



People of PROMIG

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros
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People of PROMIG: How did you get started in your career?

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros: I was in the middle of completing a Garcia Robles Fulbright Binational Business Fellowship in Mexico City, when I first learned about librarianship as a career, and more specifically the career of Mary Ochs, now retired. At the time, Mary was working as the library director of the Mann Library at Cornell University doing incredible work with the Gates Foundation as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Her impactful work and humility made an impression. Before Mary, I had not considered the importance of global information flows and the people behind the scenes supporting its dissemination, organization, and access. I pivoted away from a career in business, nonprofit, and NGOs assuming I could be like Mary and do more good through the library profession. At the time, I was working in the nonprofit sector serving communities in need including affordable housing, mental health services, foster care, climate change, and the arts. At the time, I thought libraries would be a place to meet faculty and students researching social and global issues and more importantly seeking to engage with the reality on the ground. This is the idealist thinking that got me here.

People of PROMIG: What's your job title?

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros: Assistant Professor, Latin America, Iberian, and Latino/a Studies Librarian.

People of PROMIG: What do you enjoy most about your work, either as a librarian or in your specific role?

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros: I enjoy helping users and students test the limits of the library and academic system. I am here to help users get their new, unconventional, and often original ideas off the ground. Good ideas need people behind them, I am here to be one of those people.



Image courtesy The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

People of PROMIG: What part(s) of your job are most challenging?

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros: It is a challenge to steward global information. Access to global information is not equitable. My job is to advocate for and steward the scholarship of 30+ Latin American countries, to give the region a voice from the Midwest in shaping learning and the creation of new knowledge. Information from Latin America is not easily accessible, described accurately, or available through most library collections. Take the region's existing economic and social inequities and you will see it manifest in its global information flows. The most challenging part of my job is to see how little space Latin America takes up in the library and higher education in general. Despite being our closest geographic neighbor and trading partner, the region matters so very little in the education and information diet of the average student. A region with rich biodiversity, the largest growing demographic in the US, and incredible cultural patrimony, even with these characteristics, Latin America takes up such little space. It seems to be most known as a foreign language, a border, a type of cuisine, rather than a region to learn about and engage with. How is this helpful in preparing the next generation to encounter the global challenges that are surely coming? I also find it a challenge to work past the limitations of being a "librarian" on a

research campus. It is an imposing glass ceiling. I already have other glass enclosures to work past. I could do more if I was seen for my abilities and not for my professional and social identities. It feels like a cage.



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People of PROMIG: What do you think most people would be surprised to learn about you?

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros: I really embraced the idea of a library as a place. I approach my collection development like I do my outreach. I start with the humans in front of me listening, supporting, building relationships and learning about their needs rather than selecting items for a hypothetical and distant user of the future. For many reasons, I find collection development to be my least favorite part of being a librarian. There is nothing easy about selecting and acquiring materials from Latin America, it's hard enough to find these items, it's harder to make a library system to maneuver as an international enterprise. International business is complex. What motivation does the library have to do something a multimillion corporations find challenging, to add a book for a country most curriculums have omitted.

People of PROMIG: Any recent project that you'd like to tell us about?

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros: I recently compiled a 300+ multilingual Latinx children collection to fill gaps in public and academic libraries. These books were selected by experts in children's literature, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies. They respond to support K-12 Latinx literacy in our local schools that holds so many talented Latinx/e students back and keep Latinx students lagging through the higher education pipe-line. At present, the collection resides in my liaison department as a private teaching collection. I have not found a way to ingest this collection in a public or academic library. If anyone out there has ideas, I'd love to hear it. I've been trying for two years and I've exasperated all my ideas.

People of PROMIG: What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros: I would have liked to be a journalist, an immigration lawyer, a social entrepreneur, a museum curator, a children's book writer, a UX designer, an accessibility expert. Most of all, I'd like to be helpful to others in a capacity that allows me to contribute the best of what I know.

People of PROMIG: This is probably too broad a question to ask, but how would you describe your approach to community-led outreach and events?

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros: My community-led projects are seeking to be helpful and responsive to another human being. Sometimes my programs are about building a bridge from one culture to another. Other times my programs are about putting the right voices at the front of the room. Some of my programs are seeking to hold space for different people to interact. I try to robinhood all the resources of the campus to help those who may not have access to it. I give the best of myself professionally to my service. My methods and approach are developed by the mentors who invested in me. I am a copy imitating what I can of the good I received from others.