

# UTILIZING FRENCH SOURCES IN PARIS FOR LATIN AMERICAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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Latin American historical research in France is limited, although interest is increasing. The evidence of this is readily apparent. For instance, the proposed book, *Guide des sources de l'histoire de l'Amérique Latine conservées en France* is still in draft and more than ten years behind schedule.<sup>1</sup> An examination of articles on Latin America in French journals indicates the limited use of sources available in France.<sup>2</sup> The National Archives receives only a few requests for archival searches, its files indicating only three such requests on the topic South America (Amérique du Sud). These include inquiries for materials on commerce between France and Latin America in the first half of the nineteenth century, sources for steamship packet-boats to America in the nineteenth century, and Anglo-French diplomatic relations with Latin America, 1836–48. There were no search requests for Brazil or Argentina, but six for Mexico. Yet archival sources of information about Latin America in France are abundant and provide materials not available elsewhere. This is particularly true for material on the former French colonies and on Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico.

Although it is impossible to particularize on all the materials in Parisian libraries and archives, as they are vast and vary according to specific countries and subjects, there are certain areas where the French international and professional tradition have produced fine documents. The demographic materials for the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French colonies appear very impressive. This interest in statistics is continued in French consular records throughout Latin America. The commercial correspondence of the French Foreign Ministry contains regular annual records of imports, exports, and number and nationality of ships as well as records of prices. Counts of numbers of French citizens and their employment allow for considerable statistical analysis. To my delight the prices of eggs and chickens were indicated for Paraguay during the War of the Triple Alliance. Even such things as the mint records for Santiago and Lima 1796–1818 exist in the documents held by the Foreign Ministry.

Utilization of these sources is growing. Increasingly, French universities are showing an interest in Latin America, although enrollments in Latin American oriented programs remain small.<sup>3</sup> The increasing number of theses prepared in French universities are also a manifestation of this interest. Topics indicate that the greatest research interest by country is Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Peru followed by Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela. By discipline, literature has received the most attention, followed by economics and then history, political issues, and social problems.<sup>4</sup>

Until the Guide for French Sources on Latin America is published, fully utilizing the various French materials for Latin America represents a challenge. The best general work in English, which describes French libraries and archives, hours, access, procedures, and types of catalogues, is Erwin K. Welsch's *Libraries and Archives in France: A Handbook*.<sup>5</sup> More description of the types of material available is found in Waldo G. Leland's *Guide to Materials for American History in the Libraries and Archives of Paris*, Vol. 1, *Libraries* and Vol. 2, *Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. The index includes references to various Latin American countries, and the descriptions of the Mexican material are particularly good.<sup>6</sup> There are also specialized volumes and articles on doing research on various Latin American countries such as Mexico and Uruguay.<sup>7</sup>

Unless one's interest relates to one of the former French colonies, without doubt the best place to begin research is the Foreign Ministry archives, Archives diplomatiques du ministère des affaires étrangères (37, Quai d'Orsay, 75700 Paris, hours 2 to 7 P.M.). If one brings a letter of reference from the Franco-American Commission for Educational Exchange (9, rue Chardin, Paris 75016) written for the United States embassy in Paris, one will immediately be issued a reader's card and be allowed to request material. A maximum of three volumes may be ordered each day for use the following day. The personnel are helpful and will provide you with the catalogue which will most likely contain the description of the material of most interest for a particular research project. Although when utilizing pre-1895 material the inclination is to concentrate on the Political Correspondence and Consular and Commercial Correspondence, other files should not be neglected, particularly Memoranda and Documents, Miscellaneous Papers, both political and commercial, and Private Papers. The twentieth century material has a larger subject breakdown under country headings. While reporting varies greatly according to the French official and area, I found the commercial and economic consular information superior to the United States reports and at times better than the British.<sup>8</sup>

Since the Foreign Ministry is open only in the afternoon, it may prove useful to do research in the morning at the Bibliothèque Nationale (58, rue de Richelieu, Paris 75002). Although the various reading rooms

have different hours, generally the library is open from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. with the main reading room open until eight. The limited space in the main library has made it necessary to limit users. Thus this library is probably the most difficult of the French centers to obtain access to. However, two photographs, a passport, a statement from your university indicating that you are employed and the specific subject of your research, and the payment of a small fee should obtain a reader's card. Along with the card you will receive a sheet indicating the hours of the library and a pamphlet indicating the various catalogues available.

Within the National Library, there are four search rooms that will be of most use: the main reading room and catalogue room, the map room, journal and newspaper room, and the manuscript room. The greatest demand is for a seat in the main reading room and one should arrive early to assure a place. While the National Library should have a copy of every book published in France, the catalogue system is difficult to use since there are both printed catalogues and card catalogues for author and subject. The catalogue one uses depends upon the date of publication of the work one wants to consult. Given the heavy demand for seating space, limitation of ten books per day, and the catalogue system, readers would be wise to utilize the main reading room only for those works that they have not been able to obtain in other libraries. In addition, the Latin American collection is weaker than the holdings of major libraries such as UCLA, Texas, Berkeley, and Wisconsin. While the newspaper and journal room has plenty of reader space, one should consult primarily journals and newspapers not found elsewhere. If consulting a French newspaper, one may discover it is on microfilm, and the machines are ancient. The result is that much of the microfilm is barely readable and the machines take the patience of the truly dedicated to operate. The Latin American newspaper collection is primarily of twentieth-century editions. I found the Latin American journal collection also disappointing.

The manuscript and map collections of the National Library will provide the most original sources. In the case of manuscripts, it is useful to know which set of papers one wants to examine since subject catalogues do not seem very complete. The major printed catalogues with references to Latin American materials are the *Catalogue des Mss. Français*, *Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises*, and, for the more recent acquisitions, the card catalogue. The manuscript collection is best for the colonial era and includes some major collections in Spanish from the missions and orders.<sup>9</sup> Not to be ignored is the cartographic section with its one and a half million maps. The French did produce an extensive number of maps of Latin America and you may find some you have not found elsewhere. The maps are listed by country for Latin America in a card catalogue with descriptions and date. The facilities for examining

the maps are excellent. One may request photographic copies but it will take one month and is expensive, or one may take the photographs oneself on payment of a lesser fee.

There are, of course, other libraries in Paris and nearby, besides the National Library, which are well worth consulting for their Latin American collections. Among these are the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine (B.D.I.C.) (2, rue de Rouen, 92001 Nanterre), which has an excellent post-1870 collection as well as a good newspaper collection, and the Université de Paris, Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne (47, rue des Écoles, 75005 Paris) with its two million plus volumes, making it the second largest research library in France. Also worth consulting is the Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine—Sorbonne Nouvelle (28, rue Saint-Guillaume, 75007 Paris). There are many other Paris libraries with specialized collections that may prove useful depending upon one's topic. Valid researchers with photographs and a passport should be able to obtain permission to use the various libraries.<sup>10</sup>

Anyone doing research on Latin America in Paris will want to consult the National Archives and possibly various ministerial archives. The largest amount of material on Latin America is held at the National Archives (60, rue des Francs-Bourgeois, 75141 Paris). With a letter of introduction indicating research topic and a passport one can easily obtain from the Bureau des Renseignements a one-month reader's card. Indications of several months stay in Paris and two photographs should result in a one-year card. This card is valid not only for the National Archives but subsidiary and departmental archives. The National Archives reading room is open from 9 A.M. to 6 P.M., although new volumes may not be requested from twelve to two and after five.

Because Latin American materials are but a fraction of the holdings and found in various categories, it would save time to write several months before coming to Paris to the Bureau des Renseignements, poste 2121 of the National Archives, to ask for the type of material available on your topic. Although the resulting search may not be exhaustive, it will at least indicate the type of sources that should be consulted. One may also upon arrival fill out a "demande de recherche" and give it to the Bureau de Renseignements, but such searches may not be completed quickly. Once the Guide to Latin American Sources is published, there will be extensive help in this area. If you do not write beforehand to the archives, your first purchase at the Archives Boutique should be the National Archives, *Guide du Lecteur*, last edition published in 1978. It will orient you to the major sources. Having examined the reader's guide, one is ready to tackle the catalogue room with its various indexes.<sup>11</sup> From 10 A.M. to 12 P.M. and 2 P.M. to 5 P.M. there is a professional librarian who can help you in the catalogue room. You will discover at

the National Archives, as other places in Paris, that Spanish and Portuguese will help you understand but be of limited use in conversation. However, French employees can in necessity understand and communicate in English. To my surprise this was as true of those who delivered the volumes and cartons to my desk as it was of those trained in archival research. In the catalogue room you should be presented with catalogues that possibly contain material for your topic. In addition, it might be worth checking the card catalogues that indicate previous searches on a variety of topics and suggested sources. If there is no one to help you in the catalogue room, the most useful volume will be *Les Archives nationales: État général des fonds, Tomo II, 1789–1940*, edited by Remi Mathieu.<sup>12</sup> While the volume has no subject index, leafing through one can find the general categories that would be of most use. From that one can go to specific catalogues that describe the materials in more detail.

For nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin America, the categories of most use at the National Archives are Commerce et industrie, serie F<sup>12</sup>, Travaux publics F<sup>14</sup>, Instruction publique F<sup>17</sup>, Beaux-Arts F<sup>21</sup>, and Postes et Télégraphes F<sup>90</sup>. There are individual catalogues with specific descriptions available. For Latin American economic historians of the 1890–1940 era, the AQ 65 (Archives d'entreprises) are valuable. There is no printed catalogue and the 35,000 cards in 26 categories are located at the Bureau de Bergeron (87, rue Vieille du Temple), two blocks away from the National Archives. The arrangements for seeing this catalogue should be made through the librarians in the catalogue room. The material on mining, land, railroads, and agriculture in Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil looked particularly useful, including annual company reports, newspaper articles, and correspondence. Once one has the correct carton number, it may be requested in the normal manner in the main reading room of the National Archives. Finally, not to be missed are the Marine holdings of the National Archives up to 1870. The most useful categories are BB<sup>3</sup>, (Lettres reçues), letters addressed to the Minister of Marine from various consuls by year and in alphabetical order by consulate, and the superior BB<sup>4</sup> (Campagnes), which consists of various reports from naval ships on stations visited. These are best for the ports of major call, although often written in less depth than the Foreign Ministry reports. Generally, the volumes will be labeled "Amérique de Sud," but may be more specific, as for example "Brésil" and "La Plata." Keep in mind that although you may reserve volumes or boxes from one day to the next, no more than eight cartons will be brought to your desk on any given day.

In addition to the main depository of the National Archives, one may need to consult other locations. If one is doing research on the former French colonies of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, Saint-Domingue, and lesser Antilles, then the Archives d'Outre-Mer (27, rue

Oudinot, 75700 Paris) is the depository. The social and economic materials including demographic information are excellent and abundant. Hours are from 9:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. with volumes brought every half hour and no volumes brought from 12:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. A card catalogue rather than printed catalogue helps to locate material. The reader's card obtained at this archive, similar to that of the main National Archives, provides access to the National Archival system.

Three other archives within Paris have information relating to Latin America and generally store materials which are post-1870. The Service historique de la Marine (Pavillon de la Reine, Château de Vincennes, 94300 Vincennes), is open Monday through Friday from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Saturday 9 A.M. to 12 P.M. Here is to be found the material relevant to Latin America from 1870 to 1940 and the continuation of the same series from the National Archives, although with some exceptions. In addition to BB<sup>3</sup> and BB<sup>4</sup>, naval attaché reports from various posts, BB<sup>7</sup>, is stored only at the Marine Archives and may have relevant information.

The Service historique de l'Armée de Terre (Vieux-Fort, Château de Vincennes, 94300 Vincennes) is open 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Monday through Friday and half days on Saturday. It requires a letter of introduction from the U.S. embassy to obtain a reader's card. None of the army material appears to be in the National Archives. The Archives économiques et financières du Ministère des Finances (192, Saint-Honoré, 75056 Paris) has some economic and financial materials relating to Latin America, primarily for the 1870–1940 era.

Finally, it should be mentioned that none of the archives or libraries that I consulted permitted typewriters. However, photocopying and microfilming, while expensive, are generally available. All libraries and archives did allow the use of pens.

This report has mentioned the major archives and libraries in Paris, primarily those that seem to possess the greatest amount of material on Latin America. An examination of their holdings makes it apparent that there is much useful material in Paris both for the development of further French scholarship on Latin America and for utilization by foreign scholars. While some materials require extensive work to uncover, much of the best information is readily accessible.

#### NOTES

1. I am indebted to Marie-Antoinette Menier, Conservateur en chef aux Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-mer, for permission to examine a draft copy. This guide is particularly needed for the evaluation of Latin American holdings of the government department archives. These are almost unused at this time because they are too scattered to encourage scholars without better indication of usefulness. Hopefully the guide will also help in locating private business papers. Hilda Sabato, affiliated with

- CISEA (Hipolito Yrigoyen 1156, 1407 Buenos Aires, Argentina), was able, with a great deal of diligence, to locate commercial papers connected to the wool industry, which prove very useful for Argentine history.
2. Also see Frédéric Mauro, "Comment développer les recherches françaises sur l'histoire de l'Amérique Latine?," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* (Paris) 14 (Oct./Dec. 1967): 424–35.
  3. Three groups with interest in Latin America are the Groupe de Recherches sur l'Amérique Latine, Université de Toulouse-Le Miril; Groupe de Recherches et d'Études Économiques et Sociales sur l'Amérique Latine-Domaine Universitaire (GRESAL), Grenoble; and Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine, Paris. They produced in December of 1978 *Amérique Latine: Bulletin analytique de documentation*, which included annotated bibliographies of from seven to thirty-six references on nine different subjects from indigenous medicine to industrialization. If this project is continued, it should further encourage Latin American research in France. Peter Geismar, "Latin American Studies in France," *LARR* 3, no. 4 (Fall, 1968): 45–51 also discusses French interest in Latin America. Also see Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Latin American Studies in Europe* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Center for Latin American Studies, Monograph Document Series 1, 1979), pp. 46–60.
  4. "Catalogue des Thèses soutenues en France sur l'Amérique Latine de 1954 à 1969," in *Cahiers des Amériques Latines* 4 (1969):145–94 and "Catalogues des Thèses et Mémoires sur l'Amérique Latine soutenues en France de 1970 à 1974," in *Cahiers des Amériques Latines* 9–10 (1974): 283–366.
  5. Pittsburgh: Council for European Studies, 1973.
  6. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1932, 1943.
  7. Mario Fação Espalter, "La historia uruguaya en los archivos del Francia," *Revista nacional: Academia Nacional de Letras* (Montevideo) 2: 21, (Sept. 1939), pp. 403–10. The Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, Comisión de Historia has published a series of volumes on materials in European archives for various Latin American areas including Argentina, Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, and Ecuador. While primarily emphasizing material in Spanish archives and generally better for the colonial era, French libraries and archives are at times discussed.
  8. The standard work discussing the French Foreign Ministry Archives in English is Vincent Confer, "France: Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères (AMAE)," in Daniel H. Thomas and Lynn M. Case, *The New Guide to the Diplomatic Archives of Western Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), pp. 69–91; and for Latin American materials in the French Foreign Ministry see Didier Ozanam, *Les sources de l'histoire de l'Amérique Latine, Vol. 1 Les affaires étrangères* (Paris: Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine, 1963). Also see Edgard A. Rodríguez Leal, *Relaciones entre Francia y Venezuela, 1830–1918* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, 1977).
  9. Also see Leland, *Guide*, Vol. 1, for a description of the manuscript collection.
  10. Jean Robinson prepared for the Franco-American Commission for Educational Exchange a small pamphlet, "A Brief Guide to Libraries and Archives in Paris," which is worth obtaining from the commission when you request your letter of introduction since it discusses various libraries as well as gives bus and metro lines for reaching them. Also see John Ferguson, *Libraries in France* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books and Clive Bingley, 1971).
  11. One should not neglect the *Guide des sources de l'histoire des États-Unis dans les archives françaises* (Paris: France Expansion, 1976), which was published for the U.S. bicentennial and which will most definitely help in understanding the various categories that might have material related to your topic even though its emphasis is on North America.
  12. Paris: Archives Nationales, 1979. Volume 1 is pre-1789 materials and volume 3 is the Marine and Outre-Mer Archives.