

# Designing and Implementing a Digitization Workflow for Post-custodial Initiatives at the Benson Latin American Collection, UT Austin

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## Post-custodial archival model

- Providing access to archival materials without taking physical custody
- Emphasizes sustained collaborative and mutual relationships, rather than one-off extractive ones
- Archives provide expertise, equipment, and funds as needed to make materials available digitally
- Partner organizations undertake digitization work and retain physical and intellectual control
- Previous post-custodial projects at the Benson:

- Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, Guatemala (AHPN)
- Latin American Digital Initiatives (LADI)
- Human Rights Documentation Initiative (HRDI)



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## Libros de Hijuelas

- Records of land privatization (*reparto de tierras*) in Michoacán, Mexico, mostly late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> c.
- 192 books of bound documents, approximately 75 thousand pages, in various states of decay
- Held at the Archivo General e Histórico del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Michoacán (AGHPM) in Morelia, Michoacán

## Project overview

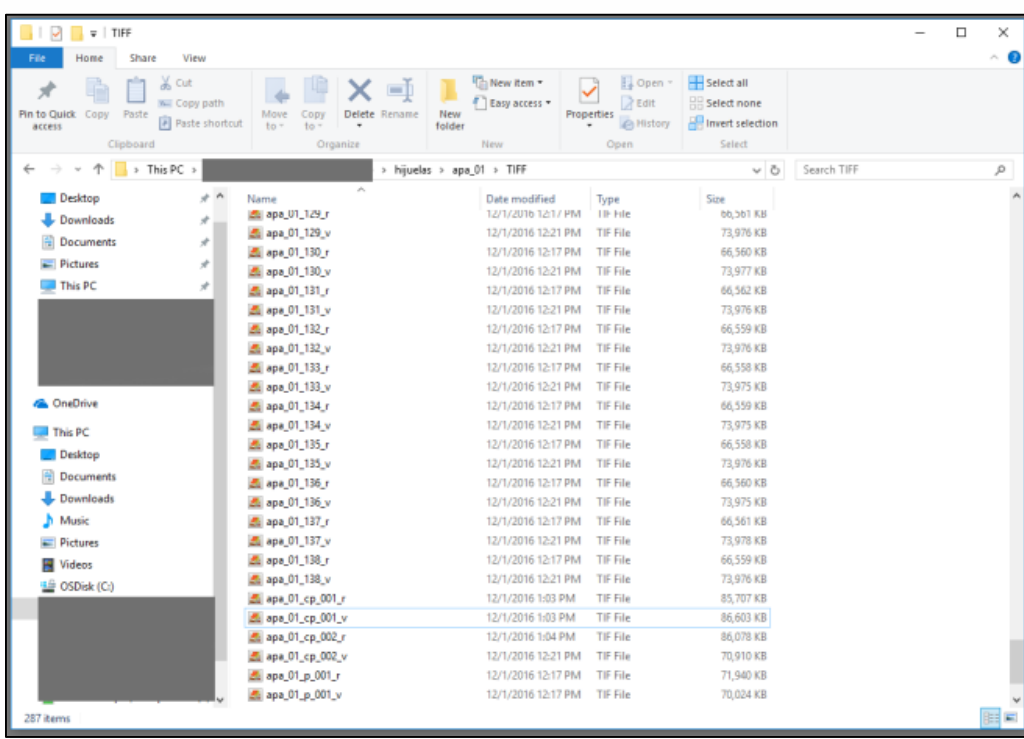
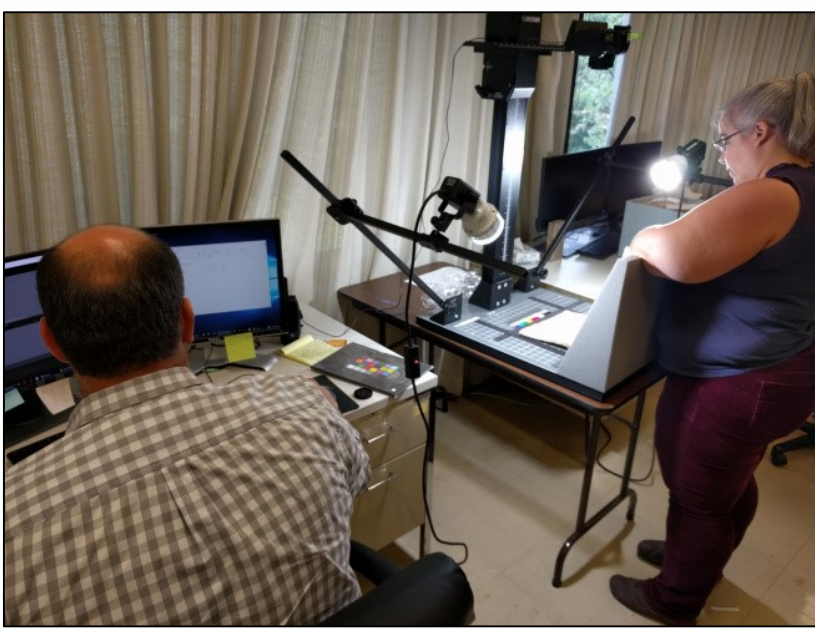
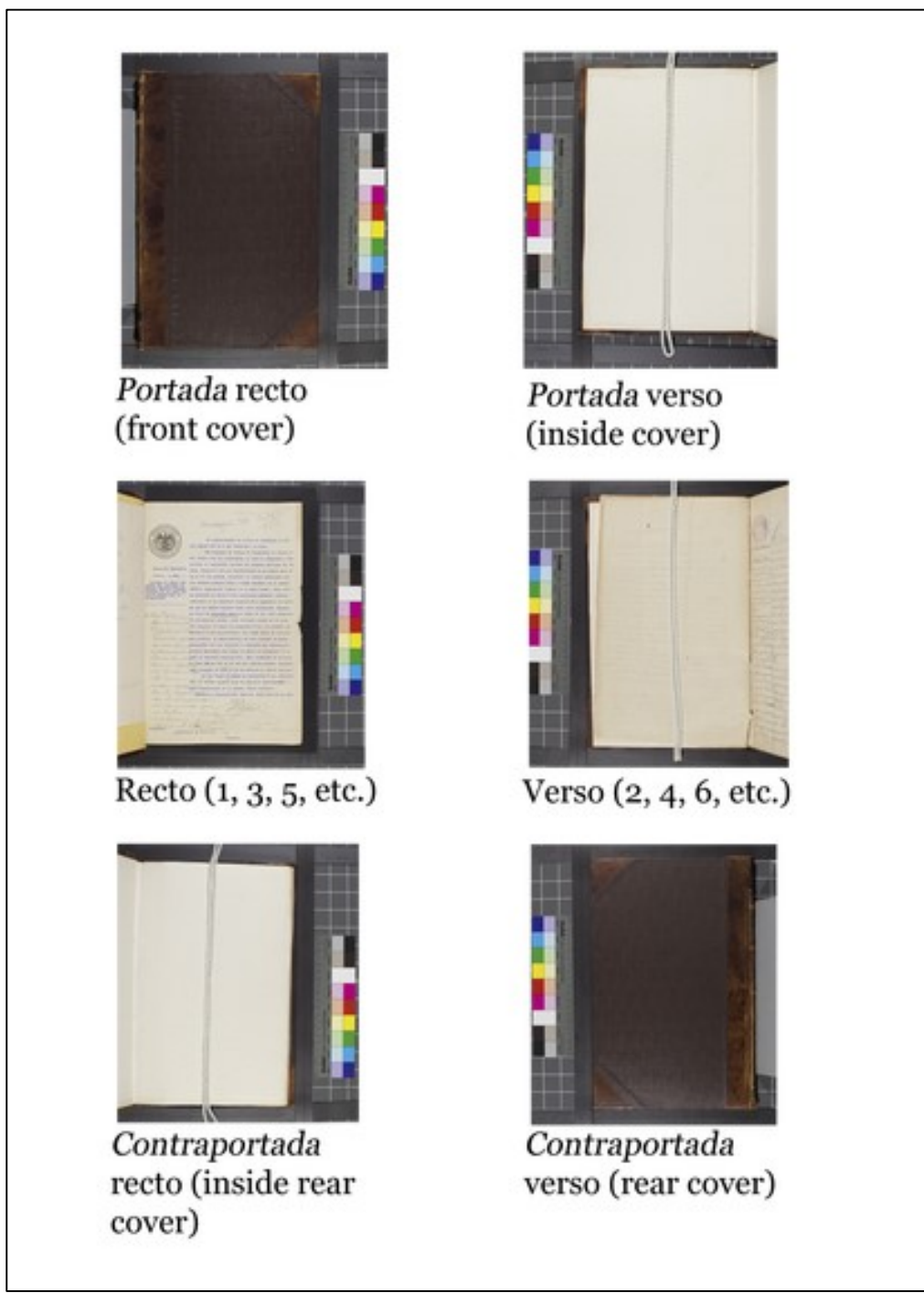
- 4 local historians will digitize and describe each document over the course of 2 years, funded by a British Library Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) grant
- Digitization workflow emphasizes speed and simplicity: minimize cleanup & manual file name entry, simplify file management
- Equipment must be inexpensive, easy to deliver, and last the full 2 years

## Equipment and software used

- Canon EOS 6D DSLR camera
- Beseler copy stand, LED lights, Kodak color separation guide
- Adobe Lightroom to capture, review, edit, and export photos
- LaCie rugged external HDDs to deliver digitized materials
- Total Commander to create and verify md5 checksums

## Digitization workflow

- Cameras are mounted vertically on copy stands and tethered to the computer and controlled from within Adobe Lightroom
- Custom templates used in Lightroom to automatically name files
- Books are photographed in 6 sections: front cover, body, and back cover, each photographed in recto and verso
- Batch editing (crop, color adjustment) and export into a single folder of TIFFs
- Workflow can digitize up to 200 pages per hour



## Results to date

- November 2016 workshop in Morelia was successful: Team has digitized 45 books in 6 months
- Very little QC needed: team reviews images as they are taken and re-photographs as needed
- Minor modifications to the workflow communicated to the team over email and during May 2017 follow-up visit



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## Lessons for future projects

- Equipment needs: Taller copy stand for larger items, higher-megapixel camera for finer detail
- Raw image files are ideal archival masters
- Clearer idea of object size and condition needed prior to arrival
- Nimbleness is essential: Quick responses to emailed questions and requests for assistance, remote adaptations to workflow
- Internet access on-site to facilitate communication