

Foreword

The Future of Area Librarianship Project at Indiana University was initiated following the 1993 annual meeting of Title VI area studies center directors in Washington, D.C. Two major themes of that meeting were libraries and cooperation. Area studies librarians were invited to attend and join in discussions of library issues with area studies center directors. One of the major issues of concern was the future of area librarianship in relation to the impending retirement of many area librarians, the appropriate training of new area librarians who seem to be following different career paths from the first generation of area librarians, and the marginalization of area librarianship in libraries and library schools in the current environment of increased emphasis on common denominator electronic tools and decreased funding for area studies and other specialized fields. The expertise of area librarians was seen as essential for continuing to build and service strong foreign area research collections in the United States.

Nancy Schmidt, then Chair of the Africana Librarians Council and Librarian for African Studies at Indiana University, and Patrick O'Meara, then Director of Indiana University's African Studies Program, attended the 1993 Title VI area studies directors meeting, were pleased that national attention was being given to issues of concern at Indiana University, and interested in developing cooperative projects that might address some of these issues. The Africana Librarians Council and Indiana University African Studies Program both have a history of successful involvement in cooperative projects that encouraged us to develop cooperative projects which would contribute to the solution of some problems related to the future of area librarianship.

In cooperation with James Neal, then Dean of Indiana University Libraries, Patrick O'Meara convened several meetings of area studies, library, and library school personnel who developed two cooperative projects, one to put in place dual degree programs in area studies and library and information science at Indiana University, and the other to address nationally the recruitment and training of area librarians. The dual degree programs now exist at Indiana University. In the introduction to the conference James Neal outlines the other cooperative project of which the 1995 conference in Indianapolis was one part.

It has been a challenge to prepare the conference proceedings to provide a balance between the creative chaos of enthusiastic discussions and the practical concerns and plans that emerged from them. Transcribing the tapes of the discussions and publishing them would provide every detail of the conference and document every participant's contribution, but this would risk losing the larger picture in numerous and sometimes redundant details. Instead, summaries of the discussions have been prepared from the flip chart notes made by discussion group leaders and compiled after the conference by Hilary Jolly, from my notes on the discussions, and from listening to some of the tapes. The discussions have been summarized in relation to the questions and topics assigned to discussion groups. From the summaries it is clear that conference participants brought their own concerns to the conference, because in some instances they chose not to discuss the assigned topics, but ones they considered more important.

When we started the Future of Area Librarianship Project we hoped that Indiana University could help stimulate national attention to the issues surrounding the future of area librarianship. There are many suggestions in the "Action Plans" and "Next Steps" sections of the proceedings that library and area studies organizations and individuals can respond to. Hopefully the publication and distribution of the conference proceedings will lead to the coming together of interested individuals and groups who will publicize the issues at stake and move the agenda forward.

Nancy J. Schmidt
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