

**IUSB FACULTY RESEARCH GRANT  
CLOSING REPORT**

**PROJECT TITLE:** OCCUPYING AMERICAN SPACE: U.S. TRAVELERS IN PANAMA AND NICARAGUA, 1820–1860

**GRANTEE:** JAKE D. MATTOX  
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**1. Description of grant-supported activity**

During the period covered under this grant, my main focus was assessing, locating, and beginning to analyze the extant primary sources associated with American travel across Panama and Nicaragua in the 1840s and 1850s. These include letters, diaries, manuscripts, and published journals and guidebooks. This intensive research involved searching electronic databases and accessing, as possible via interlibrary loan, the print and microfiche holdings of several university libraries.

My archival research included an examination of the following databases:

- *Library of Congress, American Memory Project: "California as I Saw It:" First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years*
- *Library of Congress, American Memory Project: Westward by Sea: A Maritime Perspective on American Expansion, 1820–1890.*
- *North American Women's Letters and Diaries*
- *19<sup>th</sup> Century Masterfile*
- *American Periodicals Series Online*

**2. Were you able to complete the project? Describe any difficulty you had.**

One challenge of this project is that I have been able to uncover an exceptional wealth of archival materials to cover. This provides an amazing opportunity, but also demands considerable time. Part of this is due to the fact that I have refined my focus so that it includes available periodical writings; this is a necessary step in terms of establishing a thorough and complete contextualization of the discourses about expansionism and the Americas circulating in the antebellum period.

**3. Did, or will, the project result in a specific product – a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc? If so, please describe and indicate state of development.**

The project resulted in a rich compilation of approximately 25 archival materials, most of which have not been previously examined in a scholarly context; I am thus well-positioned to make a contribution to the field with my investigation of this material. During the grant period, I began the process of closely examining these works as I drafted a preliminary analysis that investigates how they represented these alternate American geographies, how descriptions of Panama and local residents were shaped by existing discourses about the newly acquired California, and how U.S. claims of hegemony in the hemisphere were implicitly extended through these travel writings. My objective is to complete a journal article on the basis of this analysis, which I will submit to *American Literary History*, *American Quarterly*, and/or other appropriate top journals in the field.