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No lo tires! Don't Throw it Away! Texas Latino Archives Shaping their own Narrative: Community Leaders Negotiate a Framework for their Archival Collection

Diane Duesterhoeft

St. Mary's University, San Antonio, TX, dduesterhoeft@stmarytx.edu

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No lo tires! Don't Throw it Away! Texas Latino Archives

Shaping their own Narrative: Community Leaders Negotiate a Framework for their Archival Collection

Texas Library Association Annual Conference
April 8, 2014 - San Antonio, TX

Diane M. Duesterhoeft

- Reference/Instruction Librarian, St. Mary's University, Blume Library
- Leader with C.O.P.S./Metro Alliance

dduesterhoeft@stmarytx.edu

Twitter: @dduesterhoeft

#txla14



A few points



- Thank you to Oralia Garza de Cortés
- Librarian and community activist, not an archivist
- Leader with community organization:
C.O.P.S./Metro Alliance

- Thanks - Presentation based on unpublished paper co-authored with Oralia Garza de Cortés
- Oralia also was very helpful in conceptualizing and navigating the process from conceptualization to getting the documents into the archives
- I'm not an archivist
- Presenting viewpoint from a community organization leader
- Have been a "leader" (rather than member) with COPS/Metro since 1998 – involvement thru my church

C.O.P.S./The Metro Alliance

- Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) organizations
- C.O.P.S. – 1974
- The Metro Alliance – merger of two prior organizations 1989
- Today work as virtually one organization

*Photos from March 2002
Accountability Assembly*



- Communities Organized for Public Service, or C.O.P.S., founded in 1974 in San Antonio
- First organizer, Ernesto J. Cortés, Jr - San Antonio native - trained by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the well-known community organizing training school established by Saul Alinsky in Chicago.
- C.O.P.S. formed the first of the modern-day IAF organizations in the Southwest Network.
- Took hold on South & West sides of San Antonio among predominantly-Hispanic Catholic parishes
- Institutional, rather than individual, members
- Early 1980s, its sister organization, the East Side Alliance, formed and was comprised primarily of African American and Hispanic low- and lower-middle income churches.
- 1982, the Metropolitan Congregational Alliance organized and included South, Central, and Northwest area Anglo and Hispanic Protestant lower-middle and middle-income churches. The Metro Alliance formed through a merger of these latter two organizations in 1989.

C.O.P.S./The Metro Alliance



- Today, C.O.P.S. and the Metro Alliance, or C.O.P.S./Metro, work together as virtually one organization,
- broad-based, non-partisan organization.
- Today C.O.P.S./Metro is a multi-ethnic citizens' organization comprising religious institutions, schools, and labor locals.
- Serves as a “people’s university,” training and developing leaders from member institutions to participate in public life
- by advocating for needs and services for the **common good** and
- **holding public officials accountable** for their public commitments to these needs.

Project genesis



- Many years of historical documents in rented office space
- Evaluation of the collection
- Office move

Current C.O.P.S./Metro Alliance office location

- Although written about in scholarly publications on a national level,
- Still a rich untapped source for documenting the voices and stories of those leaders who participated in the shaping of their society.
- History not organized and retrievable in one central place, the stories have emerged somewhat piecemeal.
- In early 2010, a lead organizer with C.O.P.S./Metro expressed concern about the organization's historical records that were occupying rented office space in a manner that was potentially vulnerable to fire, water, insect, or rodent damage.
- 200 boxes of materials gathered over the course of the organization's 30+ history were occupying limited office space.
- The materials had become somewhat disorganized because many of the boxes had been moved to several locations through the years and because limited space no longer allowed for efficient organization. (4 locations in the past 16 years).
- New leaders didn't know the history of the organization; early presidents of the organization recently passed away, which made preservation of the history more urgent.

Project inception

Considerations by the organization:


- local repository
- timeliness of processing
- related collections and materials in the archive
- online access to finding aids and collection description

Leaders sort through organization's records, 2010



- a cadre of leaders gathered to discuss the archival project and developed a strategy to find a permanent home for the organization's archive.
- Local - where the organization started--San Antonio--and
- where family members could have easy access to their loved ones' records of community achievement.
- Many of the former C.O.P.S. presidents and early leaders also had archival materials.
- Looked at the largest public university library in the city, the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA)
- Andy Sarábia (pers. comm.), 1st president of C.O.P.S., noted that UTSA had recently acquired the Albert Peña papers
- UTSA was developing a stronger and more visible collection in Mexican American history.
- Recent additions to the collections at the university's special collections department could lead researchers to the organization's materials.

UTSA finding aid




[Home](#) | [Finding Aid](#)
[Technical Support](#)

[Texas Archival Resources Online](#)

[Print Version](#) | [Save XML File \(265k\)](#)
[Accessing Materials Described Here](#)

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A Guide to the C.O.P.S./Metro Alliance Records, 1954-2009

Descriptive Summary

Creators:	Communities Organized for Public Service (San Antonio, Tex.) and Metro Alliance (San Antonio, Tex.)
Title:	C.O.P.S./Metro Alliance Records
Dates:	1954-2009
Creator Abstract:	Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) is an organization of 26 parishes in the predominantly Hispanic, low-income West Side and South Side of San Antonio. Founded in 1974, it is the oldest of the Interfaith Area Foundation (IAF) organizations in Texas and, indeed, in the entire national network. The Metro Alliance, which shares office space and many resources with C.O.P.S., formed in 1989 through a merger of the East Side Alliance, composed of African American and Hispanic low- and lower-middle income churches, and the Metropolitan Congregational Alliance.
Content Abstract:	The bulk of the collection consists of news clippings, project files, reports, budgets, programs and general office files.
Identification:	MS 346
Extent:	72 linear feet (72 Boxes)
Language:	Materials are in English.
Repository:	The University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

Historical Note

Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) is an organization of 26 parishes in the predominantly Hispanic, low-income West Side and South Side of San Antonio. Founded in 1974, it is the oldest of the Interfaith Area Foundation (IAF) organizations in Texas and, indeed, in the entire national network. The Metro Alliance, which shares office space and many resources with C.O.P.S., formed in 1989 through a merger of the East Side Alliance, composed of African American and Hispanic low- and lower-middle income churches, and the Metropolitan Congregational Alliance. The latter organized in 1982 and included South, Central, and Northwest area Anglo and Hispanic Protestant lower-middle and middle-income churches.

C.O.P.S. and Metro Alliance are a coalition of over 70 congregations, schools, and unions coming together so that we can effectively act on behalf of families. C.O.P.S. and Metro Alliance work within each of these institutions to identify a diverse, broad-based leadership that can connect to each other in new ways in order to act effectively on behalf of children, families, and neighborhoods. By learning to work together for the public good, C.O.P.S. and Metro Alliance leaders are able to work with the business community and elected officials to make San Antonio a better place for families. The relationships that leaders develop and foster within their institutions and among leaders from the racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse institutions that comprise these organizations are the foundation of broad-based community organizing.

- Student exposure and access to C.O.P.S./Metro’s materials through university courses in History, Interdisciplinary Studies, Mexican American Studies, Political Science, Public Administration, Sociology, Women’s Studies, and other disciplines by conducting research using primary (archival) sources.
- Online access to the finding aid through the Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) system - Discoverable through Google.
- Some of the finding aids in TARO that mention C.O.P.S./Metro include the Albert Peña papers (UTSA), the José Ángel Gutiérrez papers (UT-Austin), and former Governor Ann Richards papers (UT-Austin).

How Does an Archives Operate?

Archives are run by professionals whose first priorities are selecting and preserving historical materials and making them available for use. If your organization donates its records, the staff of that repository will be responsible for the care of the records and will continue to work with your organization as you use the records and periodically add to the collection.

Feel free to contact the archivist at a nearby library, university, historical society, or state archives for details about their archival operations. The Society of American Archivists can also provide you with information and suggestions.

Your Organization's Records Could Have Historic Value

Listed below are some types of records that archival repositories preserve for historical and administrative research:

- Architectural records
- Articles of incorporation, charters
- Audio recordings
- Budgets
- Bylaws and revisions
- Clippings
- Constitution and revisions
- Correspondence/email of officers
- Data sets
- Directories
- Financial statements
- Handbooks
- Legal documents
- Memoranda
- Minutes of meetings
- Membership lists
- Motion picture film, videotape, audio recordings, DVDs, and CDs
- Newsletters and other publications (generated by the organization)
- Organizational charts
- Pamphlets, brochures, fliers, etc.
- Photographs
- Planning documents
- Press releases
- Reports (annual, committee, etc.)
- Rosters
- Scrapbooks
- Speeches
- Subject files
- Tax returns
- Websites/blogs/social media content

Please note that the above list pertains as well to digital versions of such items. Your digital files should have descriptive file names and a consistent naming convention. Be sure to check your digital files at least once a year to assure you still have access to them. Digital media should be backed up on a regular basis.

All materials benefit from being stored in a cool, dry, and temperature-stable environment.



- Special Collections Head & staff very willing to work with the C.O.P.S./Metro leaders. Assessed collection onsite and provided an orientation and tour of their area, so the leaders could learn more about the estimated processing time and see some of the other archival collections
- Oralía joined us on the project and provided a larger vision and framework
- Preparation of the collection – used the SAA guidelines for items to include & exclude

Sorting materials



Leaders sort through organization's records, 2010

- Items included
- Items excluded
- Providing a broader focus for the project




- Gathered teams of 4-6 leaders for 3-6 hours at a time to review materials and organize and sort by topic, also arranged by year
- Items generally at least 4-5 years old or older
- Bankers boxes worked best for transport
- Special Collections staff picked up collections when we had 10 or more boxes at a time. They would quarantine the material (part of normal procedures) before processing.

SEARCH THIS COLLECTION [Advanced Search](#) [View All](#)

Home >> C.O.P.S. and Metro Alliance Records

C.O.P.S. and Metro Alliance Records



RECENT ADDITIONS

[RECEIVE UPDATES FOR THIS COLLECTION.](#)

ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) is an organization of 26 parishes in the predominantly Hispanic, low-income West Side and South Side of San Antonio. Founded in 1974, it is the oldest of the Interfaith Area Foundation (IAF) organizations in Texas. The Metro Alliance, which shares office space and many resources with C.O.P.S., formed in 1989 through a merger of the East Side Alliance, composed of African American and Hispanic low- and lower-middle income churches, and the Metropolitan Congregational Alliance. The latter organized in 1982 and included South, Central, and Northwest area Anglo and Hispanic Protestant lower-middle and middle-income churches.

[VIEW ENTIRE COLLECTION](#)

Fresh Start program

Questions for state legislators

San Antonio affordable homes

Project Weed and Seed

- The Special Collections staff digitized some of the visual materials from the collection
- Interviews with several leaders from C.O.P.S. had been recorded and some are available through the UTSA online archives, we wanted to gather and preserve more of the stories of our early leaders.
- StoryCorps Historías came to the Las Palmas Branch of the San Antonio Public Library in August 2010.
- Oralía secured four appointments at the Las Palmas Branch.
- During the course of two days, she conducted interviews with the four leaders.
- Each recording session was 40 minutes.



- December 2010 C.O.P.S./Metro held an end-of-the year/end-of-the-decade/memorabilia celebration. Early leaders were personally invited by Andy Sarabia.
- Head of Special Collections attended and took material that had been gathered and collected for the archive.
- The Managing Director for NOWCastSA, an online community journalism site, was interested in capturing the stories of some of the early C.O.P.S./Metro leaders through video.
- NOWCastSA staff members recorded brief interviews with two of the early leaders at the December 2010 celebration.
- They also recorded an on-location interview with Andy Sarabia, as he guided them on his legendary tour of West Side Victory Stories: sites on San Antonio's West Side that were the focus of the early work and struggles of C.O.P.S., including the parish sites of several of the member institutions, several of the library branches, drainage projects, and senior housing projects.

Lessons Learned

- Consult with a variety of stakeholders - in addition to current leaders and members, consult with early leaders of the organization, if possible. Consider potential researchers, as well.
- Bankers boxes often work best for easily transporting paper documents.
- Ask questions:
 - How quickly is the material likely to be processed?
 - Will there be an online finding aid that is accessible to the public?
 - Is a staff member available to respond to questions that might arise as materials are being gathered?
 - Are there related collections that might lead researchers to the organization's archives?

- Lessons Learned (slide 1)

Lessons Learned (*continued*)

- Develop a written checklist of materials to include/exclude for the archives. This is especially helpful if a number of volunteers or staff are working with the materials.
- Inform early members and current members of the organization, as well as their families, that this material is being gathered for the local archives. Encourage them to contribute to the archives.
- Mediate the introduction of the archives to current and past members of the organization so as to alleviate any mistrust they may have of a university, historical or cultural institution. This involves the introduction of the formal agreement (deed of gift) forms required for the transfer of material to the archives.
- Utilize the deed of gift form(s) that the archives makes available to donors. This can help alleviate future confusion.

- Lessons Learned (continued)

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No lo tires! Don't Throw it Away! Texas Latino Archives



Panelists Margo Gutierrez, LLLAS Benson Collection, UT-Austin; Carolina A. Villarroel, Brown Foundation, Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, University of Houston; Esther Garcia, Latino Caucus Round Table Chair; Gloria Espitia, Austin History Center; Diane Duesterhoeft, St. Mary's University & C.O.P.S./Metro Alliance, San Antonio. *Photos courtesy Esther Garcia.*

Attend one of these Latino Caucus events.
It's never been more relevant.

TLA 2014
SAN ANTONIO
April 8-11
Henry B. Gonzalez
Convention Center



TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2:00-3:30 PM

- **ROOM 201 CONCOURSE LEVEL**

NO LO TIRES! DON'T THROW IT AWAY!

TEXAS LATINO ARCHIVES

Margo Gutierrez, LLLAS Benson, University of Texas
Carolina Villarroel, Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary
Heritage Project

Diane Duesterhoeft, St. Mary's University

Gloria Espitia, Austin History Center

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 4:30-5:30 PM

- **SAN ANTONIO PUBLIC LIBRARY**

VOICES DE SAN ANTO: SAN ANTONIO AUTHORS

Barbara Renaud Gonzalez, novelist, poet

Carmen Tafolla, poet, author

Bryce Milligan, poet, musician, publisher

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 5:30-6:00 PM

- **SAN ANTONIO PUBLIC LIBRARY**

SANDRA CISNEROS: MAKING READING MAGIC

Sandra Cisneros, poet, novelist, scholar

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 6:00 PM

- **SAN ANTONIO PUBLIC LIBRARY**

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SAN ANTONIO REFORMA CHAPTER

Join us and the San Antonio authors for a reception, a
chance to meet and mingle with our San Antonio au-
thors and REFORMA members from all over Texas.

Source:
<http://www.governors.org/latino/ta/ta.html>

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 9:00 AM

- **ROOM 002 - A RIVER LEVEL**

LATINO CAUCUS MEETING

DONDE ESTA THE GOOD STUFF? SELECTING QUALITY
SPANISH MATERIALS

Daniel Berdner, librarian

Jenny Lizarraga, Cinco Books

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 1-1:50 PM

- **ROOM 216 B CONCOURSE LEVEL**

SPECIAL LANGUAGE COLLECTIONS AND THE ALA FREE
PASS TO GUADALUPE INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR

FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 9-9:50 PM

- **ROOM 210 AB CONCOURSE LEVEL**

CONECTING WITH LATINO FAMILIES

Mark Smith, Texas State Library and Archives Commission

Pat Mora, author

Oralia Garza de Cortes, consultant

Paola Ferate-Soto, Austin Public Library

FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 10-11:20 AM

- **ROOM 201 CONCOURSE LEVEL**

DIA DE LOS NIÑOS: SCHOOL AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

50% of students in Texas K-12 schools are Hispanic.

50% of students in Texas K-12 schools are Hispanic.

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 - Slide 7: Finding aid accessed April 7, 2014:
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utsa/00283/utsa-00283.html>
 - Slide 8: Accessed April 7, 2014:
<http://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/donating-orgrecs>
 - Slide 10: Accessed April 7, 2014:
<http://digital.utsa.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16018coll5>
 - Slide 11: Accessed April 7, 2014: <http://nowcastsa.com/blogs/map-living-history-copsmetro-alliance>
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dduesterhoeft@gmail.com or
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/dianeduesterhoeft/>