

The Current Status and Future Trends in International Education and Research at American Universities, and the Impact on Libraries

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I am delighted to present the opening address at this important meeting. Let me say at the outset that I am deeply committed to research libraries and that throughout my professional life I have been dependent on them. I specialize on contemporary politics in Southern Africa and hence, I have an ongoing need for up-to-date political and economic information. When I was the director of a Title VI Center, I worked closely with subject and area specialists. For several years I served on the IU Bloomington Faculty Council Library Advisory Committee, and I co-chaired the search that brought Jim Neal as Dean to Indiana University Libraries. I also serve on the advisory board of the IU Lilly Rare Book Library.

The intellectual changes that occur within the disciplines and patterns of national funding, directly impinge on libraries and collections. With this in mind, let me attempt an overview of patterns of funding for international activities.

The International Context

Since 1958, the National Defense Education Act (now Title VI of the Higher Education Act) has been a vital source of funding for universities with strong international interests. In the context of the Soviet Space Program and increasing East-West global political competition, Congress considered it in the strategic interest of the United States to develop resources and information on other societies and cultures, particularly those about which very little was known. The 1960s and the early 1970s were periods of promise, limited growth and consolidation, but also years of uncertainty. In the 1970s, the Nixon Administration attempted to eliminate Title VI funding but, then, as now, there was a great rallying by supporters of this important program. In the 1970s and 1980s, Title VI moved in new directions when special program initiatives were introduced. In the 1970s there was some resistance to policy directives calling for Title VI Centers to engage in what was then a relatively undefined notion of outreach. Today the purely practical wisdom of this move is evident. Important new constituencies are being served and, on another level, members of Congress see outreach as an important part of Title VI activities. Outreach itself has changed. Initially, area programs emphasized reaching out to K through 12, later this expanded to small colleges and most recently to national and local media have been emphasized. The introduction of Centers for International Business Education (CIBERS) was also resisted but today their centrality is no longer in question.

As I already mentioned, today Title VI funding is once again threatened. In a recent letter, Myles Brand, President of Indiana University reaffirmed the strategic importance of these programs -- an argument that continues to be convincing to Congress. He wrote: "I firmly believe also...that current efforts in the US House of Representatives to end funding for international higher education programs under Title VI are misguided. The slash-and-burn policy proposed by the House in this area will force the closure of more than 150 international centers on college campuses nationwide. Graduates of these programs-- many are IU graduates-- are an important part of the Department of State, our military forces, and sundry concerns relating to our national defense and global competitiveness. Our international programs also teach thousands of IU students the intricacies of foreign cultures and provide an understanding of our neighbors worldwide. We must all share the pain of balancing the budget, but gutting our

international programs is not the answer."

It is interesting that many of us who have lobbied for Title VI funding found that the new generation of Congressional representatives were frequently surprised to learn about the strategic importance of these programs. They also seemed unaware of the fact that funding would not be picked up by the private sector, the states, or by the universities themselves. I very much hope that Title VI funding will continue. In terms of libraries, Title VI funding has been important for collection development and staff salaries. Currently, according to recent statistics from the Center for International Education of the Department of Education, about an average 9% of Center budgets are devoted to Library acquisitions and Teaching materials: Africa 7.3%, East Asia 7.5%, Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia 6.6%, Latin America 8.0%, Middle East 9.9%, South Asia 11%, Southeast Asia 9.4%, western Europe 1.7%. Many acquisitions for the latter world area are made from existing library budgets hence the low percentage.

Title VI has not been the only source of funding for international activities. The National Endowment for the Humanities has funded individual scholars and projects, and the United States Information Agency (USIA) has sponsored the Universities' Affiliation Program which has been an excellent bridge fostering ties between universities in the US with counterparts abroad. Bilateral agreements with universities abroad are important particularly since we need to be more sensitive to the needs of developing institutions abroad. Many have faculty who are grossly underpaid and libraries and facilities that are often rudimentary or at best inadequate.

An Africanist Perspective

I would like to use my experiences as co-editor of a book that has been used by more than 70 universities and colleges over the past 20 years to highlight the changing context in which area librarians work. Phyllis Martin and I recently completed the third edition of our edited volume **Africa** which first appeared in 1976. The shifts in the contributions sharply emphasize changes in perspective and scholarship and, in turn, the need for vigilance in terms of collections and in advising students and scholars. The first edition made limited references to the military, AIDS, gender issues, popular culture, structural adjustment or the environment -- to name only a few areas.

The 1960s were a period of fundamental change with the end of colonialism and the transition to independence for one African nation after another. This was a time of optimism without realistic references to limits, and research and teaching reflected this trend. Military coups, economic decline, and continuing social problems and disease were not major issues. By the 1980s a new "realism" was evident in the study and teaching of Africa. There was now greater emphasis on the roots of rural poverty, hunger, class differentiation, and on the weakness of political institutions. There was a movement away from macro studies to a concern with issues such as rural development, gender, AIDS, etc. In the humanities there has been less emphasis on broad continent-wide categorization and more attention devoted to context, popular culture, etc.

One of the basic assumptions of all area studies programs has been sound interdisciplinary training backed up with language competence. Doctoral programs continue to be solidly grounded in the disciplines based on the assumption that graduate students need to fully use the tools of their disciplines if they are to have legitimacy in their fields. On a practical level, this has proved to be a sound approach enabling those who have completed their doctorates to become fully fledged members of their departments. On a pedagogical level, the demands and rigors of language study, interdisciplinary course work and field work seem to be increasingly antithetical to the narrower contemporary goals in many disciplines. Area librarians have played

a vital and formative role in advising and assisting generations of graduate and undergraduate students and their importance is even greater because of the pressures that are now placed on students.

Fundamental changes that have occurred in so many societies have also had an impact on librarianship. In the 1960s scholars had considerably fewer resources on which to base their research. Over the years there has been a growing body of data through original field research for dissertations, official reports by governments, international agencies, and other sources. Countries that were previously off-bounds to US scholars have undergone fundamental transformations and, as a consequence, have become more accessible. All of these changes have placed new and differing demands on area specialists. At the same time, difficulties in obtaining affiliation and clearance, health problems, and political and economic instability continue to make field work challenging, if not impossible, in some parts of the world. And there are special needs that librarians must meet for students and researchers who work in these areas.

Archives that were closed are now available, and societies that discouraged or excluded research are now no longer so. All of these changes have directly affected how librarians acquire materials and how they advise students, faculty, and other users.

Future Area Study Trends

Recent policy shifts by the Mellon Foundation and the Social Science Research Council point towards a future that holds promise, but which may also be problematical. The Mellon Foundation has also recently tried to set an important new agenda: "...this change in the Foundation's programs will not, we hope, be misunderstood. We remain convinced that serious scholarly training is inevitably grounded in the disciplines and inevitably situated geographically and temporally. Students must continue to acquire mastery of the languages, history and cultures of a particular country or region as a necessary starting point for scholarly careers. We also believe that the best of the area studies centers will continue to find support from other sources in the future."

This new direction is laudable, but leaves several key questions unaddressed. While the move to interarea/interdisciplinary studies is important, it is not clear that the vital base of area programs will continue to find support directly from the universities or from other sources. While university administrators might be well-aware of the importance of the centers, they might be unwilling to allocate scarce resources to them. The danger is that the valuable resource base provided by area programs will be undermined in the process.

Paralleling these changes, foundations and donor agencies have increasingly moved their support to institution building in the countries themselves. The wisdom of doing so is indisputable. However, there has of necessity been a cost to area programs in the US. I am particularly delighted that the Ford Foundation is once again opening up opportunities for African Studies and Russian Studies in the US -- thus recognizing that this too is an important domain. The significance of the preparation of scholars and the building of resource bases in the US needs to be understood as important in and of itself.

Libraries and Area Librarians—Future Issues and Goals

Area Librarians have been key partners in these years of change. Many of the generation of Africanists trained in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s have retired. Jobs exist in most disciplines, but graduates have also followed alternative careers in the public sector, in museums, or working for businesses and corporations. Only a few are seeking careers in area librarianship.

The domain of area programs has not been static, nor have the demands placed on area librarians. It is crucial that this partnership with faculty and students be sustained.

The place of area librarianship in libraries that are in the process of being transformed by technology must be reassessed. In what ways will area librarians advise advanced students, meet faculty needs, make decisions about acquisitions, and originate cataloguing? These questions cannot simply be addressed by technology.

What should be the qualifications of the area librarian in this changing context?

Where are areas programs moving and how should area librarians respond to these changes?

How should area librarians respond to the increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary and interarea programs?

Consortia and cooperative approaches have become important in the 1990s. How can these be fully utilized?

A recent report from the Center for International Education of the US Department of Education maintains that continuous library development must be a high priority to maintain center strength, and that the rising costs of acquisitions demand more interuniversity coordination. What funding strategies could be used effectively to encourage both rationalization and continued strengthening of library resources?

I hope that this conference will be able to address these and other issues.

Discussion

Much of the discussion focused on center-periphery issues. A number of participants questioned O'Meara's presentation of area studies as being synonymous with Title VI centers. Area studies are more diverse than that at Title VI centers. Area studies exist at colleges as well as research universities. At an increasing number of institutions, inter-area and global studies are being emphasized. More information is needed on area studies at institutions whose libraries do not belong to ARL. There is a widespread perception that area studies in libraries are peripheral to other library activities, and that area studies programs are peripheral to other academic programs at universities.

The need for more area studies outreach to business and professional schools and to smaller institutions whose libraries do not belong to ARL was discussed. The importance of undergraduate and high school language training for the future of area studies was mentioned, as well as the impact of the adoption of responsibility-centered management in an increasing number of higher education institutions.