

International Information Exchange: New Configurations for Library Collaboration in South Asian Studies

by

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I. Introduction

Over the past fifteen years U.S. research libraries have altered the ways they provide their patrons with research materials on South Asia, especially those in the regional languages of the subcontinent. Attempts to coordinate South Asia collection development at the national level have gradually given way to regional and local collaborative activities for preservation and enhanced access. Recently, the most successful of such collaborations have moved away from geographically-determined partnerships and have brought together select groupings of participating institutions based on commonalities of particular research and teaching interests. These new collaborative groups have focused their energies on special projects that have garnered more than five million dollars in support from foundations, from Federal government agencies, and from direct contributions of the institutions themselves. Increasingly these projects have begun to recruit international participation, particularly from institutions in the subcontinent itself.

This paper addresses: first, the principles underpinning those projects and their international character; second, the characteristics of programs that have been most successful; and third, future directions for further international collaborations supporting scholarship on South Asia. Special attention is given to the balance between newer and older technologies; the development of models that depart from the traditional "colonial plunder" approach to collection development by providing equal benefits both inside and outside the subcontinent; features of these models that are likely to provide long-term self-sustainability for the projects; and the potentials for leaping over intermediate technologies as digital systems are developed in the region and supported by the projects themselves.

II. Principles

Several principles are foundations for the preservation and access projects described below. The principles have developed over time based on experience – sometimes-painful experience. They have most often been the result of inductive reasoning. We argue that the world of deductive reasoning exhibited by Dr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide* is ill suited to preservation and access.

1. Selection of Projects

How do we select projects to pursue?

a. Inherent merit, broadest benefit

Projects with demonstrably great value for scholars, that produce easily accessible resources are the most beneficial to undertake. Within area studies, we have found that many of the projects meeting these basic criteria of merit and benefit involve *international* collaborations and

that those collaborations are sustained because of the synergies created among participants based upon a shared sense of the value derived.

b. Serendipity

The role of serendipity in the evolution of our projects has been striking. While it is easy to imagine valuable projects, those that happen to present themselves (through a clustering of contacts, suggestions from scholars, and communications from unlikely sources) are often not the ones most worth pursuing. The challenge is to remain open to the unexpected while viewing the serendipitous encounters with hardheaded realism.

c. Source of Energy: bottom-up

Anyone can tell you more than you want to hear about how much effort it takes to make collaborative projects succeed. What characterizes successful projects? How do they generate the requisite energy? One renewable energy source is the motivation of the librarians who interact on a daily basis with library patrons. These are the librarians responsible for collection development, faculty liaison, bibliographic instruction, and reference and research consultation. This is particularly true among area studies librarians who are known to harbor strong personal commitment to their field well beyond what is strictly called for in their job descriptions. A South Asia librarian, for example, will be very highly motivated to preserve materials that his faculty and students require and to seek new, more efficient ways of providing access to unique South Asia research resources. If he relies strictly on local resources, however, he may not be able to meet readers' expectations. Initiatives to provide for those needs are not likely to come from library administrators themselves. The energies of area librarians can be fully engaged by library projects initiated by colleagues, responding to immediate and urgent needs of patrons. In our experience, library projects initiated by these area studies librarians are more likely to be successful because they are geared towards tangible solutions to strong local needs. With such initiatives arising from the bottom up, library administrators can then respond with appropriate support to ensure institutional participation.

d. Which specific materials and projects should we work on?

Several presuppositions are at play here: 1) physical access implies preservation; 2) intellectual access implies bibliographic access; 3) broad distribution of benefits implies digital products. Taken together, these presuppositions suggest that successful projects must preserve important materials, provide appropriate bibliographic access for them, and selectively disseminate them over the Internet. Which materials are "important?" In practice, this is determined by the combination of serendipity (which opens the door to newly available materials and collections) and the strength of known information needs. Selection of materials for a project should be carried out by teams of library subject specialists working with committees of scholars. Which type of bibliographic access is "appropriate?" Again, this must be determined by subject librarians in consultation with scholars. For example, bibliographic access for journals implies article-level indexing. So the project must weigh the importance of journals for the particular subject/region/language selected. At the same time it is important to assess the quality of existing journal indexes for those journals. Likewise, selection of materials for full-text digital access will depend heavily on a detailed understanding of current usage patterns as well as feedback from scholars on how they *would* use such digital materials if they were made available.

e. The forest or the trees?

Both. That is, projects must be selected which are narrow enough to be feasible in the near term, but broad enough to suggest the outlines of some larger agenda of obvious merit. This means that although the individual projects are initiated on the basis of their own value across participating institutions, a clustering of such projects over time will lead to a broader benefit which is greater than the sum of its parts. Keeping such a broader vision in mind while selecting and prioritizing individual projects makes it more likely that follow-on support and participation from a variety of institutions will be possible. As more and more of the big picture is filled in, more institutions will detect the value of the larger program and will contribute their resources

and energies. As a result of this broader participation, it is easier to demonstrate the contributive value of each separate piece. But it is the inherent merit of the larger vision of information access and preservation that enables each distinct project to engage its participants productively.

2. Selection of Partners

Area studies preservation and access projects are most likely to have broad benefit if they are both collaborative and international in scope. Selecting the particular partners with whom to work is a very important issue. In our experience, small *self-selected* groupings that are forged from common concern for the particular matter of the project are most likely to succeed, regardless of the geographic or structural distribution of the institutions involved. This is another instance of the bottom-up principle. Area librarians who are highly motivated to meet the needs of local readers will elect to participate in small groupings of specialist librarians with similar objectives. Two or three libraries with strong area studies programs in a given world area and able to invest some of the requisite human and material resources may initiate a project. Additional partners may be added later in subsequent phases. We also believe that projects are uniquely successful if they involve collaborative engagement by South Asian and foreign participants where librarians in each country take active responsibility and where there is mutual benefit to all the participants. A project that can incorporate foreign partners will have the better chance of achieving significant benefits. Specifically in South Asia, we have observed that non-governmental organizations are preferable as partners because they are more flexible and less subject to bureaucratic restrictions. They are also more likely to be engaged out of appreciation for the academic significance of the project itself. A side benefit of projects with international partnerships is that there are opportunities to test the practical limits of different techniques and technologies in a wider variety of settings.

3. Selection of Methodologies

Preservation and access projects involve a range of methodologies and approaches. We are often faced with choices among alternative approaches. How do we decide? First, in international collaborations it is important that planning and decision making involve all the participants. In order for our colleagues abroad to participate effectively in such planning, it is sometimes necessary for the project itself to provide training for librarians. For example, in India there are only a handful of schools that teach MARC or aspects of electronic bibliographic control. Yet such training is a prerequisite for effective and equitable partnership in a collaborative project.

a. Preservation

While funding agencies often favor experimental projects for access, it is still vitally important to distinguish preservation goals from access goals. Access over time implies prior preservation activity. But the preservation must be carried out through methodologies that are optimized for the long-term stability of the content. While many consider microfilm user-unfriendly and certainly old-fashioned, it is the most stable preservation medium for texts and also a bridge medium to the digital future if the microfilm is of high quality. What can be experimental about microfilming projects, however, is the international collaborative approach. For example, one traditional paradigm for foreign research material is what we call the “colonial plunder” approach. Western libraries swoop in with cash, buy local treasures, and sequester them in their rare book libraries or preserve them for themselves. In contrast, one new approach is to work with scholars, agencies, and libraries in the countries that are the original home of these publications. Institutions may be established in country to hold the resources locally while preserving them *in situ* and providing local and international bibliographic and full-text access. If a collection has been purchased and processed with support from U.S. institutions, the ownership might eventually be ceded to the in-country partner. Local ownership is the preferable long-term solution rather than indefinite stewardship, which might appear to some as implying colonial dependency. This methodology, if carefully controlled to ensure continuing engagement of all participants, enables readers in country to receive as many benefits (and contribute as much energy) as the international community of scholars. Another methodological consideration in the area of preservation is the need to enforce established international standards for reprography.

(We are all aware of projects that responded to the need for transient access with “quick and dirty” microfilming, with the result that the materials are essentially lost to long-term use.)

b. Bibliographic access

Books must be cataloged to international standards if project benefits are to be enjoyed broadly. While it is more expensive to implement consistently high standards, insisting on established international cataloging practices permits integration of the resulting records into OCLC, RLIN, and other international bibliographic databases. But of course, achieving this objective requires time. We have found that as an interim measure, partial or provisional records created by a number of local libraries and individual collections (or converted from handlists or card catalogs as a first step of a larger project) can be combined into regional union catalogs. These catalogs have the value of letting users know that an item exists and is physically available in a particular collection. Still, we have remained committed to the goal of access to the intellectual content via full bibliographic records. Bibliographic access for journals means that articles must be indexed. Again, labor-intensive efforts such as article indexing will only be valuable if the results can cluster with other seams of bibliographic data. To avoid permanently isolating information from its users, international bibliographic standards must be employed.

c. Full-text and document delivery

The project should be constructed to permit the broadest possible access to full texts. Of course, bibliographic information *is* inherently valuable in its own right. Scholars planning to do field work in India, for example, are very grateful for information on holdings in libraries within that country. It allows them to maximize the effectiveness of their limited time abroad. Still, this represents only a small portion of the *potential* value of those collections. So the bibliographic access alone is incomplete. Selective provision of full-text online and document delivery is a logical extension of such projects. Does this mean that cataloging and indexing a collection presupposes the intention to digitize the whole collection? No, but it does require that we evolve a methodology for identifying the materials that are likely to generate the widest use, as well as an infrastructure for providing such full text access or document delivery in response to unanticipated demand. Access to preserved materials should be provided without charge, if possible, or on the basis of cost recovery, if necessary. This follows the well-established practice of public library support by the Carnegie Foundation.

III. Context of Library Networks and Institutions in North America

The projects described later in this paper are possible only because they build upon the existing infrastructures of international bibliographic utilities such as OCLC and RLIN and organizational contexts such as CRL. For South Asia, in particular, the international collaborative projects described here have depended crucially upon the prior existence of several organizational entities, including:

- 1) **Library of Congress Field Offices** <<http://lcweb.loc.gov/acq/ovop/delhi/>>. The United States Library of Congress maintains offices in New Delhi and Islamabad with additional acquisition agents in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, Mongolia, China, and Iran. Among other things, LC's South Asia Cooperative Acquisitions Programs serve the function of a book vendor for approximately 30 research libraries with South Asia collections. Participating institutions complete a profile describing specific areas of interest. The Library of Congress staff based in the subcontinent then select appropriate books within those categories, purchase them, catalog the titles, and deliver them to the participants. Participation is open to both U.S. and foreign libraries. Prices for individual titles are considerably lower than from commercial dealers, reflecting the economy of scale in purchasing. Full cataloging records are provided for all titles acquired, saving technical processing expenses at participating institutions.
- 2) **South Asia Microform Project (SAMP)** <<http://www.crl.uchicago.edu/info/samp.htm>>. SAMP is a membership organization based at the Center for Research Libraries. It is dedicated to the acquisition of less-frequently-used South Asian resources in microform and delivery of those resources via inter-library loan. Twenty-four North American institutions pay membership fees

of \$550 per year. Membership is open to libraries worldwide. The major benefit for participants is rapid access to approximately 20,000 publications. SAMP has a solid record of raising foundation and government support to supplement membership fees for use in its projects.

- 3) **Committee on South Asia Libraries and Documentation (CONSALD)** <<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/area-studies/SouthAsia/Lib/consald.html>>. Under this organization, all U.S. and Canadian libraries with major South Asia collections convene each year in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies. CONSALD discusses changes to the Library of Congress Field Office programs, as needed, and hears reports on activities in the member libraries. It also provides some continuing professional development via workshops.
- 4) **U.S. regional library consortia** for South Asia. South Asia Consortium East <<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/area-studies/SouthAsia/Lib/saceast.html>>, the Committee on Institutional Cooperation's South Asia Library Project <<http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/cic/soasia/>>, and South Asia Consortium West <<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/subject/area/sacwest/index.html>> are sub-groups of CONSALD with members focused on rationalizing acquisitions programs to maintain library strengths on South Asia in the eastern, central, and western regions, respectively.

IV. Vignettes

Short vignettes follow for a few major South Asia projects. They are ordered in a rough chronological fashion, progressing from the earliest to the most recent. They are clustered according to broad headings as follows:

Traditional bibliography,
 Preservation microfilming and archival reproduction,
 Collections purchased and maintained in South Asia,
 Digital projects, and
 Composite initiatives.

Traditional Bibliography

Official Publications of India <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/southasia/off-pubs.html>>

Improved access to the official publications of India is the major objective of a program by the University of Chicago Library and the British Library. The initiative includes:

- Production of a Web site with a searchable catalog and selected documents;
- Assembly of a bibliographic database including all pre-Independence official publications of India together with a description of worldwide holdings, beginning with the nearly 22,000 titles held by the British Library;
- Cataloging the titles and distributing the bibliographic records to the international bibliographic utilities OCLC and RLIN;
- Deposit of the British Library's duplicate official publications of India (roughly 20,000 volumes) at the University of Chicago;
- Creation of an international union list reflecting holdings of official publications of India; and
- Preparation of selected titles as full electronic texts under the Digital South Asia Library project.

Selected publications related to official publications of India have also been made available as full texts on the Web site. These include the following:

- Introductory matter in Frank Campbell's path-breaking *Index-catalogue of Indian official publications in the Library, British Museum*, providing an overview of those materials in what was the British Museum and now is the British Library collection.
- A guide to the *Official Publications* published by the British Library Reference Division, 1984.
- The text of "V class lists" at the India Office Records prepared by John Sims in the 1980s.

- An article by John Sims on "The Official Publications Collection in IOLR" from the *Newsletter of the India Office Library and Records*.

Preservation Microfilming and Archival Reproduction

Microfilming of Indian Publications Project <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/southasia/mippweb.html>>

Microfilming of Indian Publications Project (MIPP) is a joint project of the Library of Congress and the National Library of India. Its objective is to preserve and make accessible all 55,992 books listed in *The National Bibliography of Indian Literature: 1901-1953 (NBIL)* together with the pre-1954 titles in the *NBIL* supplement. These are books in the twenty-two major languages of South Asia selected by a group of Indian scholars for their central importance to humanistic understanding of India.

MIPP began in 1990 under a bi-national agreement between the U.S. and Indian governments. A multi-national Steering Committee with representatives from the U.S., India, and U.K. provides governance for the project.

The South Asia Microform Project (SAMP) at the Center for Research Libraries holds microfilm from the MIPP project for use in the U.S. Film copies are also available at the Library of Congress. More than sixty Indian libraries are now participating in the program by lending books for preservation under MIPP. In exchange for their participation, these libraries receive a microfilm copy of each book they loan for preservation and a copy of the project's database.

As of March 1999, more than 16,800 titles had been microfilmed. Virtually all of these books are fully cataloged and may be found in the Center for Research Libraries' on-line catalog as well as on the international bibliographic utilities OCLC and RLIN. Funding for the project from several sources currently totals \$790,000. Additional proposals are under consideration that would yield \$1,100,000 for the project over the next five years.

Chief among the project's benefits are that:

- Some of the most important books published during the first half of this century are being preserved, with determination of what is most important having been made by Indian scholars;
- Microfilm is being produced in India to international preservation standards;
- Indian project staff are being trained by Library of Congress reprographics experts and will be available for engagement in the public sector in India following the conclusion of the project;
- High quality cataloging records are being produced in India and distributed to the world via the two major bibliographic utilities, OCLC and RLIN;
- Expenses for microfilming and cataloging in India are approximately one-fifth of what they would be in the U.S.; and
- The project has elevated public awareness of preservation needs within India through coverage in the popular press. It has also demonstrated the value of large-scale international cooperation in the area of cultural preservation.

South Asia Reference Tools Program <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/southasia/sart.html>>

Many of the reference tools required for scholarship on South Asia are brittle and relatively rare. The South Asia Reference Tools Program seeks to improve that situation by making available high quality photoreproductions of selected reference tools on acid-free paper at reasonable prices. This program functions under the South Asia Library Project of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation.

The program began in 1996 with reproduction of nineteen early catalogs of South Asian materials in the British Museum. Simultaneously the contents of those catalogs was converted to a searchable electronic catalog and mounted as a resource on the World Wide Web. Based on the success of that first effort, we will be taking up another set of volumes for reproduction late in 1999. The next titles will include the nineteenth-century catalogs of the India Office Library.

Collections Cooperatively Purchased by U.S. Libraries and Maintained in South Asia

Roja Muthiah Research Library <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/southasia/rmrl.html>>

The Roja Muthiah Research Library (RMRL) was founded in 1994 as a joint project of the University of Chicago and MOZHI, an Indian public trust dedicated to developing resources in languages and culture. RMRL exists to provide research materials and facilities for students of Tamil studies in a variety of fields spanning the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. The Library's main objectives are to preserve, catalog, and expand the collection of Roja Muthiah, who during his lifetime amassed one of the world's finest private libraries of Tamil publications.

The Library's notable strengths are its holdings in classical and modern literature, literary criticism, medicine, cinema and the related culture of printed works (such as cinema song books), folklore, material by and about women, religion and philosophy, and numerous publications of historical value. The collection consists of more than 100,000 volumes of books, journals, and newspapers. In addition there are rich holdings of oleolithographs from Ravi Varma's workshop, nearly 30,000 journal abstracts and indexes, an enormous collection of clippings, drama notices, wedding invitations, business and family correspondence, and palm leaf manuscripts. Most of the publications date from the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

The University of Chicago purchased the collection with the clear intention that the materials would not be removed from India, but rather would be cataloged and microfilmed in Madras. Following the completion of cataloging and preservation, the collection will be ceded by the University to MOZHI, our sister institution in the program, along with copies of all the microfilm created. The University is raising funds necessary for purchase of the collection, processing, development of a full reprographics facility in Madras, and all other expenses during the first six to seven years of the project. Slightly more than \$1,000,000 has been raised for the project to date from the Committee on Southern Asian Studies at the University of Chicago, the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine in London, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Ford Foundation. Subjects already under preservation treatment include:

- Classical and medieval literature, linguistics;

- History of medicine, including siddha, yoga, ayurveda, nadisastra, visatantra, and related topics such as jyotisastra, erotic literature / sexuality, botany, and animals;

- Biographies, Indian history, colonial materials, caste and caste histories; and

- Folklore, drama, cinema, musicology and music, and art

As of May 1999, more than 12,000 volumes had been filmed to exacting international standards for preservation microfilm. The reprographics facility at RMRL is already considered one of the three best in India even though it has been in existence for less than five years.

Urdu Research Library Consortium <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/southasia/URLC.html>>

A consortium of U.S. research libraries with collecting interests in the Urdu language have launched a program, based at the University of Chicago, to acquire and preserve the collection of Mr. Mohd. Abdus Samad Khan. His private library was purchased by the consortium, which was formed in April 1996 under the name Urdu Research Library Consortium (URLC). In its general contours the program of URLC resembles that at the Roja Muthiah Research Library.

Initial expenses were paid with funds from the sale of shares to member institutions. The following six libraries or consortia have joined the Consortium to date: CIC South Asia Library Project (including the universities of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin as paying members); Columbia University; Harvard University; SACWest (including the universities of California - Berkeley, Texas - Austin, and Washington as paying members); University of Chicago; University of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Samad Khan's library is widely considered one of the world's finest for early Urdu periodicals and printed books. As a collector of great acumen, Mr. Samad Khan built the library with care and erudition over most of his adult life. Holdings are well rounded across all areas of Urdu publishing.

Approximately 2,600 periodical titles (many in complete runs) and at least 26,500 monographs comprise the collection. Most imprints date from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and are unavailable at any U.S. library. Physical condition of the collection is very good, especially considering the age of the publications. While comparisons of collections are often invidious, we are convinced that this is one of the best collections of Urdu in South Asia.

Serials are one of the special strengths of the URLC collection. Periodicals in the collection from the last century and the early part of this century are undoubtedly the best that any scholar with whom we have spoken has seen anywhere in the world. There are more than 60,000 issues of journals along with newspapers, such as extensive runs of the rare *Avadh Akhbar*, published by Naval Kishore Press in Lucknow, and *Sahifah*, the first newspaper published from Hyderabad in Urdu and Persian. Many little literary magazines are also available. The journals, many uniquely found at the URLC collection, cover virtually all areas of Urdu writing in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences.

Monographs in the collection also cover an enormous array of topics. While relatively small at 26,500 titles, the monograph collection is extremely important. As examples:

- 1) *History* -- more than 2,000 titles on such topics as the Qutb Shahi dynasty and the rule of the Nizams, including government gazettes, court records, and histories of official service; Muslims in India; and the partition of India;
- 2) *Language and literature* -- approximately 12,000 titles on the development of the Urdu language; *tazkiras* (prose works on Urdu poets); studies in Urdu of traditional grammar and phonetics; and more than 2,500 volumes of Urdu poetry;
- 3) *Religious texts and studies* -- more than 4,000 titles on all aspects of Islam, as well as Urdu publications on Hinduism, Christianity, and Jainism;
- 4) *Biography and autobiography* -- approximately 2,000 titles on major and minor figures from South Asia and elsewhere in the world.

Digital Projects

CIC's South Asia Libraries Digital Dictionaries Program

The South Asia Libraries Project of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) has purchased the electronic files corresponding to three modern Hindi and Tamil dictionaries and will mount them as on-line databases for Web access from CIC domains. Additionally, access to the dictionaries will be sold to non-CIC institutions under royalty agreements with copyright holders for the dictionaries. The paper equivalents of the three proposed dictionaries -- widely adopted for courses in Hindi and Tamil -- are:

The Oxford Hindi-English dictionary / edited by R. S. McGregor. Oxford [England] : Oxford University Press, 1993. xx, 1083 p. ; 25 cm.

Kriyavin tarkalat Tamil akarati : Tamil-Tamil-Ankilam / [chief editor, P. R. Subramanian]. Madras : Kriya, 1992. xxxvi, 979 p. : ill. ; 23 cm. [A dictionary of contemporary Tamil, Tamil-Tamil-English.]

Tarkalat Tamil maraputtotar akarati : Tamil-Tamil-Ankilam. Chennai : Moli, 1997. xlii, 404 p. ; 23 cm. [A dictionary of idioms and phrases in contemporary Tamil; Tamil-Tamil-English.]

These purchases are being covered by contributions of \$2,000 each from CIC institutions with active South Asia programs (Chicago, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin-Madison) and \$500 from other CIC members (Indiana, Michigan State, Northwestern, Ohio State, Pennsylvania State, and Purdue.) Scholars at CIC institutions supporting South Asia studies will benefit most from these resources. However, all CIC members have students and faculty for whom the dictionaries will be valued resources.

Most of the groundwork for mounting the electronic files is already completed. Since investigations for this project began in 1995, test versions of all three dictionary files have been successfully converted to databases and preliminary versions of search engines are running at the University of Chicago. Search

results are displayed in both roman transliteration and in the appropriate script over the Web. The University of Chicago Library will host the site. The Hindi and Tamil dictionaries will be available to CIC readers as Web databases before the end of 1999.

In a parallel collaborative CIC initiative, Chicago, Michigan, and Wisconsin-Madison received funding from the Department of Education under Title VI for conversion of an Urdu dictionary, John T. Platts' *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*. First published in 1884 by Oxford University Press, the dictionary is still considered exemplary and is widely used by Urdu scholars. That dictionary is being keyed by an offshore contractor and will be available on the Web winter 1999 as a worldwide resource, without charge.

Digital Dictionaries of South Asia <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/southasia/605.html>>

The University of Chicago, Columbia University, and the Triangle South Asia Consortium in North Carolina received a three-year grant of \$444,000 in 1999 to expand upon the experience of the CIC Digital Dictionaries program to create and disseminate a much broader set of electronic dictionaries. A panel of language experts will identify key, established dictionaries which currently exist in print for each of the twenty-six modern literary languages of South Asia. At least one multilingual dictionary will be selected for each South Asian language; in the case of the more frequently taught languages, an additional monolingual dictionary will also be chosen. After the best extant resources have been identified, a team of project staff will then convert the dictionaries to digital formats. The results of this conversion will be available to readers through a searchable site on the World Wide Web, by means of standard file transfer protocol, or by compact disc. There will be no charge for access via the Internet and the compact discs will be available for the cost of duplication and mailing. This project will make a major contribution to the larger international lexical infrastructure while providing high quality resources for use by scholars and lay readers throughout the world. To complement the Digital Dictionaries of South Asia project, Columbia University Libraries has received a grant from the Hinduja Foundation, as a project of Columbia's Dharam Hinduja Indic Research Center, to convert a well-known dictionary of Sanskrit into an online database, for integration with the lexical database described above. The Columbia project will also produce online pedagogical tools for teaching scholars how to utilize South Asian manuscripts in their research. All of the lexical data will be provided with Unicode encoding.

Indic Manuscripts Access Project <<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/dhirc/wgOnlineproj.html>>

Under a large-scale grant from the Hinduja Foundation, Columbia University Libraries is now microfilming its large collection of Indic language manuscripts. These manuscripts, covering a wide range of topics especially important to the history of science and mathematics, will then be scanned from the film for production of high-resolution digital images, which are to be published on the web for global scholarly access. The full bibliographic descriptions of these items are being created as part of the project, and combine MARC-format records in RLIN and OCLC with the web version of the detailed scholarly descriptions of these works by Prof. David Pingree of the History of Mathematics Department at Brown University. An international body of Indological scholars and librarians advises the project.

Digital South Asia Library <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/southasia/dsal.html>>

The University of Chicago Library and Columbia University Libraries initiated a two-year pilot project on South Asia in 1998. The main objective of this project is to improve access to and delivery of international research resources. The improved access is the result of developing the infrastructure for inter-continental electronic document delivery to and from selected South Asia libraries and creating new electronic reference resources. These are comprised primarily of data entered by project participants in South Asia. In addition to the lead institutions, the Roja Muthiah Research Library and the Sundarayya Vignana Kendram are playing key roles in India. The pilot project is a part of a larger initiative titled the Global Resources Program. The Association of American Universities (AAU) and Association of Research Libraries (ARL) developed the program with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

New project resources created under the pilot project include:

- Periodical indexes to select historical journals in Tamil and Urdu along with contribution of index entries for articles in English and other European languages to the *Bibliography of Asian Studies*.

- Union lists:

Library of Congress South Asia Serials <<http://efts.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/sa/search/search-main.html>> with holdings of U.S. participant libraries.

Irene Joshi's *A union list of South Asian newspapers and gazettes in reporting libraries and archives* will be available in 1999.

Tamil journals in Madras, including the Roja Muthiah Research Library, Maraimalai Adigal Library, and the Tamil Nadu State Archives.

Urdu journals in Hyderabad. The URLC collection, described above, and soon to include the Idara-e-Adabiyat Panjavurta e-Urdu.

- Full electronic texts of select official publications of India.

The Center for Research Libraries (CRL) received a grant of \$540,000 in 1999 from the U.S. Department of Education for a three-year second phase of the Digital South Asia Library (DSAL) <<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/southasia/606.html>>. Through this project scholars, public policy officials, business leaders, and other citizens will benefit from an improved electronic information infrastructure and expeditious electronic delivery of digital research materials directly to their computers from the South Asian subcontinent and England. The DSAL project in its second phase will produce:

- 1) On-line information about contemporary and historical South Asia – including full-text documents, statistical data, electronic images of historical photographs, cartographic representations, and pedagogical resources for language instruction;
- 2) Delivery on demand of page images from South Asia, scanned from both paper and microform sources;
- 3) Internet-based indexes to highly select journals in the regional languages of South Asia;
- 4) Use of Unicode electronic character encoding for non-roman language data disseminated under the project;
- 5) An international cooperative venture whose contributing members will include leading universities in the U.S., Britain, and South Asia as well as libraries with a focus on South Asian studies; and
- 6) A detailed plan of operation for phase three of the Digital South Asia Library.

This second phase of the Digital South Asia Library project is being presented to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for partial funding of the required matching project support. Other matching support will be provided by cash and in-kind contributions from the Center for Research Libraries, U.S. and overseas research libraries participating in DSAL, together with philanthropic foundations in the United Kingdom and South Asia. Proposals are also under preparation including: creation of an electronic *Guide to Pakistani Periodical Publications*, an on-line index to current English serial literature in the social sciences and humanities to be submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities; creation of digital resources for South Asian art historical research and museology to be submitted to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and creation of a union catalog of nineteenth-century South Asian publications to be submitted to the Ford Foundation.

The second phase of the Digital South Asia Library will dramatically increase the quantity and the range of research resources available as well as multiply the number of participants in DSAL. Following this proposed project, the third phase of DSAL will be largely self-sustaining, based on membership contributions from universities and individual scholars.

Composite Initiative

A Center for South Asian Libraries

The Center for Research Libraries is currently incorporating a tax-exempt overseas center for South Asian libraries. This center will facilitate scholarly research on South Asia in all academic disciplines through improved preservation of and access to the print, manuscript, and electronic heritage of India,

Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and through support for the exchange of scholarly information. These aims will be accomplished through activities of the new center operating in conjunction with organizations and institutions holding similar objectives, such as the American Institute of Indian Studies. Membership in the center will be open to non-U.S. institutions as well. The range of activities will overlap with and extend those under the Digital South Asia Library Pilot Project. As a new American overseas research center, the corporation will apply for membership in the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) to help achieve these purposes.

The Council of American Overseas Research Centers describes its purposes and activities on its web site <<http://www.caorc.org>>. There it states:

- American Overseas Research Centers foster international scholarly exchange, primarily through sponsorship of fellowship programs, which allow pre-doctoral and senior scholars to pursue independent research important to the increase of knowledge and to our understanding of foreign cultures.
- These non-governmental institutions are seen by their host countries as the official arm of American higher learning. The private structure of the centers and the unbiased research they promote make them respected foci of American academia in the countries in which they operate.
- The members of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers have centers in Bangladesh, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia, Turkey, West Africa, and Yemen, and together represent over three hundred years of experience in facilitating research in foreign countries. The older centers have served as an operations base for virtually every American specialist undertaking research in the host countries.

Scholars will benefit enormously from the activities of the new center, tentatively called the Center for South Asian Libraries (CSAL). Current library collections in the United States are, for several reasons, ill equipped to provide scholars with early printed texts in the languages of South Asia. Because most library collections on South Asia in the States have been developed since World War II, their greatest strengths are in holdings of recent publications. Aside from recent work by the South Asia Microform Project and the Microfilming of Indian Publications Project, there has been little systematic effort to acquire early imprints in most languages of the South Asian subcontinent. In the past faculty and students exerted only slight demand for access to earlier printed texts. The need for access has changed dramatically, however, as a result of forty years of U.S. federal funding for the study of "critical languages".

The Center for Research Libraries (CRL), the home base in the U.S. for the new South Asia library center, is an institution with global interests and reach. As a consequence, it makes sense to locate the new center under the CRL umbrella. CSAL, a self-sustaining and independent corporation, will deposit copies of the resources resulting from its activities in South Asia with CRL. Additionally, CRL will be able to rely on the overseas center as a means of collecting research materials such as doctoral theses that are difficult to gather without a presence in the country of origin. The South Asia Microform Project (SAMP), based at CRL, will also find the bases of operation maintained by the new South Asia center of value as it continues to expand access to microforms from and about South Asia.

Current and proposed members of CAORC include the American Institute of Indian Studies, the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, and the American Institute of Sri Lanka Studies. Some of these institutes maintain libraries. The new CSAL will offer to assist those libraries to improve access to their collections and generally to enhance their infrastructure through collaborative engagements with the center. Starting with a base of operations in India, the center will likely expand its activities to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Already we have established a cooperating partnership with the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, a unique library in Kathmandu, Nepal with a comprehensive collection spanning the history of publishing in the Nepali language. The Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, like the RMRL in Madras and the URLC in Hyderabad, will work with the Digital South Asia Libraries project, through the coordinating efforts of the CSAL, to

catalog and preserve its collections, index its important journals, and provide bibliographic and full-text data via the internet. These new activities will be taken up after consultation with relevant CAORC centers in those countries.

V. Future Directions

What does the future hold? A few things seem reasonably clear. The first is that serious support for preservation microfilming of South Asian scholarly resources will dwindle. In large measure this is because foundations and government agencies are devoting more of their support to digital projects. It is important to expand electronic horizons through imaginative funding for the development of resources delivered via the Internet. Yet the needs of South Asianists are quite different from those of other scholars. Classicists working in Greek and Latin, for instance, have had years of sustained support by agencies around the world for preservation microfilming of the most important literature in that field. Further, scholars of ancient Greece can confidently state that all the major ancient Greek texts are available in electronic form along with most of the minor texts and inscriptions. In contrast, many of the most seminal publications from South Asia are in the most fragile of conditions, with relatively few copies in existence. Others have simply disappeared without a trace due to the pervasive impact of a harsh, variable climate, insects, and internal destruction due to the use of highly acidic paper.

This leads us to state that the future must hold more international initiatives for preservation and access. South Asian nations do not have adequate resources to meet the preservation needs within the region. We expect that the new center for libraries in South Asia (CSAL), which is being established by the Center for Research Libraries, will be one of those new initiatives providing external support for preservation and access activities within the subcontinent. The new center will be open to broader participation by non-U.S. institutions. Interconnection with other area groups is an additional future arena for international engagement. South Asians are dispersed throughout the world. They have found diasporic homes in Singapore, South Africa, the Caribbean, and China, to mention a few examples. By working in collaboration with our fellow scholars and librarians in those far-flung regions we will ensure that materials are preserved for telling the entire, worldwide story of South Asian peoples.

Our colleagues in South Asia deserve better access to scholarly resources. We need to expand the array of U.S., European, and East Asian publications about South Asia made accessible in South Asia itself. One often hears the lament of colleagues in the subcontinent over the difficulties they face in obtaining foreign journals or purchasing books printed in wealthy nations. This lack of access to the most recent writings of other scholars leaves many of them incapable of joining international scholarly discourse on an equal footing. They will contribute more effectively as colleagues if they have easier access to all publications about South Asia. More robust programs are needed for exchange of books and journals. As our institutions move toward delivery of publications over the Internet, there is a need to lobby for preferential pricing for our colleagues in South Asia. Certainly, we should strive to make the digital resources we create under our international collaborative efforts accessible to scholars in South Asia without charge, following the model of the free public library.

VI. Concluding Comments

South Asia has been the focus of this paper. And yet, we see significant potential in engagements across the boundaries of world regions. Two developments hold promise for the near term. The first is a planned meeting of the Global Resources Project (GRP) participants whose projects cover materials and information resources from Africa, Germany, Japan, Latin America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. One objective of that meeting will likely be sharing experiences of GRP's component projects so that others may understand more fully what has and has not been successful. Other probable topics include realistic assessment of impediments as we move towards self-sustaining status as programs and consideration of economies of scale we may achieve through common approaches to similar activities such as creation of periodical indexes. The second development relates to the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) and creation of the Center for South Asian Libraries mentioned above. While that new Center will devote most of its attention to activities in the subcontinent, there are early signs that

CAORC, whose broad American Overseas Digital Library project recently won a major grant under U.S. Department of Education's Title VI program, would value the sharing of expertise through consultancies with its other member centers, many of which have libraries. It may also be possible to organize workshops for training librarians from other centers in preservation, bibliographic access, and digitization.

We also believe that some of the approaches described in this paper could be generalized as models for other regions of the world. For example, the model we have discussed as a counterpoint to colonial plunder seems reasonable to consider for implementation in other areas formerly under colonial rule. We encourage the formation of an online repository for best practices related to international information exchange.

While we see many reasons for optimism regarding international library collaboration, we realize that there are many potential and actual impediments. These include:

- Government bureaucracy in foreign countries and in the U.S.;
- Suspicions by scholars and bureaucrats abroad over the motives for our activities and the repeated suggestion of imperialism as a driving force behind our engagements;
- Unevenness in the expertise brought forward by some collaborators abroad (while simultaneously recognizing that in several instances we have found greater expertise in India for our digital projects than in the U.S.); and
- The lack of international standards in certain areas (such as for microform color images) and the partial implementation of standards (such as fonts for representation of non-roman characters over the Web.)

It would be valuable to discuss methods by which these and other impediments may be minimized.

Finally, we encourage candid discussion of the fit between programs considered at this conference and trajectories of support from foundations and government bodies. How do we best avoid collapse during periods of reduced funding for major projects? The projects described in the vignettes above were organized with many modest milestones and sub-units. This has permitted us to undertake activities in relatively small batches or units. With the MIPP project, the preservation activities have been undertaken either language-by-language or by preserving all the relevant titles in a single collection. We have also considered hibernation modes for projects if funding were to evaporate, although it has not been necessary to implement this approach yet. Hibernation would involve maintenance of critical staff as a nucleus from which activities could begin again when funding was once more made available. This could be achieved through use of reserve funds set aside from the several projects. Another question we would like to open for discussion is the degree of realism undergirding self-sustainability for international projects. For obvious reasons, most funding agencies encourage movement towards self-sustenance and are wary of projects that are excessively dependent upon their support. Creative thinking will produce ancillary streams of revenue from resources developed under these projects. As an example, the British Library is discussing the possibility of selling through its Web site extremely high quality photographs generated under the Digital South Asia Library project. Those images are from originals held by the British Library. They will be scanned at high enough resolution to be used in commercial publications. (Lower resolution images will be distributed without charge via the DSAL project site.) As part of this marketing arrangement, the British Library is willing to consider payment of royalties to the project. Another approach we have found useful is one of encompassing or subsuming older projects under newer ones, giving a new flavor to the older activities. For instance, as funding agencies have shown a preference for digitization projects, we have sought funds to convert selected scholarly resources created under earlier preservation projects into digital archives and to index them for easier access.

We thank the organizers and sponsors for creating this forum and look forward to continued engagement with the institutions represented at the conference.