

Jessie's piece of the Cuba essay.

- Key institutions involved in the preservation effort.
- Any recent or current projects of note.

With over 400 public libraries in the Cuban library system it is easy to see the dedication they have to education and preservation. The largest fixture in the cultural preservation of Cuba is the José Martí National Library. The library was founded in 1901 through a provision established by the United States requiring Cuba to set up a library system, but was not named after José Martí or in the building it is in today until 1949. Since the 1950s, the library has had a goal of education and literacy for all citizens of Cuba and has had great success with this mission. According to the latest UNESCO survey of literacy in 2006, the youth literacy rate is 100% literate and adults are at a 99.8% literacy rate. The library has many educational and fun programs that attract many people to the library. Furthering the education programs for the library, the director of the National library in 1962 established the National Librarian Training School located in Havana (Starkweather 2000). Through this free two-year program students learn library and information science and help continue the literacy and cultural preservation mission of the library system.

The José Martí library is currently working on preservation methods and the digitizing of much of their collection. The race is on for expansive changes in preservation within the Cuban library system, as the National library director, Eliades Acosta states, "the Cuban climate is the enemy of paper" (Eberhart 2001, 30). The library system has been working for ten years on installing air conditioning and humidity controls but still the "reading rooms are climate-controlled only by fans and open windows that offer free access to the occasional bird" (Eberhart 2001, 30). Currently the library is working on digitizing their collection of fifteen thousand Cuban Revolutionary posters produced between 1960 and

the mid 1980s; they are fighting an uphill battle with this collection because of the climate and the high acidity of the posters (Ward 2005). The digitization process needs funding and the preservation end of these posters is very labor intensive with placing acid-free sheets in between each poster and moving the materials to better shelving (Ward 2005). The posters are of great interest to the historical heritage of the country and also the library has developed a partnership with the Cal Library at UCLA-Berkeley within which the library at Berkeley is helping to catalog and store some of the posters and other materials from the National library (Starkweather 2000).

Beyond the José Martí library there are many museums and institutions that are working to preserve the history of Cuba. Surprisingly, the Acuario Nacional de Cuba (The National Aquarium of Cuba) has a fantastic public library built within the aquarium. The collection focuses on marine science and provides courses in environmental education. The aquarium offers many spectacular services to anyone who comes by including, a bilingual website, a public reading room, borrowing services, interlibrary loans, and has a very engaging children and young adult collection (Ramos, Gilkes 2007). Also the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana has an extensive collection of Cuban artworks that they are working on digitizing and also restoration of many of the artworks in their collection. In Cuba, they have a strong passion for education and promotion of their country and through the preservation efforts of today they will be able to keep much of their history alive.

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