

**An Internet-Based Subject Guide to Collections of Public and Academic Libraries
in Amigos' Region**

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Overview

Historically researchers relied upon a variety of print tools to locate and identify libraries owning unique resources. Among the traditional paper sources used by researchers to determine collection holdings are the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections and Ash's Guide to Subject Collections. Each of these resources has proven helpful to researchers but not without limitations. Perhaps the greatest limitation has been that institutions have elected to submit information about their most prominent collections but often omitted other useful collections. One way to partially circumvent this limitation has been to rely upon OPACs that are available through the Internet; however, these often do not contain the complete holdings for each library. An additional problem with searching various OPACs lies in the inefficiencies associated with a researcher determining, from among a large group of libraries, which collection will provide the most fruitful starting point. This project was an attempt to bridge the gap between the information found in traditional print finding aids and their electronic counterparts allowing researchers to efficiently target particular libraries for possible visits.

Phase One

Phase one of the project involved identifying institutions within the AMIGOS region with collections that matched the criteria. Total institutions identified numbered more than 100. After attempting to gather information on the special collections of these institutions the total number was reduced to 74.

Library totals by type of library (N=74):

Academic	63
Public	10
Special	1

Library totals by State (N=74):

Arizona	3
Arkansas	8
New Mexico	2
Oklahoma	12
Texas	49

Phase Two

Phase two involved gathering descriptions of collections identified in phase one and then developing subject headings based upon these descriptions. More than 350 subject headings were developed and assigned to appropriate collections based upon the descriptions provided by each institution. Paper records for each collection were created and used as the basis for further development.

Phase Three

Phase three involved converting the data to HTML, then indexing and uploading it. URLs and IP addresses for each library were then obtained and linked to each collection description and then linked to the Internet via the OSU Library website. Students were hired and supervised by one of the project members to convert the paper records to an electronic format and then to convert the electronic copy to HTML. Copy was reviewed and corrections made when appropriate. Links were checked periodically to ensure that the guide still functioned as a useful tool for researchers.

Evaluation

While serving as a useful introduction to collections within the region, the guide has been supplanted through the rapid growth of Internet-based pages describing collections created by individual institutions. When the project was conceived the investigators failed to adequately anticipate the explosive growth of such pages that have since proved extremely useful tools to promote institutional holdings to a wider audience. Further limitations in the usefulness of the guide exist due to the number of collections identified and covered by the project. Additional collections are being acquired and promoted by institutions throughout the region on an ongoing basis and, in some cases, interesting discoveries are occurring in already existing but previously unidentified collections housed at these same institutions.

The project is available to the public at:

<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Treasures/amigonm.htm>