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1. Introduction

Let me begin by thanking the program committee for the invitation to share with you this afternoon the broad outlines, goals, and status of three related projects: The Early California Population Project; the California Pobladores Project; and the Early California Cultural Atlas. It is really a pleasure to do so here at the Huntington where these projects were developed and of course before an audience of so many colleagues. Just so you know the plan for this session, I am going to give the history and rationale and promise of the first two of these projects, and then my colleague Jeanette will take on the more enviable job of actually showing off how they are all coming together in our third project, the ECCA, a new interactive digital history project. Then we hit the reception.

Let me state at the outset that by design this plenary is not a crash course on early California history. It would be great if you all left this session declaring: “We are all California-ists now.” But that won’t be the measure of our session. Unlike the amazing papers given at the other sessions at this conference, this session by design is not argument driven. I could talk at some length about how the resources we’ll discuss have reshaped my own understanding of early California, but that is not what this session is about. Rather, this session is intended to be an overview of three projects that promise not only to reshape the field and its historiography but perhaps over time to remake it.

Before I move to my discussion of our work, let me begin with Roy Ritchie, in whose honor this conference has been organized.

Roy has been feted, honored, and praised over the past year since his retirement became official. You all know Roy as an expert on the history of colonial New York, and of beach culture, and of European forests, and of the lives of pirates. You certainly know Roy as the creator of the modern Research Division here at the Huntington Library, for without his efforts there would be far fewer of those fellowships that have brought so many of us here for important research and for invaluable episodes of writing. But I am guessing that few of you know Roy as the ultimate supporter of a series of research projects that are establishing a foundation for a rewriting of the history of California before 1850. Without Roy, and his incredible support and skills as project director, the Early California Population Project and its related projects would not exist. Roy not only fostered a culture of research within the Huntington’s ever expanding walls but he has led the way in creating an online research
environment that is reinvigorating the field of early California history, and therefore contributing to greater understandings of early America.

As Roy is fond of reminding me, the first of these projects--the ECPP--was more demanding than any of us could have imagined--and completing it took stamina on Roy’s part, as well as large doses of patience, generosity, good humor, decisiveness, and fundraising. As I’ll discuss in more detail soon, without Roy, the field of early California history would not be where it is now, a growing field with exciting new scholarship.

2. The Early California Population Project

This plenary session--and in many ways the early California Population Project--has its origins in historical documents and complex interactions initiated more than two hundred and forty years ago with the establishment of Mission San Diego on July 16, 1769. On that day the Franciscans inaugurated a chain of missions that would eventually stretch from San Diego to just north of San Francisco.

Show Map

More than a year and a half after the establishment of Mission San Diego, in the first months of 1771, the Kumeyaay allowed the missionaries to baptize a handful of their children. The first Indian baptized at San Diego was a three-year old boy who the padres named “Francisco Antonio”; Francisco Antonio was the son of a village leader who himself would be baptized in 1771 and named “Carlos” in honor of Spain’s King, Carlos Tercero.

In keeping with Catholic practice the names of these Kumeyaay and the sacraments they received were recorded by the Franciscans in the mission’s baptism register. The details of these first baptisms at San Diego and those of some five hundred other Kumeyaay are not known to us today in full because the register in which the padres recorded them was destroyed in 1775 when Carlos and his brother led an attack that killed one missionary and burned Mission San Diego to the ground. However, good record keepers that they were, soon after the attack the Franciscans painstakingly reconstructed the baptism register from memory in a new volume that survives to this very day.

By the time missionaries began anew with the baptism register of Mission San Diego, Franciscans had established four more missions in California: San Carlos Borromeo (1770), San Antonio de Padua (1771), San Gabriel Archangel (1771), and San Luis Obispo (1772).

At these missions in these early years, missionaries baptized more than one thousand Indians, believing that they were cultivating in them the rudiments of a Spanish Catholic identity. In the coming decades, the padres would establish sixteen more missions as well as a chapel at the presidio of Santa Barbara and a church in the pueblo of Los Angeles. At all of these sites missionaries dutifully administered and meticulously recorded thousands of sacraments. In so
doing, they built a set of records that would encompass nearly the entirety of the region’s colonial population. While there is no countervailing set of records from Indians describing colonial California, these baptism, marriage, and burial registers constitute an amazingly thorough record of the lives of the Indians, soldiers, settlers, and missionaries of colonial California. And although there has been heated debate during the last two hundred and forty years over the goals, the morality, and the legacy of the mission enterprise and its effects on California Indians, scholars have never doubted the importance of the sacramental registers to an understanding of the people of Alta California.

Collectively, these mission registers contain not only much of the information necessary to reconstruct the lives of tens of thousands of Indians and settlers but also the raw materials for the discovery and writing of larger and more intimate histories of colonial California. Moreover, these records are of added importance given that the overwhelming majority of the documents generated in Spanish and Mexican California were destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906. In many ways these projects are an attempt to bring new sources to bear on a field whose history went up in smoke before it was ever written.

California Mission Sacramental Registers

From the historians’ perspective mission records are incredibly rich. When California missionaries baptized an individual—be it an Indian adult or a newborn Spanish child—they recorded that person’s given Spanish name, godparents, place of origin, age, parents, siblings, and, when applicable, the individual’s children, marital status, as well as any other family relations or facts about that person--such as political or occupational status--that they considered relevant to his or her identity. Furthermore, in California, as an aid to recordkeeping, missionaries assigned each baptism a unique number, beginning with the number one for the first baptism at each mission. Similarly, when they married or buried someone and performed the associated sacraments, missionaries recorded that individual’s Spanish name, age, marital status, place of baptism, family relations, and, when known, their baptism number and mission of baptism. Franciscans also assigned marriage and burial records unique numbers at each mission. Thus, at any given time, the missionaries could determine how many baptisms, marriages, and burials they had performed at each mission. And each year they used their tabulations of sacraments to justify their work here to a skeptical political leadership in central Mexico. The padres also believed that these records gave them a clear way of identifying individual Indians within the growing ranks of neophytes at each mission.

Remarkably—given the political instability of California as it shifted from Spanish to Mexican rule, and then to U.S. statehood—the baptism, marriage, and burial records for California’s missions survive with but a few exceptions.

Show image of Mission Santa Clara
Altogether, the sacramental registers from these sites contain records on more than 100,000 baptisms, 70,000 burials, and 28,000 marriages that the Franciscans administered between 1769 and 1850.

These records are only as useful as they are accessible, and until recently they were pretty inaccessible. Available only on microfilm at selected archives throughout the state, and unindexed and often barely legible, they were used only selectively by a small group of scholars and clergymen.

A prerequisite to the full exploitation of these registers was a workable system that would allow scholars to access the information in the registers easily and systematically. Without this comprehensive and integrated database, it was impossible, many of us reasoned, to see the movements of Indians and settlers from one part of the province to another or to grasp various social processes and patterns of historical change that unfolded across all of the missions, presidios, and pueblos of colonial California.

The creation of this comprehensive database required institutional support, as it was too vast an undertaking for one person or even a group of researchers. It is not like we are doing Big Science, but it does take resources to pull this sort of project together--maybe we should call this sort of project Big Humanities. In 1998, Roy saw the importance of this endeavor. With his backing and the institutional support of the Huntington, the Early California Population Project (ECP) was born. From the outset, it would prove to be a Huntington-led collaborative project, one that would involve numerous scholars, a team of data-entry personnel, grants from a wide range of institutions, and nearly a decade of work, all overseen by Roy. My role was as General Editor. And Andie Reid, seated here with us, was the person who coordinated the work of the data entry team and performed a ton of data entry herself over many years of full time work.

One of the main accomplishments of the project was to take primary records like these and break them up into their component parts so that discrete bits of information could be transcribed into corresponding fields, and that is what you see diagrammed here.

Another main accomplishment of the project was to create record linkages so that researchers could follow the life histories of individuals. The key to the record linkages was our decision to assign to each individual a unique identifier that was a combination of the mission where they were born and their own baptism number. Record linkage is very complicated, especially for Indians in the missions as unlike the soldiers and settlers they had only first names and the padres made it a habit of using many of the same names over and over again. That said we developed an extensive protocol for making these linkages and characterizing the certainly with which we made them.
In its current form

- Of our 70,000 burials, 90% are linked to corresponding baptism records
- Of our 100,000 baptisms, 72% of children are linked to their mother and 65% to their father
- Of our 28,000 marriages 90% of brides and grooms are linked to their own baptism records

Show ppt of db online and queries

There are two forms of queries, simple and complex. In the simple query we search by table, say by baptism, marriages, or burials. In the complex query we can search in any number of ways and create complex documents, like this

List of all baptisms performed by Padre Junipero Serra.

Or this census of Mission San Juan Capistrano

The database went online in 2006 and since then it has become an indispensable resource, reshaping how we understand population change, land use, Indian culture, naming practices, and god parentage in Alta California. Journal articles based on the database have appeared in regional journals such as the *Southern California Quarterly* and *The Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* but also in more high-profile publications such as the *American Indian Quarterly*, *Ethnohistory*, and *The History of the Family*. It has also figures prominently in several recent dissertations and monographs.

The database has also become a go-to resource for California Indian tribes seeking federal recognition and the Office within the Federal Government that handles those applications.

3. **The California Pobladores Project**

The ECPP, like any good database, will always be a work in progress. Since its online debut the ECPP has been updated many times as we have made many refinements of the data in response to the suggestions of users. But on a larger scale we have pursued three augmentations and refinements to the ECPP. Recently--and I mean only in the last few days--we completed a major supplement to the ECPP that we call the **California Pobladores Project**.

Recall that the ECPP includes only records of sacraments that were performed in the California missions. Recall also that it is the baptism record number that we use to link records of individuals. That means that for immigrants to California, of which there were more than a thousand in the first two decades of settlement, the ECPP has no birth records. That is
problematic for us because the immigrants who came to California married here, had kids here, and died here, and for those families--since we don’t have the baptism records of the parents--we have been unable to fully link records. And without record linkages you cannot begin to study in a detailed way the life histories of individuals and communities.

For the past 9 months two UCR graduate students, Seth Archer and Ea Madrigal, have worked with incredible devotion and intensity and creativity on the Pobladores Project. We extracted from the existing database the unlinked records of the immigrants, and the Seth and Ea, using widely accepted genealogical guides created new baptism records for those immigrants and linked together all of their related records.

This new database contains records on over 13,000 soldiers and settlers who lived here before 1850 and is pretty tightly linked.

Powerpoint of link percentages

Those percentages are cause for celebration, but so too are data modifications and conversions that allow us to present this data through a more user-friendly and powerful interface than the simple query function of the ECPP.

In this new format, it looks like this, and users will be able to do quickly create a whole range of views of the data.

Return to our friend Mariano Castro

I know that as academic historians we are often trained to look down our noses at genealogists, but we all know that good history tells the story of individuals, and that without this sort of resource, the history of California has often been simply a retelling of the life histories of the same famous families. This will provide a different look at a large segment of the population that has never really been studied.

Moreover, this complete database is an empirical base from which we can now study anew the re-peopling of this region, the different outcomes of disease among Indians and immigrants, the movements of soldiers and settlers not just to California but within this region, and perhaps most importantly the history of family formation in California and the lives of women in California before 1850.

So, we began with the ECPP, a massive database that was primarily Indians. We have now created a second database of the soldiers and settlers of the region and created a new interface, a new way to search and see the data.

So with that let me thank Roy again for his pioneering efforts on the ECPP and now I am going to turn the podium over to Jeanette, who will discuss and present the Early California Cultural Atlas, an NEH funded project that takes all of this data in new and exciting directions.
In this project, we are demonstrating how adding the spatial component to temporal analysis leads not only to a deepening of humanistic inquiry but to a reformulation of the inquiry itself.

In this new project we are creating a website that we believe will have a wide audience, and perhaps none more important than the hundreds of thousands of K-12 kids and their teachers who are required by the State to study the history of early California and its missions.

For this new project we have received two NEH DHI grants, and we are partnering with the National Center for History in the Schools run by Gary Nash and the Stanford Spatial History Lab initiated by Richard White.