

Project: Venezuela and The Turbulent 1960s: The Presidential Archive of Raúl Leoni (1964-1969).

Funding Proposal, 2023

Participants:

- Fundación Red Historia Digital Venezolana (Red Historia Venezuela)
- Fundación Raúl y Menca Leoni
- Duke University Libraries
- University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Libraries

Introduction

The presidential administration of Raúl Leoni (1964-1969) was crucial for the consolidation of Venezuelan democracy. Leoni became the first president in the country's history to succeed another civilian, Rómulo Betancourt (1959-1964), through a peaceful transfer of power. Yet Leoni faced numerous obstacles during his quinquennium. Internally, the negotiations to maintain the coalition that brought him to power failed in 1966. Furthermore, strife within his own political party, Democratic Action, undermined his power and eventually led to the party's defeat in 1968. Externally, his government confronted the most belligerent phase of a Cuban-backed guerrilla insurgency that had begun earlier that decade. As if that were not enough, Leoni faced growing tensions with neighboring Guyana over the disputed Esequibo territory. The presence of foreign oil companies also proved troublesome, as the Venezuelan government quarreled with them over royalty rates and unpaid taxes. Lastly, the Leoni administration cultivated an ambivalent relationship with the United States. On the one hand, both nations established a close hemispheric alliance against Cuba. On the other, the leaders of both nations often clashed over the United States' energy policies, which the Venezuelans believed to be disregarding their own national concerns. For these reasons and more, the Presidential Archive of Raúl Leoni is an unparalleled repository of local and international topics recounting Venezuela's turbulent 1960s.

Proposal

The Presidential Archive of Raúl Leoni is a collection of personal papers and official documents that is in urgent need of digitization in order to make them more easily accessible to scholars and the community. To this end, the Fundación Red Historia Digital Venezolana (or Venezuela History Network) and the Fundación Raúl y Menca Leoni have been working together on the development of a digital repository for these documents in order to preserve this invaluable cache of cultural heritage.

We propose to digitize the entire archive, generate the corresponding metadata for each document at the item level, and promote the archive's content online through the creation of an open-access repository hosted by the Venezuela History Network [website](#).

All members of the team proposed in this project have been trained in document digitization using overhead scanners (CZUR 3000 PRO) as well as in the process of metadata generation.

Content and importance of documents

This archive is indispensable for high-level research on diverse aspects of Venezuela's tumultuous 1960s. Its diversity of contents reflects the various challenges faced by the democratic system established in 1958. Topics include the violent threat posed by the Revolutionary Left Movement and the Armed Forces of National Liberation; diplomacy in the face of Cuban meddling in domestic affairs within hemispheric organizations such as the Organization of American States; tensions with Guyana over the Essequibo territory; Venezuelan-Colombian relations; regional diplomatic and economic initiatives; relations with U.S and British oil companies; domestic political affairs such as the coalition government (Ancha Base) and the strife within the Democratic Action party; the significant role of labor unions and leaders; and the creation of new state-sponsored industries in the aluminum, steel, and hydropower sectors. Additionally, a section of this archive contains documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the personal papers of Ignacio Iribarren Borges, the Foreign Minister under Leoni.

The proposed collection is broad in scope and will be valuable for scholars from various disciplines such as history, political science, international relations, economics, education and anthropology. This digitization project will provide researchers throughout the world with original primary sources needed to reconstruct and discover new historical facts and interpretations, challenging official narratives about this period.

The total number of documents in this collection is 19,322, totaling 30,249 pages (and digital captures). What follows is an inventory of number pages per folder in this archive:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 2802 pages
- United States: 1089 pages
- Colombia: 824 pages
- Guyana Esequiba: 4798 pages
- Petroleum: 5439 pages
- Cuba: 3792 pages
- Guerrilla Activities: 2979 pages
- Organization of American States: 255 pages
- Internal Politics: 3320 pages
- Government coalition (Ancha Base): 371 pages
- Fiscal Reform: 320 pages
- State Corporations: 25 pages
- National Chamber of Businesses (FEDECAMARAS): 28 pages
- National Ministries (miscellaneous): 393 pages
- Ministry of Defense: 150 pages
- Ministry of Labor: 156 pages
- Democratic Action Party: 551 pages
- Labor Movement: 944 pages
- Personal letters of President Leoni: 126 pages
- Other Records: 1887 pages

Work plan

1. Pull documents and letters for scanning from the collection.
2. Verify all letters and documents according to the inventory's location.

3. Scan each letter and document. Return them to their place of provenance.
4. Create corresponding metadata for all scanned content at the item level.
5. Upload scanned content and metadata into the digital repository of the Venezuela History Network.
6. Submit progress reports and deliver copies of digitized materials to the Center for Research Libraries.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

The Presidential Archive of Raúl Leoni is part of the Fundación Raúl y Menca Leoni, an institution created in 2006 by the children of the former president with the purpose of preserving and disseminating his legacy. Almost all of the documents in the archive are official records from Leoni's administration, with a small portion consisting of personal letters and other documents authored by him. None of the documents in this archive are subject to copyright under Venezuelan law. The Fundación Raúl y Menca Leoni has granted full permission for the digitization and free reproduction of the contents of this archive online for research and pedagogical purposes.

Digitization specifications

Personal documents and letters will be scanned at 300 dpi resolution following FADGI's 3-Star Performance scale using a CZUR 3000 Pro overhead scanner that generates master files in JPEG and derivatives in TIFF and PDF. Derivative copies in TIFF will be delivered to the Center for Research Libraries, the Venezuela History Network and the Fundación Raúl y Menca Leoni. Derivative copies in JPEG and PDF will be hosted and displayed at the digital repository of the Venezuela History Network. The materials digitized as part of this project are good candidates for Optical Character Recognition (OCR) since most documents are typewritten. The digital objects we produce will have OCR technology embedded into the digitized item. The CZUR 3000 scanner has a feature that automatically applies OCR to typewritten documents after performing scan captures.

For reference about the quality of the imaging for the CZUR 3000 scanners look at some of the colonial volumes digitized by [the Venezuela History Network](#) during its first digitization project [here](#).

Metadata

The Dublin Core metadata schema will be used. Our metadata team is already experienced in this format.

Hosting

Hosting will be at the [Venezuela History Network](#) website, as well as the digital collections pages of Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries. The Venezuela History Network serves as a digital repository for historical collections. The Raúl Leoni collection will be hosted on the website's "Collections" section. The digital platform developed by the Venezuela History Network employs Vercel for its user-facing front-end. The back-end has been developed

using Laravel, a PHP framework similar to the one used by other open-source cultural heritage platforms such as Collective Access.

The Laravel platform used by the Venezuela History Network has many similarities to Collective Access, an open-source platform that focuses on managing and publishing collections for museums, archives, and libraries. However, our Laravel platform offers more flexibility by providing the same managing and publishing features without the pre-configurations and limitations already in place in Collective Access software. Our platform combines content management, repository management, and collection and exhibition management systems into a single tool that is easily customizable. The Venezuela History Network currently employs this platform to create digital repositories and preserve digital collections. The platform uses standardized metadata schemes, allowing for specific searches within the documents. Depending on the collection, these schemes can be easily modified to add new fields or categories.

Plan of work:

Months	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Digitization of the objects	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Creation of metadata for each item	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Drafting of first progress report					x					
Drafting of second progress report/submit digital copies of the collection to CRL										x
Organization of an academic event about project										x

Bibliography

Conservation Center for Arts & Historic Artifacts. "Digitization Plan: Draft Fundación Red Historia Digital Venezolana." Google Docs. Philadelphia, Conservation Center for Arts & Artifacts, 2021.

Modern Endangered Archives Program. "Image Digitization_MEAP Resources.docx." Google Docs. California, University of California Los Angeles, 2022.

———. "MEAP Metadata Brainstorming Worksheet_2022.docx." Google Docs. California, University of California Los Angeles, 2022.

Available facilities

The Presidential Archive of Raúl Leoni is located at the Fundación Raúl y Menca Leoni. The organization has the proper spaces to carry out the digitization project . The project will take place at the Fundación Raúl y Menca Leoni.