

*Introduction*  
*Liberty!/Égalité!/;Independencia!:*  
*Print Culture, Enlightenment, and*  
*Revolution in the Americas, 1776-1838*

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The 2006 conference, LIBERTY/ÉGALITÉ/INDEPENDENCIA: Print Culture, Enlightenment, and Revolution in the Americas, 1776-1838, was the second in a series of three authorized by the Society's Council as a complement to the annual James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American culture. The Wiggins Lecture is delivered by the conference convener, who organizes additional sessions around a selected theme. The first conference 'Histories of Print, Manuscript, and Performance in America' was organized for 2005 by Sandra Gustafson, English, University of Notre Dame. Her Wiggins Lecture, 'The Emerging Media of Early America,' appeared in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, volume 115, part 2.

When David Shields proposed a conference focused on the history of the book in the Americas, it was a suggestion that mirrored the aspirations of the American Antiquarian Society's founder Isaiah Thomas. In the original bylaws of 1812, he envisioned that the collections of the Society would include 'books of every description, including pamphlets and magazines, especially

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those which were early printed either in South or North America.' To foster this interest, individuals residing in South America were routinely elected to the Society in its early years. Among those elected was Simón Bolívar, in October 1829, although he died at the end of the following year and there is no record of his having accepted his election.

The Society's South American collections were strengthened as titles became available. A boost came in the form of the Isaac and Edward L. Davis Fund, established in 1868 for the purchase of materials relating 'to that portion of North America lying south of the United States.' Stephen Salisbury III (1835-1905), who became the Society's president in 1887 and was its greatest benefactor in life and in death (when his bequest of \$200,000 enabled the Society to build the current Antiquarian Hall), was passionately interested in the archaeology of South and Central America. Salisbury was instrumental in helping to develop the collection by giving early imprints from Mexico and Central America, a subject area that now also includes his own manuscripts of travel and participation in archaeological excavations. Salisbury's interest in archaeology was sparked during his first visit to the Yucatan Peninsula in 1862. Papers on archaeological expeditions to the Yucatan, many sponsored by Salisbury, were published in earlier volumes of the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*. Essays written by him include 'Dr. LePlongeon in Yucatan,' (1877) and 'Terra Cotta Figure from Isla Mujeres,' (1878). Salisbury further developed this study in three books on the Mayan culture, *The Mayas and the Source of Their History* (1877), *Maya Archaeology and Notes on Yucatan* (1879), and *Maya History and Mexican Copper Tools* (1880). Later, during the early years of Clarence S. Brigham's tenure as librarian of the Society (librarian 1908-30; director 1930-59), all of the works of the Chilean bibliographer José Toribio Medina (1852-1930) were acquired, as well as a large collection of Mexican almanacs and imprints. While South America is not a primary collecting focus of the Society and, indeed, certain parts of the collection

have been distributed to other centers, specific subject areas continue to be collected.<sup>1</sup>

AAS interest in Canadiana extends to printed materials relating to the history of New France and British North America from the period of European settlement through 1876. The collection reflects the geographical, cultural, and historical links between French and English-speaking Canada and the United States. Journals of early discovery and exploration, nineteenth-century guidebooks, illustrated reports of expeditions, biographies, essays in Canadian folklore and literature, and federal and provincial government documents are a part of this rich and diverse collection. Family histories relevant to Loyalist studies, maps and lithographs of Canadian cities, early Canadian newspapers, nineteenth-century almanacs, and scholarly periodicals are also part of the collection. Most relevant for this conference is the collection of documentary series such as those published by the Champlain Society. *The Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada* focuses on one of the central events of Ontario's early history, and AAS holds several other works about that armed insurrection in Upper and Lower Canada. Among the primary sources on the patriot uprising are several rare personal narratives by political prisoners who were transported to the British penal colony in Van Dieman's Land following the rebellion of 1837-38.

The conference topic provided an opportunity to showcase highlights of the collection. An exhibition curated by Joanne Chaison, AAS research librarian is the source for the illustrations selected for the essays based on the conference talks.

1. To be able to maintain collections at a level useful for serious research, in 1968 the AAS Council reaffirmed a developing practice that the range of collecting would include the former French and English parts of North America from the period of settlement by Europeans through 1876. As a result, many European and South American imprints went to Brown University and newspapers to the University of Connecticut. Additions to the collection are now restricted to West Indian imprints and to books and pamphlets dealing with Central and South America and the West Indies (generally relating to history, relations with the United States, or description and travel) that were printed in the United States before 1877. Secondary works are added in areas such as social, political, and economic histories of the West Indies and relations between the United States and Mexico during the period of westward expansion.

The papers read and discussed at the 2006 conference were premised on the intellectual connections resulting from the circulation of written works throughout the Atlantic World. They charted the circulation of print and communications in Caribbean and South American revolutions and considered the impact of materials that originated in Europe and North and South America on other imperial and colonial contexts. David Shields's Wiggins Lecture, "We declare you independent whether you wish it or not": The Print Culture of Early Filibusterism,' looked at a long tradition of soldiers of fortune passionately committed to the export of revolution, operating from the Old World and the New. He identified the operative binary for these adventurers' appropriation of communication forms not as public-private but as public-secret. 'Publicity,' he claims, 'was the hallmark of American nationalist adventures or adventures invoking a cosmopolite liberty.' Secrecy is understood as a sign that the adventure was under the aegis of an Old World imperial power.

In the New World, there were abundant texts associated with the founding of the United States. Among them, are the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. The paper by David Armitage is not reproduced in this volume, but his recent book *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Harvard University Press, 2007) speaks directly to this point and includes many examples of such declarations. Writing on constitutions and rights, Eric Slauter notes that between 1776 and 1826, of the nearly sixty constitutions drafted in the new states of the Americas, twenty were in Latin America.

Mariselle Meléndez traces the role of five newspapers published in Lima showing how they were used first by the colonial authorities to respond to the American and French revolutions and some thirty years later by creole intellectuals in support of independence. David Geggus describes the surprising richness of newspaper archives and other printed sources relating to the abolition of slavery and the Haitian Revolution. Local journalism and expatriate writings in both the United States and France, falsified

documents, rumor and written sources, the use of free colored scribes by illiterate slave leaders—are central to uncovering the intentions of the black insurgents.

Four of the papers considered the works of influential republican writers whose writings and relationships with other authors and intellectuals spurred the shaping of their ideas about the kind of polity might emerge and flourish after independence.

Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall studies the friendship between Abbé Grégoire and Joel Barlow that was based on agreement about republicanism and foundered because of irreconcilable differences. Karen Stolley interprets Viscardo's 'Letter to Spanish Americans' (1791). Leonora Sansay's largely unknown novel about a failing marriage is in Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's interpretation, up to a point, a critique of the colonial fantasy of white superiority over black incapacity. But as the novel unfolds, Sansay identifies the existence of a third category—the white creole—who is identified with the colonial rather than the European white culture. Nancy Vogeley's examination of Llorente ties French printing and trade routes that introduced European writers and ideas to Mexico during its time of nation-building between 1821 and 1824, when its first constitution was written. Llorente's contribution, derived from his understanding of Spanish America's Catholic history and the role he considered most appropriate for religion in the new state, has been underplayed in interpretations of Mexican independence and statehood.

The paper delivered by Karen Racine (history, University of Guelph), 'Proxy Past: The Use of British Historical References during the Spanish American Independence Era' is not included in this volume. In it, she outlined ways in which English ideas of liberty as expressed during its Civil War and the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell inspired Spanish American reformers.

Essays by Sandra Gustafson and Michel Ducharme show two of the ways in which this era of independence, republicanism, and liberty can be shown to have come to an end. Gustafson traces Daniel Webster's reorientation of constitutional thinking in the

United States with the rise of Garrisonian abolitionism and the threat of Southern secession in the 1830s, while Ducharme takes a close look at the Canadian revolutionary uprisings of 1837 and 1838. The conference viewed the circulation of writings and ideas throughout the Atlantic World when liberty, equality, and independence were on the minds of many. It provided an opportunity for books, letters, public documents, and treaties to be put into conversation with each other revealing connections, sometimes unexpected, in thought and sentiment.

#### *Acknowledgments*

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