

## **The history of books in Colombia: the roadmap of an emerging field**

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Concerning a survey published by the periodical *El Tiempo* in 1964, which sought to ascertain why book publishing in Colombia was such an odyssey, the writer Hernando Téllez maintained that this type of journalistic exercise was futile. He observed that the debate over problems relating to books was one of the subjects meant to occupy the country's imagination only during intervals in which popular rule and politics could be set aside. Problems relating to books, he insisted, were not real problems; rather, they were normal manifestations of "cultural and economic underdevelopment." This writer's opinions contradicted those of the other two experts interviewed – an editor and a bookseller – who instead blamed issues such as the high cost of paper and the absence of literary criticism.

Téllez's analysis was simple: the publishing industry depended on official and semiofficial entities (academies and institutes) due to the risks involved in independent publishing in a country where the small book buying market suffered from precarious "cultural and economic conditions." He added: "as writers, we have only the buyers and readers of our books that we deserve. Nothing more, nothing less."<sup>1</sup>

Although it is not our purpose to analyze Téllez's opinions, they shed useful light on the odyssey of book history in Colombia. Specifically, Téllez points out several aspects that have historically limited the development of print culture in Colombia, from a high illiteracy rate and low purchasing power to the exclusive character of its literate elite. Moreover, the writer makes note of the State's significance in supporting the publishing industry, largely dependent on the education sector. Bearing this in mind, our paper aims to shed light on the relationship between the State and academia in the development of book studies and to show how the fledgling status of the discipline in Colombia is explained by historical constraints on its publishing sphere and readers.

The journey we will outline also highlights the different perspectives that have guided the study of print material in Colombia and those responsible for it. The bibliographic tradition characterized the first stage of research in the mid-twentieth century, which also marked the first connection between book scholars and cultural institutionalization. Through the subsequent professionalization of history as a discipline, issues such as the press started to be

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1 Hernando Téllez, "La odisea de publicar un libro en Colombia," *El Tiempo* (August 30, 1964): 3.

addressed by political and cultural historians, who sought to look beyond the journalistic literature that dominated the scene.

The geography of subjects and problems inherent in the history of books and reading was expanded upon by historians at the start of the twenty-first century, once the French and Spanish historiographical approaches had been received and appropriated, thus shaping lines of work around the study of printing, the parties involved in writing and reading, and the emergence of the modern publisher. This study does not seek to be exhaustive; instead we hope it will serve to outline the emergence of a field with aims for consolidation, rather than just a historiographical summary *per se*.<sup>2</sup>

### **From bibliographic viewpoints to historiographical renewal**

As elsewhere in Latin America, studies by scholars and bibliographers comprise the first substrate in book history research books in Colombia. Concerned with recording the national bibliographic history, these initiatives served both to gain national representation as well as to establish “sites of knowledge,” such as the National Library, early on. The nineteenth century in Colombia was characterized by political instability that prevented many official projects from attaining continuity; nevertheless, scholars interested in the minutiae of printing provided interesting historical and bibliographic analyses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>3</sup>

Growing interest in the history of printing and the National Library led to a golden age of research in the mid-twentieth century. During this period, projects were led by the *Instituto Caro y Cuervo*, the *Academia Colombiana de Historia*, and the *Instituto Colombiano de Cultura*, all of which are also prestigious publishers. However, interest in the field still eluded professional historians, who at that point had barely made their way into the National University.

Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo's bibliographic work is perhaps the most significant from that period, particularly due to its insight and diversity, including subjects such as travel literature, art, and bibliography itself.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, bibliophilia came to the fore in the works of Ignacio Rodríguez Guerrero. A keen scholar of rare and curious books, Guerrero provided data on

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2 For two recent summaries see Sergio Pérez, “Estudios sobre el libro en Colombia. Una revisión,” *Lingüística y literatura* 71 (2017): 153–174 and Alfonso Rubio, “La historia del libro y la lectura en Colombia. un balance historiográfico,” *Información, cultura y sociedad* 34 (2016): 11–26.

3 Isidoro Laverde, *Apuntes sobre bibliografía colombiana*. Bogotá: Imprenta a Vapor de Zalamea Hermanos, 1882, Eduardo Posada, *Bibliografía bogotana 1728-1931*. Bogotá: Imprenta de Arboleda y Valencia, 1917, *La Imprenta en Santa Fé de Bogotá*. Madrid: Librería general de V. Suarez, 1917. See also the studies by Chilean scholar José Toribio Medina, who published *Historia de la Imprenta en Cartagena de Indias* and *Historia de la Imprenta en Bogotá* in 1904.

4 Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo, *Bibliografía colombiana de viajes*. Bogotá: Editorial A.B.C., 1957 and *Bibliografía de bibliografías colombianas*. Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1960.

early Colombian literary collections.<sup>5</sup> In parallel, Antonio Cacia Prada took the first steps toward providing a history of journalism, writing two studies documenting and analyzing the time periods when the print world was restricted and when it experienced freedom.<sup>6</sup>

Along similar lines, Tarcisio Higuera published the first comprehensive monograph on printing in Colombia in 1970.<sup>7</sup> Higuera had previously been the director of the National Printing Press and he sought to reconstruct the country's typographical history by studying its printing and lithographic establishments, their output, and their relationships with the political world. Along these same lines, Eduardo Santa edited *El libro en Colombia* [*The book in Colombia*], a collection of essays on bookstores in Bogota, incunabula, and the history of the National Library, among other subjects.<sup>8</sup>

Printing scholars coordinated a project entitled *La Enciclopedia del Desarrollo Colombiano* [*The encyclopedia of Colombian development*]. Launched by the editor Gonzalo Canal, the second volume of the collection was dedicated to the graphic arts. Under Higuera's guidance it focused on the history of composition and printing techniques, their most meticulous critics and the main sites of apprenticeship. Although the project was intended to cover the field as a whole, the volume looked back at previous initiatives while generally excluding topics such as the diffusion of typographic skills.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the publishing boom in those years, such studies remained far from the theoretical or methodological framework required for book history. The publication of *L'apparition du livre* by Henri-Jean Martin and Lucien Febvre, for example, met with little interest among bibliographers. Although there was a gradual professionalization of history as a discipline starting in the mid-1960s, it did not bring about rapid change in fields such as written culture. The first professional historians were interested in social and economic history and therefore focused their attention on subjects such as settlement, the colonial economy, and miscegenation. However, these same historians were influenced by the *Annales* school and became receptive to innovative approaches to cultural issues.<sup>10</sup>

Alfonso Rubio confirms that the field of studies was given fresh impetus in 1998 with the publication of the article "Prácticas de lectura, ámbitos privados y formulación de un espacio

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5 Ignacio Rodríguez Guerrero, "Libros colombianos raros y curiosos," *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 9.1 (1966): 250–260.

6 Antonio Cacia Prada, *La libertad de prensa en Colombia*. Bogotá: Prensa Católica, 1958; *Historia del periodismo colombiano*. Bogotá: Fondo Rotatorio de la Policía, 1968.

7 Tarcisio Higuera, *La imprenta en Colombia*. Bogotá: INALPRO, 1970.

8 Eduardo Santa, *El libro en Colombia*. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1973.

9 *Enciclopedia del Desarrollo Colombiano. Volumen II. Artes gráficas*. Bogotá: Antares-Canal Ramírez, 1970.

10 The work of Germán Colmenares was significant at that time. See for example *Convenciones contra la cultura. Ensayos sobre la historiografía hispanoamericana del siglo XIX*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1986.

público moderno. Nueva Granada a finales del Antiguo Régimen” [Reading practices, private sectors, and the creation of a modern public sphere. New Granada at the end of the old regime] by Renán Silva.<sup>11</sup> This study takes a critical stance toward the work of Roger Chartier and Jürgen Habermas, discussing the importance of analyzing the practice of reading to study the educated people of New Granada, their interests and scientific projects.<sup>12</sup>

Gilberto Loaiza’s work also began to draw on the French perspective. He proposed studying the Republican press as a crossroads between the political and sociocultural ambitions of Republican writers and nationally constructed projects. Loaiza’s interest in forms of sociability likewise opened another perspective to observe transformations in the print world as a result of associationism and its part in the creation of libraries and the circulation of certain types of literature.<sup>13</sup>

This period of cultural shifts coincided with other interesting instances of renewal. On the one hand, nine bibliographic studies were published, such as those by Flor María Rodríguez and Álvaro Garzón Marthá, which filled many gaps in the national print record.<sup>14</sup> On the other, the first steps were taken to research Colombian publishers with *Historia de las empresas editoriales de América Latina, siglo XX* [A history of twentieth-century Latin American publishing companies], a project coordinated by the writer Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda.<sup>15</sup>

These books stimulated interest in the print realm at universities, especially those where a cultural shift occurred overnight. However, advances focusing on the history of books and reading are still far from uniform in criteria and qualities. Emerging projects reveal, above all, an alignment with the objectives of political history, retrieved for the purpose of the bicentennial of independence, combined with new institutional initiatives.

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11 Renán Silva, “Prácticas de lectura, ámbitos privados y formulación de un espacio público moderno. Nueva Granada a finales del Antiguo Régimen,” in *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica. Ambigüedades y problemas siglos XVII-XIX*, eds. François-Xavier Guerra and Annick Lempérière. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998, 80–106.

12 His principal works include *Los ilustrados de Nueva Granada, 1760-1808. Genealogía de una comunidad de interpretación* (Medellín: EAFIT, 2002) and *República liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular*. Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2005.

13 Gilberto Loaiza, “El Neogranadino y la organización de hegemonías. contribución a la historia del periodismo colombiano,” *Historia Crítica* 18 (1999): 65–86. See also: *Sociabilidad, religión y política en la definición de la nación. Colombia, 1820-1886*. Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2011.

14 Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas, *Bibliografía de la literatura colombiana del siglo XIX*. Doral, FL: Stockcero, 2006, 2 vols.; Álvaro Garzón Marthá, *Historia y catálogo descriptivo de la imprenta en Colombia (1738-1810)*. Bogotá: Nomos Impresores, 2008.

15 Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda ed., *Historia de las empresas editoriales de América Latina, siglo XX*. Bogotá: CERLALC, 2000.

## Expansion in the field and mutual understanding

In general, the subjects that distinguished the renovation of the field in recent decades have focused on the history of the printing press. Emerging projects have sought to characterize the periodical press output during the colonial period and at the start of the republic, clarifying the press's role in political conflicts and in the circulation of ideological and literary trends. The fact that historians have gravitated toward the political, together with the aforementioned commemorative atmosphere, has been key in this field's expansion.

Inspired by scholars including François-Xavier Guerra, historians such as Catalina Muñoz and Margarita Garrido examined the power of the printed word as a vital revolutionary and educational tool in the struggle for independence and in the diffusion of modern languages and practices.<sup>16</sup> Situated at the boundaries of intellectual history, Francisco Ortega led several National University initiatives that sought to characterize the leading nineteenth-century periodicals, contributing to the understanding of their decision-makers and the editorial transformations undergone during the period of national organization.<sup>17</sup> Carmen Elisa Acosta did her doctoral thesis on *Lectura y nación: Novela por entregas en Colombia (1840-1880)* [*Reading and nation: Serialized novels in Colombia, 1840-1880*], which served as the first major connection between history and literature in the emerging field on print materials.<sup>18</sup>

Taking a different path, Juan Guillermo Gómez García studied the history of books in Medellín, capital of the Antioquia Department. He first analyzed the origins of left-wing publishing in the twentieth century with *Cultura intelectual de resistencia: contribución a la historia del libro de izquierda en Medellín en los años setenta* [*Intellectual culture of resistance: contributions to the history of left-wing books in Medellín in the 1970s*]. Gómez García later focused on the end of the nineteenth century, seeking to reconstruct the collection of literature that forged the region's intellectual elite.<sup>19</sup> Building on his work, Juan Camilo

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16 Catalina Muñoz, "Una aproximación histórica a la lectura en la Nueva Granada," *Historia Crítica* 22 (2001): 105–24. For a project led by Garrido see "Palabras que nos cambiaron: lenguaje y poder en la independencia," <http://www.lablaa.org/palabras-que-nos-cambiaron/index.html>

17 Francisco Ortega and Alexander Chaparro eds., *Disfraz y pluma de todos. Opinión pública y cultura política, siglos XVIII y XIX*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia/Centro de Estudios Sociales/University of Helsinki, 2012. Another project overseen by Ortega led to the creation of the Historical Digital Newspaper Archive at the Luis Ángel Arango Library, <http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/hemeroteca-digital-historica/all>

18 Carmen Elisa Acosta, *Lectura y nación: novela por entregas en Colombia, 1840-1880*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2008.

19 Juan Guillermo Gómez García, *Cultura intelectual de resistencia: contribución a la historia del libro de izquierda en Medellín en los años setenta*. Medellín: Desde Abajo, 2005; "Lectura, lectores y lectoras o el universo del libro en Tomás Carrasquilla," *Estudios de Literatura Colombiana* 23 (2008): 171–200.

Escobar Villegas focused on a more transnational analysis, exploring the role played by texts and images in constructing examples of invented superiority in the province.<sup>20</sup>

The ongoing interaction between political and intellectual history and the history of books continued down several paths, including studies by Renán Silva and Gilberto Loaiza from the Universidad del Valle in Cali, which opened up new lines of research. The State's role in developing the world of books was first examined by these historians, who highlighted the relationship between liberal educational projects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the proliferation of bookshops, libraries, and collections, all suggesting the presence of new categories of readers such as women and artisans.<sup>21</sup>

These studies also prompted a growing interest in the practices of reading and writing. Catalina Ahumada looked at concerns over reading and writing in cities to study how they developed in the slave estates of Valle del Cauca, until then seen first and foremost as socioeconomic spaces.<sup>22</sup> Another subject studied was the coalition between the cultural elite of Cali, grouped into literary circles and periodicals, and the political cadres who sought to govern Cali from the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Aura Hurtado also took an interest in rural written culture, publishing epistolary sources to study peasant literacy projects in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

Together with these contributions, the relative “regionalization” of studies can also be seen in Rafael Acevedo's research. He devoted his doctoral thesis to educational books in Caribbean Colombia, highlighting the role of the region's scholars in publishing primers and manuals in nineteenth-century public education projects.<sup>25</sup> Patricia Cardona likewise researched the function of school primers as instruments of political doctrine, later shifting

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20 Juan Camilo Escobar Villegas, *Progresar y civilizar. Imaginarios de identidad y elites intelectuales de Antioquia en Euroamérica 1830-1920*. Medellín: Universidad EAFIT, 2009.

21 Renán Silva, “El libro popular en Colombia, 1930-1948. Estrategias editoriales, formas textuales y sentidos propuestos al lector,” *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 30 (2008): 20–37; *Cultura escrita, historiografía y sociedad en el Virreinato de la Nueva Granada*. Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2015. Gilberto Loaiza, “La expansión del mundo del libro durante la ofensiva reformista liberal. Colombia, 1845-1886,” in *Independencia, independencias y espacios culturales. Diálogos de historia y literatura*, eds. Carmen Elisa Acosta, César Ayala and Henry Cruz. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2009, 25–63; and *Poder letrado. Ensayos sobre historia intelectual de Colombia, siglos XIX y XX*. Cali: Programa Editorial Universidad del Valle, 2014.

22 Catalina Ahumada, “Los apuntes y cuentas de la Hacienda Coconuco 1770-1850. Las prácticas de leer y escribir en una hacienda esclavista Colombiana,” *Historia Crítica* 42 (2010): 37–53. Ahumada continued to explore these spaces in her doctoral thesis *Cartas femeninas: experiencias de vida escrita en Colombia en la primera mitad del siglo XIX. La historia de Mariana Arboleda de Mosquera (1804-1869)*, defended at the University of Minnesota.

23 Juan David Murillo Sandoval, “Creando una biblioteca durante la Regeneración: la iniciativa del Instituto Literario de Cali en 1892,” *Historia Crítica* 45 (2011): 184–205.

24 Aura Hurtado, “La cultura escrita en sociedades campesinas: la experiencia de Radio Sutatenza en el Suroccidente colombiano,” *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 46.82 (2012): 68–91.

her focus toward studying books on national history, its discourses, types, and decision-makers.<sup>26</sup>

The transnational perspective also arose in projects highlighting the role of trading networks and cultural exchange in the expansion of the book world in Colombia. Focused on the paths taken by scientists, scholars, and translators from the nineteenth century, or on the development of spaces such as bookshops, these studies highlighted the country's connections with the global book market.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the emphasis on the nineteenth century, new periods began to be considered. Trained in the perspectives developed by Antonio Castillo Gómez, Alfonso Rubio researched sources such as post-mortem inventories of libraries and the manuals of notaries public to study reading and writing in the administrative life of the New Kingdom of Granada.<sup>28</sup> Also focusing on the colonial world, José Luis Guevara recently studied seventeenth-century manuscripts as a way of exploring New Granada book culture.<sup>29</sup>

To a large extent, the progress made by different studies is a result of the support provided by institutions such as the *Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia* (National Library of Colombia, BNC) and the *Instituto Caro y Cuervo* (ICyC). Through grants allocated to study its collections, the BNC has supported projects such as the research undertaken by Jean Paul Ruiz and Cristian Salamanca, which sought to compile and digitize the periodical press of several Colombian provinces held in various collections. Although initially quantitative, this

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25 Rafael Acevedo, "Hombres de letras en la provincia. Producción y comercio de libros en la República de Colombia, 1821-1874," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 43.1 (2016): 93–133.

26 Patricia Cardona, *La nación de papel: textos escolares, lectura y política. Estados Unidos de Colombia 1870-1876*. Medellín: Universidad EAFIT, 2012; "Historia, tradiciones editoriales y sociedad. Las Memorias y el Compendio de José Antonio de Plaza (Nueva Granada, 1850)," *Historia Crítica* 57 (2015): 97–116.

27 Andrés Jiménez Ángel, *Correspondencia y formación de redes intelectuales: los epistolarios de Rufino José Cuervo, 1865-1882*. Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 2013, and Juan David Murillo Sandoval, "La aparición de las librerías colombianas. Conexiones, consumos y giros editoriales en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX," *Historia Crítica* 65 (2017): 49–69. For a study on book sellers in the twentieth century, see Elber Berdugo and Alberto Mayor Mora, *Vida social e influencia cultural de los libreros de Bogotá, 1960-2007*. Bogotá: Universidad Autónoma, 2012.

28 Alfonso Rubio, "Bibliotecas particulares en Nueva Granada. Presencia y significado del libro religioso," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 40.2 (2013): 27–47; "Las librerías de la compañía de Jesús en Nueva Granada: un análisis descriptivo a través de sus inventarios," *Información, cultura y sociedad* 31 (2014): 53–66; and *Libros antiguos en la Universidad del Valle*. Cali: Programa Editorial Universidad del Valle, 2014. On the business of books in the colonial era, see Pedro Rueda Ramírez, *Negocio e Intercambio Cultural: El Comercio de Libros con América en la Carrera de Indias (Siglo XVII)*. Sevilla: CSIC, Universidad de Sevilla, 2005.

29 José Luis Guevara Salamanca, *La fábrica del hombre. Historias de viajes y usos de los libros del Nuevo Reino de Granada en el siglo XVII*. Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, 2015.

project led to a new research group focusing on the material characteristics and political affiliations of the nineteenth-century press.<sup>30</sup>

As in the bibliographic period of the mid-twentieth century, support for these cultural institutions has served projects that would have otherwise been difficult to finance through universities due not only to the lack of specialized research laboratories, but also to the limited resources allocated for higher education.<sup>31</sup> One notable exception is the *Nación/Cultura/Memoria* (Nation/Culture/Memory) research group at Universidad del Valle. Led first by Gilberto Loaiza and then by Alfonso Rubio, the group situated the history of books on the map of Colombian historiography. The *Congreso de Historia Intelectual en América Latina* [Congress on Intellectual History in Latin America] held in Medellín in 2014 served, for example, to provide context for the first thematic round table discussions on the history of books in the country. Organized by the aforementioned research group, the discussions drew attention to the advances made in research by its members, and facilitated the participation of renowned Latin American researchers such as Bernardo Subercaseaux.

In Cali that same year, Alfonso Rubio organized the ongoing annual seminar *Cultura escrita en Colombia* [Written Culture in Colombia], which has become a valuable venue for training in the discipline.<sup>32</sup> The presence of round-table discussions on the history of books was also noted at the *Congreso de la Asociación de Colombianistas* [Conference of the Association of Colombianists] at Medellín in 2015, which featured many print culture specialists, thus heralding a new era for the field.

### **The need for articulated maturity**

The last two years have been key in determining the profile of the national research community. Projects such as the collective book *Minúscula y plural: cultura escrita en Colombia* [Lower-case and plural: written culture in Colombia], edited by Alfonso Rubio, prove the degree of maturity attained by the research field. Being relatively free from the influence of political history, these studies highlight specific dialogs with leading authors in the field, such as Jean-Yves Mollier, Martyn Lyons, Roger Chartier, and Armando Petrucci. The range of themes in this book reveals the diversity of the subject matter, from the relationship between orality and writing in indigenous communities to representations of

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30 See the portal “Prensa del siglo XIX” at <http://recursos.bibliotecanacional.gov.co/content/prensa-del-siglo-xix>

31 Interest in the history of books at the BNC has led it to publish books on this subject, for example María F. Paz Castillo ed., *Una historia del libro ilustrado para niños en Colombia*. Bogotá: Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, 2010.

32 Over the years, the seminar themes have been the document drafted between the Council of the Indies and American institutions, periodicals as a new system of writing in nineteenth-century Colombia, and graffiti.

modern writers and the publishing of pornographic literature.<sup>33</sup> Published in 2016, this book was released on the same day as the first symposium dedicated exclusively to the field.

The symposium was entitled *Historia de la edición y de la lectura. Experiencias desde México, Argentina y Colombia* [The history of publishing and reading. Experiences from Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia]. It brought together more than twenty national researchers and included guest speakers from around Latin America, such as José Luis de Diego from Argentina and Laura Suárez from Mexico. Coordinated by Paula Marín and backed by the ICyC, the symposium shed light on the need to construct a national network of researchers which could channel the individual efforts that have characterized the development of the field.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the event foregrounded two significant elements. First, it revealed an interdisciplinary shift, with an interest in the history of publishers by researchers in literary studies, such as Margarita Valencia and Paula Marín, and by researchers in sociology, such as Felipe Vanderhuck.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, the symposium showed the ICyC's interest in consolidating research on Colombian publishing. The ICyC started a grant program in this field in 2014, but it was not until 2016, when its Masters in Publishing Studies was started, directed by Margarita Valencia, that the program took on strength.<sup>36</sup>

The ICyC's commitment to the field was also visible in their support for the project *Historia de la edición en Colombia, 1738-1851* [The history of publishing in Colombia, 1738–1851], devised and spearheaded by Alfonso Rubio. Published in 2017, this study sought to reconstruct the country's experience in typography and publishing from the time when the printing press first arrived in the New Kingdom of Granada until the consolidation of the republic in the mid-nineteenth century. Limiting themselves to this period, the authors analyzed the political and sociocultural impact of the new technology, the opinions of its critics and the role of the written word in the revolution of independence and in early national construction projects.<sup>37</sup> Following that publication – and undoubtedly significantly for this emerging field – Paula Marín presented her study on the publishers Germán Arciniegas and

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33 Alfonso Rubio ed., *Minúscula y plural. Cultura escrita en Colombia*. Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2016.

34 Papers from the symposium were later published in the journals *Historia y Memoria* (13, 2016), [http://revistas.uptc.edu.co/revistas/index.php/historia\\_memoria/issue/view/428](http://revistas.uptc.edu.co/revistas/index.php/historia_memoria/issue/view/428) and *Lingüística y Literatura* (71, 2017), <https://aprendeenlinea.udea.edu.co/revistas/index.php/lyl/issue/view/2615/showToc>.

35 Margarita Valencia ed., “Algunas miradas al libro y a la edición en Colombia,” *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 48.86 (2014): 5–68; Paula Marín, “La colección Biblioteca Popular de Cultura Colombiana (1942-1952). Ampliación del público lector y fortalecimiento del campo editorial colombianos,” *Información, cultura y sociedad* 36 (2017): 65–82; and Felipe Vanderhuck, “Los escritores se quejan. Escribir en Colombia, 1930-1946,” in Rubio, ed., *Minúscula y plural. Cultura escrita en Colombia*, 303–326.

36 See <http://www.caroycuervo.gov.co/Seminario/Maestr%C3%ADas/maestria-en-estudios-editoriales/>

37 Alfonso Rubio and Juan David Murillo Sandoval, *Historia de la edición en Colombia 1738-1851*. Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 2017.

Arturo Zapata, demonstrating a growing interest in “the age of publishers” in the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup>

These books were published at the same time as the field experienced a certain internationalization, as seen through the inclusion of Latin American historians at national events and through the participation of Colombian researchers at conferences such as *Las Edades del Libro* [Ages of the Book] in Mexico City in 2014, the SHARP Conference for Latin America (Monterrey, 2015), and the *Coloquio Argentino de Estudios sobre el Libro y la Edición* [Argentine Colloquium of Studies on Books and Publishing] in Cordoba, 2016. These experiences all forged relationships that brought Colombian research closer to more established Latin American historiographical traditions in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil.<sup>39</sup> In 2016, the Colombian team likewise connected with the project “*Editores y Editoriales Iberoamericanos*” [Editors and Ibero-American Publishers, EDI-RED] covering the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, coordinated by the Spanish scholar Pura Fernández.<sup>40</sup>

In summary, research today on the history of books and written culture in Colombia can be regarded as mature. There is no doubt that the field has developed at a faster pace in recent years, reflected by the diversification of research and by the beginning of a process of internal articulation. Although the latter objective remains a work in progress, it will build a more coherent, organic field of research, leading over time to ambitious research projects, conferences, and specialist publishers' collections.

However, advances in the field should not allow it to overlook its limitations. It is clear that the precariousness of readers which affected publishing in Hernando Téllez's day has translated into our current shortage of essential sources. The fact that book sellers and publishers have not preserved their archives, for example, presents obvious challenges for those interested in case studies in publishing. On a theoretical and methodological note, the dominance of the French perspective has also made it difficult to connect with other historiographical traditions, such as the Anglo-American or German approaches to the formats, intentions, and functions of written material.

With regard to this last limitation, the historiography of books in Colombia has suffered from a lack of studies on book agents, such as copy editors and newspaper hawkers, or studies on specific reader groups, such as laborers, women, and children. Other unexplored subjects include the impact of technologies such as linotype or the typewriter in publishing activity and the methods of communication. Finally, it is clear that a lack of specialized

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38 Paula Marín, *Un momento en la historia de la edición y de la lectura en Colombia (1925-1954)*. Germán Arciniegas y Arturo Zapata. Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, 2017.

39 The ICyC's most recent event included the Argentine researcher Gustavo Sorá. The program is available at <http://www.caroycuervo.gov.co/Eventos/5/>

40 On EDI-RED, [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/editores\\_editoriales\\_iberoamericanos/presentacion/](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/editores_editoriales_iberoamericanos/presentacion/)

research facilities has prevented ambitious joint projects from being proposed. Although several institutions have encouraged researchers, even serving as networking hubs, a decrease in the national budget allocated for education, science, and technology not only guarantees to hinder the development of the discipline, but also that of many other fields in Social Sciences and the Humanities, which tend to bear the brunt of cuts in difficult times.

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