CASE STUDY – Fotógrafos Alemanes en América Latina  
Laboratorio Audiovisual de Investigación Social del Instituto Mora, México

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the fond / collection</th>
<th>Fotógrafos Alemanes en América Latina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>1894-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Guillermo Kahlo, Bernardo Graff, Hans Mann, Werner Haberkorn, Ottokar Achtschin, Theodor Preising, Franz Mayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of photographs</td>
<td>887 photographs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Main information of the fond**  
The collection Fotógrafos Alemanes en América Latina [German Photographers in Latin America] is a virtual collection consisting of images taken by German photographers in several parts of Latin America between 1894 and 1955. The original photographs are in archives in Mexico, Argentina and Brasil, and are brought together—by way of digital copies and a unified cataloguing methodology—on the Web site Huellas de Luz [Marks of Light] <http://lais.mora.edu.mx/huellasdeluz>. That site is part of the project Heritage Preservation, Information Systems, Access and Research, undertaken by the Audiovisual Laboratory for Social Research at the Instituto Mora, in Mexico, in collaboration with the archives that hold the original materials. The virtual collection includes works by the following photographers:

- Guillermo Kahlo, who took photographs in Mexico from the end of the 19th century through the 1930’s. His work can be found in numerous public and private archives, and has been the subject of several studies and publications.
- Franz Mayer, collector and amateur photographer who shot in various parts of Mexico, producing images for magic lanterns.
- Hans Mann, a German emigrant who worked in Argentina from the 1930’s to the 1950’s. His photographs are held by Argentina’s National Academy of Fine Arts.
- Bernardo Graff, who was the first German photographer to reside in La Pampa, Argentina. He took photographs between 1894 and 1907.
- Werner Haberkorn, who worked in several cities in Brazil from the 1930’s to the 1960’s. His photographs are in the The University of Sao Paulo’s Paulist Museum.

**Virtual holdings**

1. Museu Paulista de la Universidade de Sao Paulo, Brasil [Paulist Museum, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil]
2. Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes y el Centro de Documentación de Arquitectura Latinoamericana, Argentina [National Academy of Fine Arts and Center for the Documentation of Latin American Architecture, Argentina]
3. Fototeca Bernardo Graff del Archivo Histórico Provincial "Prof. Fernando E. Araoz", Argentina [Bernardo Graff Photograph Archive, Historical Provincial Archive “Prof. Fernando E. Araoz”, Argentina]
The original photographs were (and are) located at archives in several countries. Their conservation status varies from one archive to another, as did the quality and grain of each archive’s original catalogue data. Digital reproductions were not freely available on the Web, and important relationships between the objects in different archives had not been identified.

Our main goal in forming this virtual collection was to promote the study of photographs taken by German emigrants who worked in various Latin American countries, and especially to allow the comparison of the works of these photographers, including modes of production, and thus shed light on social processes in Latin America.

Other objectives include making cultural heritage available on the Web, and continuing previous work on the computer modelling of archive catalogues and computer-human interaction in systems providing access to digital collections.

Work to create this virtual collection and place it online represents the continuation of many years of previous work in the following areas: social science research using photographs as primary sources; archival description and cataloguing of photographs; and the use of computers to represent and disseminate qualitative data for social science research.

Here are the main phases of the work undertaken for this specific collection:

- **Phase 1:**
  - Inventory and general evaluation of the materials, especially with regard to physical state and copyright.
  - Digitization of the materials.
  - Usability tests with the previous version of the software we developed for placing this and other collections online, and mock-ups of new user interface proposals.
  - Courses, workshops and seminars for and/or involving researchers and archive personnel working on the collection.
  - Work on theoretical and methodological frameworks for this and other related projects.

- **Phase 2:**
  - Multi-level documentation of the materials.
  - Production of papers, book chapters and texts to accompany the materials online.
  - Implementation of new features, including the new user interface, in the software to be used for the Web site.
  - Importation of catalogue records into the system.

- **Phase 3:**
  - Tests of the new Web site and online collection.
  - Implementation of the site’s graphic design.
  - Correction of programming and cataloguing errors.
  - Public presentation of the new site.

The virtual nature of this collection—that is, its bringing together of physically diverse works through digital copies and a unified cataloguing methodology that emphasizes the relationships between the objects involved—is one of its more unusual features.

It contains photographs of great heritage value, including images of urban architecture, technological progress, communications, important events and historical figures. The photographs’ technical characteristics and visual composition are also exceptional. As a collection assembled specifically with a view to history research, it has a unique potential to shed light on social processes of the last century, including, but not limited to, the history of photography and European immigration in Latin America.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Methodological contribution</strong></th>
<th>This project has the following distinguishing features:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− We strengthened international and inter-institutional ties through collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− We used technology to virtually bring together related collections that are physically disperse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− Catalogue data was modeled using simple symbolic Artificial Intelligence technology (Semantic Web) (part of a broad thread of work that this project is inscribed in).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− We studied interface design for computer-human interaction in access and search of digital collections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− The project was conceived as interdisciplinary research spanning problems in social science, archival science and computer science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− We combined the production of theoretical and methodological proposals with research on specific topics and/or research geared towards concrete products (such as online collections, software development).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**André Porto Ancona López**

**Professor at the Information Science, Faculty of Brasilia University**