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### Collection Revitalization at the University of New Mexico Libraries

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## COLLECTION REVITALIZATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO LIBRARIES

Samuel Sisneros, Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections

As with many university libraries/archives, at the University of New Mexico's (UNM) early acquisitions entailed verbal agreements, handshakes, and political maneuvering--making provenance as well as accession and deed records intangible. Moreover, descriptive cataloguing could be minimal and not easily accessible to the public. Modern archivists can reassess old collections and revitalize them by re-describing and digitizing their materials to improve discovery and access. In accordance with this goal, the UNM Libraries' Latin American Collections in the Center for Southwest Research (CSWR) and Special Collections recently embarked on a revitalization project of the Van de Velde Papers, acquired in 1939.

Belgian-born Paul Van de Velde lived much of his life in Mexico, where he served as Belgian consul (1910-1935) and as a mining engineer and entrepreneur. With his wife, Henriette, he published works on mining, archaeology and native Mexican languages. While in Mexico, they amassed a large personal library, which in addition to thousands of published volumes and personal documents, included 18th and 19th century Mexico City area and Oaxacan civil and ecclesiastic materials. Amidst contemporaneous unrest and persecution in Mexico, individual acquisitions of such patrimony became customary. Before leaving Mexico, Van de Velde sent his unique library to Los Angeles, California and began to seek out buyers. His collection piqued interest at UNM, but the acquisition budget was lacking. Then University President James Zimmerman worked with Judicial District Court Judge David Chavez and Governor John. E. Miles to pass a bill in the New Mexico State Legislature approving a \$20,000 appropriation. Largely supported by Native Hispanic representatives, the bill enabled UNM to purchase the Van de Velde collection -- one of the first from Mexico in UNM's libraries.

Replete with printed and handwritten Mexico City area and Oaxacan manuscripts (approximately 5000 pages) many of which were hand sewn bound volumes, this collection included cargo and accounting logs, land records, legal petitions and testimonies, political orders, birth and death registries, as well as electoral, census and military data. These essential pieces of the historical and cultural record offer data for historical interpretations of everyday life in these parts of Mexico. As such, the material also appeals to scholars of Nahuatl, and indigenous Mexican and Afro-Mexican cultures.

At the time of the Van de Velde acquisition UNM was interested in building a collection of books from Latin America and it was no surprise that Van de Velde's bound registries and testimonies were separated and cataloged as monographs. Limited experience and a contemporaneous political interest in documenting post-revolutionary Mexico left the remaining unbound manuscripts to be treated as miscellaneous and insignificant. Thankfully, recently serendipitous discoveries led the Center for Southwest Research to reassess these bound and loose 18th and 19th century manuscripts, now part of the public domain.

A project funded by the Latin American Microforms Project (LAMP) unites and shares these unique and fragile handwritten and printed manuscripts in a publicly accessible digital collection using Dublin Core standards. With a



Detail from 1780 page of baptismal registry catalogued as "Libro Uno del Nuevo Curato de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Amapa." Image courtesy of UNM Libraries.

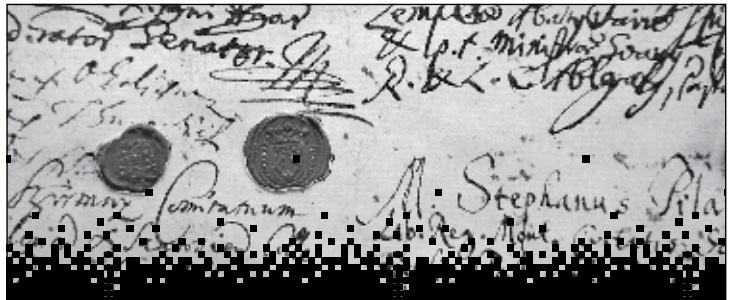
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combination of a flatbed and an oversize book eye scanner (for tightly bound and fragile items) a UNM Ph.D. fellow with historical and paleographic training works under the direction of the Manuscript Archivist **Samuel Sisneros** and Latin American collections curator Dr. Suzanne Schadl to revitalize this collection with improved spreadsheet metadata matched with digital surrogates (scanned in house at 600 dpi, as Tiff files for archival purposes). The metadata and lower resolution images are batch uploaded into ContentDM (supports OAI-PMH) for access through the New Mexico Digital Collections, located at <http://econtent.unm.edu/>. Uploading will be completed by April of 2015. The current Paul Van de Velde collection finding aid can be viewed on the Rocky Mountain Online Archive at <http://rmoa.unm.edu/docviewer.php?docId=nmulmss49bc.xml>.

For more information on this project, please contact Samuel Sisneros at [ssisne01@unm.edu](mailto:ssisne01@unm.edu).

Latin American Collections fellow Feliza Monta scanning oversize monograph. Image Courtesy of UNM Libraries



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