

# State of the Literature: Chicano History

Louise Año Nuevo Kerr

Occasional Paper No. 12

December 1997

## ABSTRACT

This paper presents a brief survey of the last 20 years of the literature on Chicano history, an assessment of its current state, areas for improvement, and how best to facilitate the “making” of new history. Prior to the 1960s, little research had been done on the history of Mexicans in the United States. With the Chicano movement came a commitment from young Chicanos to the study and inclusion of Mexican-Americans in higher education. During the 1970s, the numbers of Mexican-American-focused archives, Chicano Studies programs, and Chicano faculty members increased dramatically. In the 1980s, the number of Chicano historians stagnated and few graduate students were entering the field, mirroring growing attacks on affirmative action and multicultural education from the political right. In the present, a new generation of graduate students is rising, but institutional support for Chicano history has declined, as has the availability of new faculty positions, and the scope of research is confined by the limited range of documents in research collections. The paper provides a number of potential avenues for future research beyond the already well-traveled paths. It also proposes that academic consortia supporting Mexican-American research can supplement diminishing institutional support, and that Chicano historians should look to the science and social science model of working in research teams. The paper concludes by arguing that the obligations of Chicano historians are different and greater than those of historians of the middle ages, for instance, and that research on our community must meet the demands of the moment.