for 19 percent of the history gift books.

While the undergraduate curriculum for the Spanish program indicates a certain emphasis on Cuba and several Cuban writers, it is clear that the donor was focused on building the library's collection on Cuban literature, culture, and history, and to a lesser extent, the Dominican Republic. These donations are mostly from major publishers such as Casa de las Américas, Letras Cubanas, and Ediciones Unión in Cuba and Banco Central de la República Dominicana and Ediciones de la Fundación Corripio in the Dominican Republic. In addition to books by and about well-known figures such as José Martí, Alejo Carpentier and José Lezama Lima (Cuba), and Juan Bosch (Dominican Republic), the donations include multiple works by modern writers including Marilyn Bobes León, Nancy Alonso, Nancy Morejón, María Elena Llana, Ena Lucía Portela, Anna Lidia Vega Serova, and Mylene Fernández Pintado (Cuba) and José

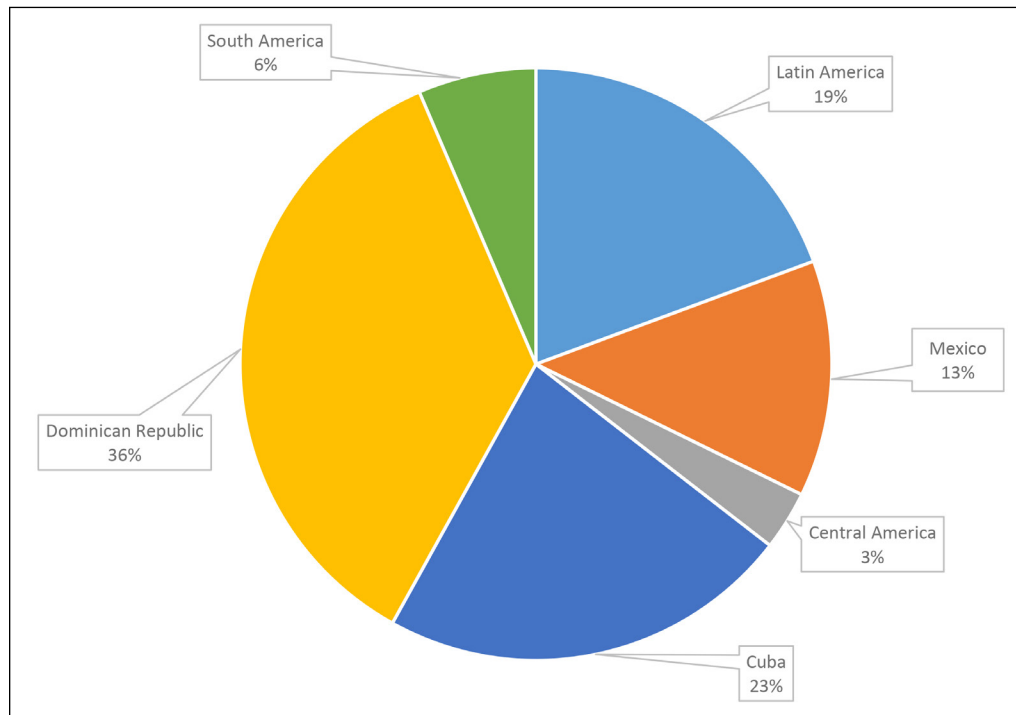


Figure 7. Gift books which are unique within Canada, by subject: Latin American history (F)

Alcántara Almánzar, Angela Hernández, and Jeannette Miller (Dominican Republic).

The donations reflect the donor's own research interests and activities. Many of these books were acquired through regular attendance at the Feria Internacional del Libro de La Habana in Cuba, and some were gifts from the authors. The faculty member has written extensively about Latin American women writers, although the focus of her research has primarily been the Modernismo literary movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the Romantic movement that preceded it, plus the representation in historical accounts and literature of Indigenous women such as Anacaona and La Malinche. Although some of the donated books in literature and history relate to these topics, plus the twenty-one books classed in HQ under feminism in Latin America, many are more recent literary works. A strong collection of twentieth century and contemporary Cuban and Dominican literature has been developed, one that could support graduate-level and faculty research. The emphasis on women writers and feminism in Latin American also aligns with the university's focus in this area—Concordia University is home to the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, which has offered programs and supported research into women's studies since the 1970s.

Regarding the comparison of usage between Spanish-language gift books and non-gifts in these two areas, the level of use is rather higher than expected for the literature gifts, especially compared to previous published studies of gift book usage. While the higher proportion of gift books being used may be due to the longer timeframe of twenty-five years of use data, it is surprising to see this level of use for works of literature and criticism written in Spanish, given that the Spanish program is relatively small and the number of other users who might borrow literature in Spanish is not likely to be particularly large in a university where the primary languages are English and French. The higher degree of use found for the history gifts in Spanish is unexpected and impressive, given that it exceeds the usage of Spanish-language works in the same subject areas purchased by the library during the past twenty years, which is unusual for donated books. Clearly a good proportion of these gift books corresponds with the needs of students and faculty studying and researching the culture and history of Spanish-speaking Latin America.

When looking at the more granular analysis of usage by call number, clearly books on certain regions have received more use than others. Among the literature gift books, those on the larger South America countries and Mexico are used the most, Cuban literature has received slightly less than average use, and Dominican literature even less. Gifts classed in history display more disparity between the two measures of percentage of items used and the average use rate by region, but overall, books about Central

American countries and Argentina receive the most use. In this category, works on the Dominican Republic have the third highest use rate, although the 54 percent of these items that have been used is slightly below the average of 58 percent for the history gifts. While the greatest number of history gifts are classed under Mexico and Cuba, usage of the former is about average among the history donations, but those on Cuba have the lowest percentage of items used and a below-average use rate.

Although works on Cuba and the Dominican Republic make up a high percentage of the donated items, books on Cuba in particular are not being used as much as those about the larger South American countries, even though the use of Cuban literature books is still equivalent to or higher than that found in other studies analyzing usage of gift books in general. These titles are, like the other gifts, relatively recent works that are appropriate for a university collection and for the courses being offered. The question remains whether the lower level of use justifies the quantity of items added to the library's collection. This analysis also shows higher use of books on the major literatures of South America, particularly of books on Argentina and Peru. Acquiring more works on this region would be a reasonable collection development strategy for the library going forward, through purchasing and encouraging future gifts.

The final parameter assessed with regard to the literature and history gifts is their availability or scarcity, as determined by WorldCat holdings in other libraries locally, nationally, or in North America (excluding Mexico). According to this data, the majority (two-thirds) of these books are not available elsewhere in the province, and over 20 percent of the works are unique within Canada, including variant editions. If just holdings of identical editions are counted, 34 percent of the gift books are not found elsewhere in the country. Only 41 books, or 6 percent, may be considered rare in that they are found in nine or fewer other libraries in Canada and the US. However, when variant editions are not counted, 116 items, or 18 percent, of the gifts are held in fewer than ten other libraries in these countries. As well, 60 percent of the literature and history gifts have fewer than fifty holdings of the same or related editions in these two countries, and 30 percent of them are found in fewer than twenty-five institutions. Clearly these gift books constitute a distinctive and locally unique collection on Spanish-speaking Latin America.

Among the books that were held in fewer libraries, those on Cuba and the Dominican Republic predominate, and those on Mexico among the history donations, just as they do among the gifts overall. The proportion of less available works that are on Cuba reflects almost exactly the proportion of books on Cuba among the donations in general, but the works on Dominican literature make up a higher proportion of the titles not found in other libraries

locally or nationally than they do of the gifts overall. A specific and uncommon collection on the literature and culture of Cuba and the Dominican Republic has thus been created from these donations.

Conclusion

Based on the factors considered in this assessment, the books donated by this faculty member are in general appropriate contributions that have added value to the library's collections. They are mostly recent publications that were received by the library sooner after publication than most gifts-in-kind; and they are in subject areas that align with the focus of the Spanish program and related courses in history, significantly increasing the library's holdings on Latin America. The level of use is higher than expected for gift books, particularly for foreign-language materials. While these books constitute a small sample, the results of the assessment demonstrate the relevance and utility of these faculty donations. Applying these assessment methods to a broader range of gifts-in-kind from faculty and other donors could provide further insights into the value of such gifts to the library.

The gifts are skewed toward works about Cuba and to a lesser extent, the Dominican Republic, to a degree that is not supported by the usage data comparing these books with the gift books on other regions. This weighting is likely a result of the donor's travels and interest in the Spanish Caribbean and her belief that these works would otherwise be less easily found in Canada. Her assumption is borne out by the data compiled on holdings elsewhere in Canada and the US, which demonstrate that a significant proportion of the gift books, particularly those about Cuba and the Dominican Republic, are not widely held elsewhere. These findings are similar to those of Ibacache et al., whose investigation into the acquisition of recent books in Spanish by academic libraries in the US found far fewer publications from Hispano-American countries other than Mexico.³⁰ They point out that acquiring books published in these countries may not only fill gaps in the collection but expose the academic community to a broader range of writers and perspectives from the region through building a more diverse collection.³¹ Given that so many of these gift books are not widely held in North America, it would be interesting to examine ILL data to determine to what extent other libraries are borrowing them.

Although the donations of Cuban and Dominican literature are more extensive than is needed to support the current undergraduate curriculum, these works might be put to greater use for coursework and research if faculty and students were made aware of this rich and unusual collection. A recent white paper issued by the Arizona State

University (ASU) Library on the future of print collections in academic institutions emphasizes the value for libraries in identifying and promoting any distinctive collections that can serve to highlight the institution's unique character.³² This assessment has uncovered one such distinct collection, which could benefit and enrich the university's teaching and research on Latin America if awareness of it were raised through promotional and outreach activities on the part of the library.

This discovery reinforces the value of using a holistic approach to assess library collections. Evaluating these books using a single measure such as usage would not have revealed the uniqueness of the gift holdings, nor the range of countries and subjects represented. As pointed out in the ASU Library white paper, "Basing an open collection on records of historic use runs the risk of enshrining traditional perspectives and risks losing more diverse cultural perspectives."³³ The collection that was developed as a result of these gifts not only broadens the library's holdings on Latin America, but with its emphasis on works from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and women writers, it provides access to voices that may be less frequently encountered in North American academic libraries.

References and Notes

1. Laura Kohl, "Gifts of Plenty: Library Gift Procedures at the University of New Mexico," *Technical Services Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2018): 28–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07317131.2017.1385293>.
2. Steven B. Carrico, "Gifts in Academic and Special Libraries: A Selected Bibliography," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services* 23 no. 4 (1999): 421–31, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1464-9055\(99\)00088-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1464-9055(99)00088-3).
3. John Ballestro and Philip C. Howze, "When a Gift is Not a Gift: Collection Assessment Using Cost-Benefit Analysis," *Collection Management* 30, no. 3 (2005): 49–66, https://doi.org/10.1300/J105v30n03_05.
4. William Joseph Thomas and Daniel Shouse, "This is Not a Dumpsite: The Problem of Evaluating Gift Books," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services* 38, no. 3–4 (2014): 63–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649055.2015.1058622>.
5. Louise W. Diodato and Virgil P. Diodato, "The Use of Gifts in a Medium Sized Academic Library," *Collection Management* 5, no. 1–2 (1983): 53–72, https://doi.org/10.1300/J105v05n01_05.
6. Rob Kairis, "Comparing Gifts to Purchased Materials: A Usage Study," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services* 24, no. 3 (2000): 351–59, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1464-9055\(00\)00091-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1464-9055(00)00091-9).
7. Janet Bishop, Patricia A. Smith, and Chris Sugnet,

- “Refocusing a Gift Program in an Academic Library,” *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services* 34, no. 4 (2010): 115–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649055.2010.10766275>.
8. Thomas and Shouse, 65–67.
 9. Jeanne Glaubitz Cross, “Going Forward with Gift Books?: The Usefulness of Donated Books for the General Collection” (poster presented at the 40th Charleston Conference, Charleston, SC, November 2, 2020), <https://www.morressier.com/article/going-forward-gift-books-usefulness-donated-books-general-collection/5f5a04c62c3338b5c13cd02f?>
 10. Ballestro and Howze, 51.
 11. Janice G. Norris, “A Subject-Oriented Approach to Gifts Management and Donor Relations,” *Collection Management* 27, no. 1 (2008): 41–57, https://doi.org/10.1300/J105v27n01_04.
 12. Kohl, 36–37.
 13. Ballestro and Howze, 52.
 14. Judit H. Ward, “Acquisitions Globalized: The Foreign Language Acquisitions Experience in a Research Library,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 53, no. 2 (2009): 86–93, <https://doi.org/10.5860/lrts.53n2.86>.
 15. Mara Thacker, “Challenges, Opportunities, and Best Practices in Overseas Buying Trips: An Interview Study Focusing on South Asia Specialists,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 61, no. 2 (2017): 70–80, <https://doi.org/10.5860/lrts.61n2.70>.
 16. Mark L. Grover, “Area Studies Library Organizations and Multi-Disciplinary Collection and Research: The Latin American Experience,” *Collaborative Librarianship* 3, no. 4 (2011): 187–96, <https://doi.org/10.29087/2011.3.4.04>.
 17. Kathia Ibacache et al., “Forgotten Hispano-American Literature: Representation of Hispano-American Presses in Academic Libraries,” *College & Research Libraries* 81, no. 6 (2020): 928–44, <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.81.6.928>.
 18. Jesús Alonso-Regalado, “Inside a Librarian’s Trip to Cuba,” *University Libraries Newsletter, University at Albany, SUNY*, Spring 2020, <https://library.albany.edu/news/cuba-trip-book-fair>.
 19. Juleah Swanson and Philip B. White, “Using the WorldCat API to Develop Data-Driven Decision-Making for Gifts-in-Kind,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 63, no. 3 (2019):180–90, <https://doi.org/10.5860/lrts.63n3.180>.
 20. Madeline M. Kelly, *The Complete Collections Assessment Manual: A Holistic Approach* (Chicago: ALA Neal Schuman, 2021), 5.
 21. Spanish American literature in this context refers to literature of the Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas, not literature by Hispanic authors in the United States.
 22. Swanson and White, 182–83.
 23. Diodato and Diodato, 60; Cross.
 24. Diodato and Diodato, 60–61.
 25. Diodato and Diodato, 63.
 26. Concordia University, “Classics, Modern Languages and Linguistics—Spanish,” *Undergraduate Calendar 2021–2022*, <https://www.concordia.ca/academics/undergraduate/calendar/current.html>.
 27. Concordia University, “History,” *Undergraduate Calendar 2021–2022*, <https://www.concordia.ca/academics/undergraduate/calendar/current.html>.
 28. Diodato and Diodato, 58–60; Kairis, 356.
 29. Bishop, Smith, and Sugnet, 117; Cross; Thomas and Shouse, 65.
 30. Ibacache et al., 933–34.
 31. Ibacache et al., 932, 940–42.
 32. *The Future of the Academic Library Print Collection: A Space for Engagement* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 2017), <https://lib.asu.edu/sites/default/files/marketing/ASU%20Whitepaper%20-%20Which%20Books.pdf>.
 33. *The Future of the Academic Library Print Collection*, 8.