

Collecting to the Core — La Frontera: The U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

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Column Editor's Note: The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the *Resources for College Libraries* bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD

The U.S.-Mexico borderlands is a region of the United States and Mexico extending nearly 2,000 miles from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, and is formed by six Mexican states (from east to west, Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja California Norte) that border on four of the United States (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California). The steady streams of people and information that flow across the border has, over the years, exerted a strong influence on the culture of both countries, while close trade relations, commercial and financial interests, and the demand for labor have bound the countries together economically. This interaction of physical, human, and economic forces has been mutually beneficial in many ways but is also often strained, as cultural, political, and economic differences present challenges to finding common ground on shared problems, including economic development and exploitation; free trade; environmental issues; women's, Native American, and human rights; health and education; undocumented immigration; and drug trafficking, to name a few. Yet despite these problems, the borderlands operate in many ways as an extension of the U.S. south into Mexico and likewise, from Mexico north into the U.S., creating a unique border culture made of Native Americans, Mexicans, Chicana/os, Latina/os, and mainstream North American populations. The literature of and about the United States-Mexico borderlands provides a perfect laboratory for the exploration of multi-disciplinary themes such as the construction of culture; the creation of identity; the causes of political behavior; the shaping of economic activity; the practice of comparative history; the nature of transnationalism; and the influence of race, gender, immigration, and ethnicity.

Documentation of the region now encompassing the United States-Mexico border began in the sixteenth century as Spanish explorers and missionaries returned reports to the church and state bureaucracies of the Spanish colonial empire. These reports provide modern scholars with a written record

of the landscape and people from the work of chroniclers such as **Father Junípero Serra** and **Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca**.¹⁻² In addition to the ethnographic and geographic information found in these accounts, there exist thousands of administrative documents including judicial records, inspections records, military papers, land deeds, mining titles, and civil documents. Church documents, such as baptism and tithe records, and Inquisition proceedings provide demographic, economic, and social information in addition to church history.³ The Spanish, and later the Mexican government, produced records from this region until the annexation of Mexico's northern territory by the United States.⁴ The signing of the **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo** to end the **Mexican-American War** in 1848 established a new border region between the United States and Mexico, and the increase in explorers, settlers, and populations resulted in an increase in border literature of fiction, history, descriptive, and travel writing. In the years since, scholars across academic disciplines — from historians to ecologists to folklorists — have written about the borderlands and its peoples, whether or not they define the geographical area using that term. At present, there is a conscious readiness to define this immense body of material as border-related. Collecting and archiving borderlands materials has become a mission of numerous libraries. What follows is a selected list of works that capture the complex vision and range of the United States-Mexico borderlands.

In *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*, **Gloria Anzaldúa** bears witness to the injustices imposed upon Mexicans and Chicana/os over the past several hundred years.⁵ Beginning with the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish in the seventeenth century, she explores the deep rift in Mexican culture and memory after the 1848 **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo** allocated half of Mexico to the United States, and ends with a message of future resistance: Chicana/os, she says, will endure while Anglos will die out or move on. Using a mix of poetry and prose, as well as a healthy blend of English, Spanish, Tex-Mex, and Nahuatl, **Anzaldúa** tells a compelling and often painful story of forced assimilation, lost heritage, and denial of self. Highly autobiographical in parts, *Borderlands* urges readers to disregard imposed ideals, internalized colonialism, and false borders to create a new self-identity. First published in 1987, this work remains on many college reading lists across disciplines.

A finalist for the 2005 **Pulitzer Prize** for general nonfiction, **Luis Alberto Urrea's** *The Devil's Highway: A True Story* details the experiences of the "Wellton 26," a group

of twenty-six Mexican men who entered the United States on foot and were abandoned by their guide in the brutal desert west of Tucson, Arizona, in May 2001.⁶ Of the twenty-six men, fourteen died, and the twelve who survived were on the verge of death when they were rescued by the border patrol and transferred to the southern Arizona town of Wellton. **Urrea's** narrative not only re-creates the men's personal stories, it also deftly illustrates the complexities on the broader topic of undocumented immigration. For the immigrants chronicled here, the crucial struggle of border crossing occurs not at the geopolitical line dividing the U.S. from Mexico, but rather during migrants' travels across the border regions and roads that would ultimately lead them to new lives in America. In depicting this region, **Urrea** describes how the paths of contemporary migrants cross and blend with those made by native peoples and pioneers; he transmits an image of a territory defined by the movement of peoples who have been marginalized by the dominant society. It is the *borderlands*, not the border itself, that presented the biggest challenge to the "Wellton 26."

In recent years, increasing numbers of Central Americans have migrated to the United States, many of them women and children. Children, some as young as seven years old, are setting out in search of parents or relatives who left to find work in the United States. In her book *Enrique's Journey*, **Pulitzer Prize-winning** journalist **Sonia Nazario** investigates the complex issues surrounding the causes and effects — both positive and negative — of Latin American immigration as she follows the story of a Honduran teen attempting to reunite with his mother in America.⁷ Throughout, the narrative examines diverse immigration issues, not only along the U.S.-Mexico border but also along the border between Mexico and Central America. The numerous statistics, documented accounts, and information about the immigration experience validate untold histories and fill in details alluded to in the main story.

When the U.S. Border Patrol originated in 1924, the primary targets of the American immigration laws were not undocumented Mexican migrants. In fact, Mexican agricultural workers, valued by American farmers, were exempt from key restrictions, namely the national quota system that strictly limited the number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. each year. However, by the middle of the twentieth century, the U.S. Border Patrol had shifted efforts toward policing undocumented immigrants at the Mexican border, a practice that continues to this day. **UCLA** historian **Kelly Lytle Hernández** charts this develop-

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ment in *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol*.⁸ Drawing on long-neglected archival sources in both the U.S. and Mexico, **Lytle Hernández** uncovers the little-known history of how Mexican immigrants slowly became the primary focus of U.S. immigration law enforcement and demonstrates how the racial profiling of Mexicans developed through the Border Patrol's increased prevention and detention efforts. Despite the historical focus of **Lytle Hernández's** work, it underscores how the rise in policing and systemic failure to recognize the diversity of the Mexican-origin population has consequentially led to the harassment, abuse, and incarceration of U.S.-born/naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, visa-holders and cross-border workers of Mexican origin.

In the past twenty years, scholars of borderlands history have depicted the many obstacles facing poor Tejanos, blacks, whites, Native Americans, women, and other subsets of borderland society with a sturdy assertion that these groups were in many respects agents of their own lives. In this regard, **Julianna Barr's** *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* is a representative work that adeptly examines the connections and interactions between cultural groups.⁹ **Barr** also adds complexity and nuance by taking great pains to explain the differences between Comanches, Apaches, Wichitas, Caddos, Cantonas, Payayas, and other American Indian groups in the Southwest. For example, each had slightly different kinship and gender patterns. Each had different economies, diplomatic alliances, and military power, which often led to different interactions with the Spanish and one another. In every instance, however, **Barr** argues that Native Americans ultimately controlled the power in relations with Spanish settlers. She also insists that given the language barriers between the Spanish and Native American Indians, symbols and gestures served as the primary form of communication with females playing important roles. When the Spaniards sought peace with the tribes they achieved the best results when they understood and acted upon accepted norms connecting gender with peaceful intent. Thus, when Spaniards included women among their settlements and trade missions, returned captive Indian women and children, and understood women's function in the negotiation process, they successfully signaled peaceful intent. **Barr's** work offers those primarily interested in borderlands history a case for Native American dominance and the importance of gender.

Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories brings together a collection of eleven essays exploring aspects of borderlands and transnational study from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.¹⁰ **Benjamin Heber Johnson** and **Andrew R. Graybill**, the volume's editors, also provide an excellent introduction to the work called "Borders and Their Historians in North America." Students new to the field as well as established scholars will find this introductory essay, together with the rest of the anthology, highly informative and useful. Complementing this work, **Samuel Truett** and **Elliott Young's** *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* is a collection of ten essays that examine border life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries not by analyzing homogeneous aspects, but by looking at the diversity, cooperation, and conflict that existed all at once along this vast, ethnically unpredictable region.¹¹ **Truett** and **Young** argue that even during the mid-twentieth century, as both the U.S. and Mexico sought to define themselves as nations through the sharp delineation of borders, the border between the two countries remained a muddied national space. People of all ethnicities lived along it: Anglos, Chicana/os, African Americans, and immigrants from Mexico, China, and other European countries all made up the complex communities at the border. These people could not be neatly placed into either the "American" or "Mexi-



Map caption/note: Accessed on October 1, 2015 from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Us-mexico-border.jpg>. Map originally published by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

can" national camps, but neither could they be grouped together as "border dwellers"; instead, they were a conglomeration of peoples whose goals, attitudes towards one another, level of movement across the border, and attitudes towards the Mexican and U.S. nations were greatly varied. **Truett** and **Young** emphasize that it is this reality of border life that is most important; that it was not a clear-cut space, or even a space that could be chopped up into smaller clear-cut spaces, but a complex transnational and multicultural space with a continually-shifting community both ethnically and relationally.

To note that **William T. Vollmann's** *Imperial* is an enormous book is an understatement.¹² At 1,125 pages (of small print), plus another 181 pages of sources, chronology, and bibliography, it is among **Vollmann's** longest works. It also mixes various genres: fiction, memoir, journalism, and history. In it, **Vollmann** focuses on Imperial County, California, together with an equal area south of the Mexican border. It is a wide-ranging exploration that includes undocumented immigrants, pollution, water quality, the infighting and bureaucracy in America over water rights and irrigation, the idea of boundaries, poverty, the systematic oppression of the poor, agriculture, the desert, the relationship between America and Mexico, farm laborers' attempts at unionizing, and the brutal conditions in the maquiladoras, among dozens of other things. For those interested in the U.S.-Mexico border, **Vollmann's** interviews with ordinary Mexicans present the patient reader with a heightened, palpable awareness of how and why undocumented immigrants cross the border. **Vollmann** has also produced

a large-format companion book of photographs, also called *Imperial* (powerHouse Books, 2009), which contains gritty portraits of some of the people and places described in the book — though without commentary.

Michael Dear's *Why Walls Won't Work: Repairing the US-Mexico Divide* is a recent and useful contribution to borderland studies.¹³ Based on **Dear's** own travels along and across the border, his book has two goals: to inquire into the empirical reality of a "third nation" culturally uniting the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico and to critique the misinformed and futile policy of building fences on the border. **Dear** concludes that walls won't work because the border has long been a place of connection; the wall is an aberration in local history; the prosperity of the border twin cities requires that there be no barriers between them; people always find ways over, under, through, and around walls; government and private interests continue opening doors in the wall; the "third nation" does indeed exist in the minds and habits of border residents; mobility and demographic realities trump the border industrial complex; Mexico is increasingly global and democratic; and walls always come down.

Tom Miller is a noted writer of literature on the American Southwest and Latin America. In *Writing on the Edge: A Borderlands Reader*, **Miller** offers readers an extraordinarily rich, complex, and unsettling anthology of borderlands literature.¹⁴ The 85 selections range from song lyrics to excerpts from novels and memoirs, from poetry to political manifestos, and draw on the work of writers as diverse in age, gen-

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der, style, and sensibility as **José Vasconcelos**, **Graham Greene**, **Oscar Zeta Acosta**, **Maya Angelou**, **Sam Shepard**, **Elena Poniatowska**, **Demetria Martínez**, **Alicia Gaspar de Alba**, and **William Carlos Williams**.

Clearly, one might argue that constructing a comprehensive bibliographic tool for monographic materials related to the U.S.-Mexico border region is an impossible endeavor. After all, how do you create a complete resource for a field of study that is not only inherently complex, but more importantly, is constantly growing both in quantity and quality? How do you begin to capture the vast amount of scholarship that has been produced by and about these multifaceted communities in a single document? Indeed, it would be difficult to list all available information resources about this borderlands region within a single text. To that end, this bibliography is by no means comprehensive, but offers a small sampling of titles to stimulate the critical study and understanding of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. 🌱

Endnotes

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Editor's note: An asterisk () denotes a title selected for *Resources for College Libraries*.

Academic E-Books: Publishers, Librarians, and Users

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Academic E-Books: Publishers, Librarians, and Users edited by **Suzanne M. Ward**, **Robert S. Freeman**, and **Judith M. Nixon** (Purdue University Press, 2016) contains all the elements of a compelling thriller. Depending on your perspective you may ask, "how will our hero escape this time?" or sitting on the edge of your seat, wonder, "when will the other shoe drop?"

The book captures the essential "Janus" perspectives and issues from a leading cast of characters in the academic book ecosystem, which is as challenged as the earth's ecosystem these days. We have come to a moment in which, as **Rhonda Herman**, President of **McFarland Publishing**, states, "...inaction is simply not an option." In the Introduction, the editors write modestly that "this book provides a snapshot of both the eBook reality and its promise in the mid-2010s." This book in fact uncovers major chasms opening between parts of the scholarly book supply chain; some described directly in the essays and others indirectly through the juxtaposition of views, which like "snapshots" also capture information obliquely and sometimes unintentionally. By soliciting contributions from various perspectives along the scholarly book continuum, the editors have "set traps for accidents"; in fact, one of the greatest values of this book to our ecosystem lies in the "synapses" between perspectives.

How do we reconcile statements such as these:

"the relationship between scholarly publishers and libraries is a vital and defining feature of this [scholarly books] market..."

(**Nadine Vassallo, BISG**) and "there is no pressure to acquire books before the moment of need. Thousands of eBook titles are candidates for cost-avoidance, or at least cost-deferment" (**Suzanne Ward, Rebecca Richardson, Purdue University Libraries**).

From a publisher perspective, **Rhonda Herman** writes, "For print books, advance orders fell roughly 50% since 2010 [...] the amount of revenue from eBooks is not enough to make up for the drop in print revenue." She continues, "But the combination of DDA and the Short-term loan (STL) has begun to undermine the equilibrium in the revenue of some titles."

Her views are echoed in the contribution by **Tony Sanfilippo** (Director, **Ohio State University Press**) who writes, "But it is also becoming evident that certain models are becoming rather problematic for publishers [...]. Demand-driven (or patron-driven) acquisitions and the typically accompanying short-term loan option [...] is one example. [...] one thing is immediately clear: this model is guaranteed to delay the majority of a title's revenue until one year after publication." As **Herman** noted, **Sanfilippo** also observes that "this model is also significantly cannibalizing print sales."

We should bear in mind that for most publishers in the humanities and social sciences, 70-90% of publisher book revenue continues to be from print and much of this material is unavailable either in digital format or in DDA. As an aside, fewer than 250 of the 1,500 publishers on YBP's approval plan publisher list make more than ten frontlist titles available in

DDA; as of September 2015, fewer than 100 publishers with more than 50 new titles per year make more than 50% of their frontlist available in DDA, and just half of those publishers make more than 75% available. It is important for us all to recognize that not all publishers have had the courage to participate in and experiment with new digital business models, and that many titles are not available in these models even for publishers that do participate.

McFarland, like many publishers, is making changes to its DDA and STL policies concluding that "Revenue has fallen too quickly so inaction is simply not an option." This position is in fact widespread among publishers and recognized in libraries that have been experimenting with DDA and STL longest. As **Karen Fischer (University of Iowa Libraries)** states in her article, "By 2015, some librarians began wondering about the long-term sustainability of the short-term loan model. As more libraries employ the STL model, many publishers have become increasingly uncomfortable with it. [...] Many publishers attribute considerable revenue losses to the STL model..." Beyond changes in pricing, publishers are also withdrawing titles, as **Kathleen Fountain (Orbis Cascade Alliance)** explains in her essay, writing, "in a review of the five titles with the most loans in FY 2014, three were no longer for loan or sale."

The publisher experiences are borne out in the library contributions to the book, albeit cast naturally in a different light. As **Suzanne Ward** and **Rebecca Richardson** write, "In-

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