

ABSTRACT

THE POSSIBILITIES OF SOUTH AMERICAN HISTORY
AND POLITICS AS A FIELD FOR RESEARCH¹

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The time has unquestionably come for us to develop not only more commerce with South America but also more intelligent relations with our southern neighbors. Most of us are much more ignorant about their history and politics than we care to admit. There is an increasing demand for trustworthy books on these subjects and the question arises as to whether it can be met. Is the field a profitable one for research, and is it possible with our available resources to undertake the production of scholarly works? It is the aim of this paper to answer these questions and to indicate the whereabouts of some of the more important collections of manuscript and printed sources, particularly those that are accessible in this country.

The basis for the paper is the author's card catalogue in the Yale Library, which includes among many others the titles of books relating to South America that are now in the Harvard Library, the Library of Congress, and the Yale Library. It is planned to make this catalogue a subject index of material relating to Spanish America. At present it contains about 25,000 cards.

It is not generally realized that South America offers a much longer period of history for study than North America and an equal variety of subjects, many of absorbing and dramatic interest both for the historian and the political scientist. The need for monographs is very great, and the accessible materials for research are abundant.

Most of the manuscript sources for the colonial period are in the Spanish archives in Seville, Simancas, and Madrid. But for the nineteenth century, the material is widely scattered. Most of it is in South America, but much is in London, and there is a large amount in Washington, in the state department, which has over 700 bound

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volumes of dispatches received from South America during the nineteenth century.

Many of the larger American libraries are able to supply both printed sources and secondary works.

The Library of Congress and the Columbus Memorial Library of the Pan-American Bureau offer excellent facilities for carrying on research in Washington.

The Yale Library has a large collection, perhaps the largest in this country, of books and manuscripts relating to South America. There are about 3300 manuscripts and over 7000 volumes of printed sources, official documents, laws, codes and decrees, periodicals and newspapers, political pamphlets, and secondary works.

The Harvard Library has a good working collection, including many sets of printed sources. The University of Pennsylvania has a large collection of the public documents of Argentina, Chile, Peru and Bolivia. The Library of Cornell University is particularly well supplied with books on Brazil. And the Bar Association of New York has the codes and commentaries of all the South American republics.