



# Library Collections and Access: Supporting Global Expertise

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## Abstract

The acquisition of foreign materials by research libraries in the United States has declined significantly over the past two decades, due to a dramatic increase in publishing world-wide, fluctuations in exchange rates, and intense pressures on library budgets to ensure access to new electronic resources and to continue to acquire scientific journals despite their massive price increases. Together, these factors have forced libraries to purchase fewer books and journals in general, and to cut back on foreign acquisitions in particular. The difficulties of acquiring, cataloging, preserving, and sharing foreign materials are especially acute precisely when access to strong collections of such materials is truly a national need. This paper, based on a wide survey of area librarians, identifies key issues affecting libraries as they face the challenges of providing resources and information services needed to support global expertise, among them: mounting pressures on library funding; the impact of the move toward electronic resources and remote access on the availability of print materials; the need for trained, dedicated staff with a strong subject background, and the uncertainties of ensuring a future supply of such librarians. The paper concludes discussing the progress and promise of cooperative, inter-institutional ventures and the potential role for federal funding to enable such collaboration to achieve an impact on the national-level issues that affect area studies teaching and research in our present environment.

## Introduction

The 1996 publication, [Scholarship, Research Libraries, and Global Publishing](#),<sup>[1]</sup> documents in sobering detail the decline in foreign acquisitions during the past two decades, and identifies the causes of the inability of North American libraries, both

individually and collectively, to keep pace with the needs of students and scholars. The causes are so well-known to librarians as to appear trite: an increase in the volume of materials published on paper (not a decrease, as many predicted would occur as a result of new electronic formats), fluctuations in exchange rates, and pressures on library budgets due to the need to purchase materials or access to materials in new (electronic) formats as well as to the ongoing serials crisis, which has resulted in large and often outrageous annual increases in the subscription costs of some journals. Due to these combined pressures, the collections of North American research libraries have come increasingly to resemble each other, as librarians struggle to collect "core" materials, with the net effect of a dramatically diminished collective resource base of true research materials, especially from other countries. Since it is the responsibility of our research libraries to provide the resources to prepare each new generation of area specialists, this is an alarming situation.

Although funding for libraries has always been an important component of Title VI awards, it is only in recent years -- during the 1990s -- that a broader perspective has developed on what this funding might accomplish. It has always been clear that strong library collections of foreign publications are at the same time a continuing national need and an emerging need, as world events cause us to focus on new regional configurations, new topics, and interregional and comparative themes whose study requires new or expanded resources. The change in focus has come about because of a new awareness of the potential benefit of cooperative, collaborative approaches to providing the research and teaching materials that students, scholars, and policy makers need. Among librarians, sharing the effort and expense to acquire foreign and especially foreign-language materials is viewed as a critical strategy to address the problems outlined above.

A recent survey of area library specialists in preparation for this conference corroborates the findings of the Reed-Scott study, and provides additional somber evidence that libraries -- their collections, staffs, and services -- are facing unprecedented challenges to the provision of resources in support of research and teaching in area studies. This paper identifies these challenges and situates them within the Title VI context by topic: the inadequacy of funding; the impact of electronic resources on acquisitions and reference service; staffing issues and the identification, recruitment, and training of future area librarians; acquisitions, collection, and preservation concerns; the promise of cooperative library ventures; and national-level issues that significantly affect research libraries in our present environment. The impact of these factors varies by world region, of course; for example, the discussion that follows focuses more on the developing regions than on Western Europe.

## **The Funding Base for International Collections**

Librarians with responsibility for area collections cite declining financial support as the most serious issue affecting their ability to meet the needs of users. In addition to the pressure brought to bear on libraries by the skyrocketing costs of science materials, particularly journals, which in turn lead to cancellation projects and across-the-board cuts, the "tug-of-war" between print and electronic resources is affecting area collections negatively. This is happening in two principal ways. First, when a central funding line for electronic resources is established (usually by skimming off some portion of the overall collections budget), a relatively small amount goes to support

area studies, because, presumably, they need it less (they have fewer electronic resources available to purchase). Second, area collections generally are more dependent on print resources, and so the "digitax" affects them disproportionately and further depletes their means of supporting the fields in which they collect. The CDs that do support area studies, for example, full-text newspapers from the Middle East, tend to be very expensive and their purchase difficult to justify, given their likely relatively low use and conflicting budgetary demands.

Area collections have also suffered from the recent trend in libraries toward justifying expenditures based on use. It is widely acknowledged that foreign collections are often not high-use. Some fields (e. g., the hard sciences) depend on relatively narrow collections of high-use materials. However, an effective interdisciplinary teaching program in area studies requires access to a broader collection of materials, fewer of which are used frequently. And yet they remain important to support the development of international knowledge and expertise. Therefore, targeting foreign collections for cuts merely on the basis of raw usage counts undermines the goals of international programs. Respondents to the survey called for a different national performance measure for area collections, separate from the simple factor of circulation. One approach would be to examine the publishing of faculty and graduate students, as well as student papers, that relied on the area collections in the research process. This kind of citation analysis would provide a more realistic assessment of the research value of foreign scholarship.

Other factors also affect the adequacy of funding for area collections, including sudden changes in the book trade (such as the move from centralized, state-sponsored publication to a decentralized, commercial environment in the former Soviet Union, for example), the tendency to focus scarce funds on primary areas or "core" materials, thus neglecting secondary and tertiary (and resulting in the impoverishment of the national bibliographic resource base), high book prices and variations in the exchange rate (e. g., dollar devaluation against the yen), and the end of various programs that have traditionally underwritten a significant part of the cost of foreign materials (e. g., excess foreign currency programs, such as PL-480).

These and other factors have resulted in libraries allocating smaller portions of their materials budgets to purchase foreign materials. But at the same time, we have also seen an erosion of our ability to develop these collections due to cutbacks in support from the operating budgets. For example, in many cases, the best means of acquiring specialized foreign research materials is through acquisition trips by area librarians. Many valuable ephemeral publications and government documents are simply not available through the commercial book trade, and their acquisition requires a concerted effort in the country, a face-to-face visit to the issuing agency, and strenuous efforts at human networking to create and maintain effective exchange partnerships. Only a very limited number of libraries regularly allocate funds for their area specialists to travel for this purpose; it is an area in which Title VI funding has often proven extremely helpful. Support staff positions may also be decreased or phased out as a result of pressures on the operating budgets. In area studies, this may mean losing staff (often multi-lingual) who perform tasks that facilitate acquisition and processing of foreign materials.

## **Electronic Resources for Reference and Research**

The greatest positive effect of the new technologies has been on English-language research, since the majority of the resources were created for the largest market. These new means of access tend to be costly, and have generally had a negative effect on budgets for foreign materials, as libraries are forced to reallocate from other areas to accommodate these new financial demands. Many of the most popular table of contents databases that are widely available, for example, include very few foreign titles, and thus offer minimal benefit in terms of access to hard-to-find and poorly indexed area studies research materials.

Of course there is a great deal of information on the Internet of interest and utility to scholars, including statistical sources, government documents, full-text primary source documents, and much analytical and synthetic literature. But because of the decentralized nature of the medium, and the lack of any central authority for imposing standards of quality, selectivity, consistency, and structured means of intellectual access, much of this material is of mixed value, poorly organized, and almost impossible to find. Another problem with the Internet is that many world regions lack the funding and expertise to make their own materials available electronically. Although this situation is improving, area studies tends to be underrepresented in the best of what the Internet has to offer. One way to enhance the usefulness of the Internet to researchers and students in area studies, and to diminish the negative impact of its inherent anarchy, is to extend the traditional role of librarians to encompass the identification, evaluation, selection, annotation, and classification of Internet resources, creating carefully selected, focused "digital collections" presented on Web pages organized by region and subject. Many such pages now exist, thanks to the determined efforts of area librarians. However, such electronic collections require an unusually high level of maintenance and updating to remain useful, and a serious commitment of a librarian's time. The best hope for future subject access to area studies materials on the Internet lies in carefully planned and coordinated cooperative projects that divide the burden of creating and maintaining these resources into progressively small units according to the specializations and unique strengths at each participating institution, subject to established standards of quality and selectivity. This distributes the work and ensures a durable consolidated resource with benefits for the entire area studies community. But such coordination requires initial investments of time and resources to create the necessary institutional infrastructures -- an appropriate use of federal funding in support of international education.

The Internet and the range of new and exciting electronic resources available to libraries both facilitate and complicate research. Students tend more and more to rely on electronic access, and this abandonment of more traditional means of doing research has had a negative effect on their training. Even when a journal is indexed, or a full-text version of a reference work is available, the electronic version usually has a relatively recent start-up date and so does not allow the user to search the backfile. This is one reason why the new Journal Storage Project, or [JSTOR](#), is a boon to scholarship: it provides full-text access to many major economic and historical journals, as well as other titles, beginning with the very first number published. It will undoubtedly encourage users to take into account earlier scholarship on topics related to their research in a way that most other modern electronic resources cannot. As yet, there is no foreign or foreign-language JSTOR underway, but this kind of resource offers potential for area studies fields.

While the JSTOR model presents an exciting example of the possibilities for centralizing technological investments to produce easy access to full-text resources for scholars, there are certain obstacles to extending this model to the broad base of area studies materials, particularly foreign-language journals. An especially perplexing problem arises from the lack of internationally recognized standards for encoding foreign alphabet texts so that they can be displayed consistently on the wide range of terminals, PC platforms and operating systems, and Web browsers. Anyone who has visited a Chinese-, Japanese- or Russian-encoded Website knows what a serious impediment the lack of standards for fonts and text-encoding can be. While great strides have been made recently in the definitions needed for standard document mark-up using protocols such as SGML (e.g., in the efforts of the Text Encoding Initiative), we are still a long way from practical application of these techniques to most foreign-language material. Centrally coordinated efforts among area librarians and text-encoding specialists and consultants would encourage the development of interinstitutional infrastructures for proposing, refining, and promulgating appropriate standards that will, in the long term, make widespread distribution of foreign-language documents possible via standard network mechanisms. This kind of cooperative project, beyond the scope of any individual institution or center, is another means of using federal funding in support of international education to leverage the existing investments in area studies materials and to eliminate the specific technological roadblock that has hampered their dissemination over the Internet.

## **Human Resources: Organizational Structure and the Demographics of Library Staff**

The 1995 conference on "[The Future of Area Librarianship](#)," hosted by [Indiana University](#) (and funded cooperatively by the library and Indiana's Title VI centers), called attention to the fact that area librarians are an endangered species, for several reasons. First, they are aging fast. In fact, area specialists as a group tend to be older than other librarians, who are older than other professions.<sup>[2]</sup> Second, there has been a trend in libraries toward restructuring bibliographers' positions to include a wide variety of additional responsibilities, not all directly related to their area specialization. This reduction to part-time status for area emphasis erodes a library's ability to provide strong area-specific collections and services. Even when they do focus on the area "full-time," the bibliographers' range of responsibilities has grown to include mounting Web pages, providing specialized reference service via electronic databases and the Internet, and developing fund-raising and outreach projects, in addition to the "traditional" roles, which require deep knowledge of selection resources, the book trade, and faculty interests. Participation in cooperative programs, such as the AAU/ARL pilot projects on Latin America, Germany, and Japan, and other parts of the new [AAU/ARL Global Resources Program](#),<sup>[3]</sup> will require additional time and effort on the part of area specialists, who will play a key role in the intellectual development as well as the implementation of these complex, interinstitutional projects.

There is often an inverse relationship between the amount of money available to spend on foreign acquisitions and the staff time that selection requires. In fact, the need to be more selective calls for more intensive scrutiny on the part of

bibliographers on a title-by-title basis, as contrasted with better endowed collections, for which large approval plans may regularly bring all the latest publications to the library "automatically." Especially with foreign research materials, identifying publications and arranging for their acquisition is time-consuming. Reviewing book catalogs more selectively, trying to match acquisitions to local needs of faculty, takes significantly more effort than spending larger amounts on broader coverage. The relationships that specialist librarians maintain with book dealers, research institutes, government and non-government agencies and other sources of information and publications on exchange are of great help in building strong collections. But they require careful tending. These tasks are critical to the effective work of the area librarian, and yet are threatened by the tendency in libraries to decrease staffing in support of foreign collections.

Area librarians and those with responsibility for international collections have played a critical and varied role in Title VI centers, well beyond that of other librarians. They are generally well-integrated into the academic programs of universities, functioning as communication channels between the faculty and the library. They provide "current awareness" for faculty by discovering and calling to their attention new resources, especially those that may be available electronically, which would otherwise escape the notice of researchers. Their expertise is also valuable in writing proposals, raising money, serving on an assortment of committees, and advising students, particularly in universities that are "internationalizing." Within the context of Title VI, the area librarian is an important player, and a center with no designated librarian is at a distinct disadvantage. In recent years, as attention within the Title VI community has turned toward library issues (as evidenced by featuring library topics at plenary sessions of center directors' meetings, and offering library break-out groups), the perceived and actual value of the specialist librarian has increased. And yet, ironically, it is at this same time, as the Indiana conference demonstrated,[\[4\]](#) that new area librarians with the appropriate skills and training are in short supply. Some new and promising models have been developed to encourage individuals with strong subject backgrounds to become library area specialists, among them the [Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellowships in Latin American Research Librarianship](#) at Duke University, and [joint Master's degree programs at Indiana University](#) between the library school and individual area studies programs. Internships and other models of preparing future area librarians would also help to draw attention to research librarianship as a legitimate and rewarding career path. Federal funding could be helpful in the initial training and further professional development of area specialists.

## **The Complexity of Acquisitions**

The process of identifying and acquiring foreign materials is best characterized as complex and labor-intensive. Simply finding out what has recently been published, what is worth acquiring, whether it is still available, and how to acquire it can require significant effort. While in recent years the book trade has improved, and there are a number of vendors who provide more modern and efficient service as well as satisfactory approval plans,[\[5\]](#) many of the publications that would most interest researchers still are not available within commercial channels. The publications of non-governmental organizations, research institutes, political parties, and government agencies, for example, do not generally make their way into the regular book trade.

In-country vendors are not always willing or able to make the extra effort to locate these materials, partly because they are so specialized and will likely be of interest to only a small number of libraries, thus decreasing their profitability for the book dealer. In addition, books published abroad tend to have small print runs and to go out of print rapidly, making it all the more important to acquire these materials quickly. As mentioned above, cooperative acquisitions trips, in which one librarian brings back information, contacts and materials for a group of libraries, would be an excellent way to put federal funding to good use to expand access to these difficult-to-acquire vernacular materials. Faculty, too, can assist in this effort when they are conducting research abroad.

In some parts of the world, such as the former Soviet Union, the book trade remains disorganized, and librarians must resort to ad hoc mechanisms for acquisitions. With the break up of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, more countries, players, and centers of activity were created, thus aggravating an already complex situation. Political conflict, obviously, can also affect access to publications. The lack of a reliable infrastructure for acquisitions can seriously hinder libraries' ability to collect important materials that document political and social change. For some areas the field offices of the [Library of Congress](#) can help. The Brazil/Rio office, for example, offers participation in a Cooperative Serials Program through which individual libraries subscribe to any of a list of hundreds of journals and newspapers, paying a subscription price and an administrative charge (it has ranged from 30% in 1990, when the program began, to 69% in 1996), but no postage. This has been a boon especially in acquiring Brazilian newspapers, which were typically costing \$3000 a year commercially and now, without shipping charges, run \$300 - \$400 through the Rio office.

For libraries that seek only core coverage of an area, either because they are smaller or because they focus on other areas, it can be difficult to identify and acquire primary-level materials. If we consider that the acquisitions process is the first step in service to faculty and students, that decisions made at this point will affect what libraries can offer in support of intensive regional or cross-regional scholarship, then finding means of improving the acquisitions process becomes an especially important goal. Working through area studies and area librarians' organizations to stimulate new service models among vendors of foreign materials is one strategy. Some international vendors are now producing MARC records<sup>[6]</sup> for ordering and cataloging; many are on e-mail and/or have home pages on the World Wide Web; others are especially interested in assisting libraries with the acquisition of different formats, such as CD-ROMs and videos. While the availability of these services varies dramatically by world region, the interrelationship of libraries, publishers, and book sellers is growing stronger, with positive implications for access to foreign publications.

## **Collection Development, Cataloging and Preservation**

Providing access to strong library collections, both historical and current, in print and non-print formats, is the single most important challenge we face to support international education and the development of area expertise. Although very deep collections have been built over many years within the U. S., especially at Title VI institutions, weaknesses remain. Of course, the budgetary pressures already

enumerated have made it impossible for libraries to maintain an adequate level of current acquisitions, much less to pursue retrospective acquisitions to fill gaps in collections. The explosion of new titles, the move into new areas of research, and the demands of new formats -- film and video, for example, now used extensively in interdisciplinary teaching -- add to these pressures. The relatively recent interest in global popular culture, to mention just one area, has affected collecting patterns as libraries are called upon to document social movements and trends in new ways, for example, by collecting popular magazines, comic books, and [telenovelas](#).

One specific area of concern cited in the survey is coverage of regional languages of South Asia, which is uneven in this country and would benefit from continuing retrospective acquisitions programs to meet the needs of current and future scholars. Research interests are always changing, and often areas of current importance, or particular languages, may only be sparsely supported in collections; thus, libraries constantly face new collecting needs, while attempting to maintain and build on the strengths of historical collections.

In order to be useful, collections must be accessible. In area studies, it is often difficult to find journal indexes that will lead scholars to articles of interest. In some libraries, whether a journal is indexed or not is a consideration in the original decision to subscribe; thus, materials that are already expected to be low-use will be even lower-use because they can only be found after great effort. Joint projects to develop journal indexes, some of which are described below under "The Promise of Cooperative Efforts," will help to improve this situation.

One of the principal concerns of area librarians is the relatively low priority given to the cataloging of foreign and especially foreign-language materials within many research libraries. It is of no use to have extensive collections of valuable research materials if users locally and remotely are not aware of their existence and cannot access them via interlibrary loan. This is one of the most serious conflicts of priorities within research libraries. As we seek to forge cooperative relationships that establish collecting responsibilities for foreign materials, responsibilities that come with the expectation that the collecting library will expedite the cataloging of those materials, this goal clashes directly with a main priority of most cataloging departments: to process as many items as possible, as quickly as possible. By their nature, vernacular materials are more difficult to catalog than mainstream books in English or other common languages. The national databases ([OCLC](#) and [RLIN](#)) may offer ready access to the cataloging records of these books, while a local library will be expected to do original cataloging [\[7\]](#) for books that are not yet included in these sources. Support for cataloging staff with language expertise is one way that federal funding could help to improve this situation. Eliminating uncataloged library backlogs of foreign-language materials, particularly in non-Roman languages, would dramatically expand access to resources that have in some cases languished for years.

In addition to being hard to acquire, foreign materials are often printed on paper of poor quality, and hence need microfilming, photocopying on acid-free paper, or other special efforts to preserve their content. A number of cooperative preservation projects targeting foreign materials have benefited from external funding, for example, from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) and Title II-C. In some cases, commercial microfilmmers have preserved valuable materials and marketed them

as collections to libraries. The field offices of the [Library of Congress](#) have also engaged in some preservation microfilming. There will always be additional need for preservation of international resources, and federal funding can make a difference here.

Many international resources are finding their way into digital form, either at the point of publication or via institutional or consortial efforts. Much is also becoming available on CD-ROM. While digitization does certainly make access much easier, the digital format has not been accepted as archivally stable over the medium-to-long run.

## **The Promise of Cooperative Efforts**

As mentioned in the Introduction to this paper, a new awareness of the value of cooperative, collaborative, multi-institutional relationships among libraries has emerged within the Title VI environment. Although the NRC proposals still require data on sheer size of local collections as a measure of institutional strength, they also take into account information on cooperative library programs that expand access for scholars and students to foreign research materials. In addition, the new invitational priority for libraries has encouraged the development of creative interinstitutional acquisitions and access projects. The recognition that local, state, regional, national, and even international consortia are critical to our collective ability to provide access to research materials in support of the training of students and the creation of new scholarship within area studies should be a basic fact of the proposal process.

Within this context, acknowledging that consortia are succeeding, step by step, at enhancing access to a greater array of foreign materials and to preserving them as well, and relying on the commitments of individual libraries to collect, catalog, and make accessible their research materials, it is important to point out that local cuts to library budgets affect more than local users. They will have an impact well beyond a single campus, especially as researchers elsewhere have come to depend on the collecting efforts of each partner in the consortium. Thus, now more than ever, we must underscore the importance of maintaining local collecting commitments -- perhaps accepting the responsibility for them at the highest possible level -- the university librarian, the provost -- not just among bibliographers. This continuity in collecting becomes ever more important as research libraries become more interconnected and rely more on each other. No one institution can collect everything to support research in area studies (or any other field). As more formal models of cooperation develop, institutions will be called upon -- and will realize it is in their interest -- to make national commitments to provide specialized resources and to agree to honor those commitments for the long term, to allow individual libraries to reallocate funds toward areas of strength. The resulting interdependence among collections will provide widespread benefits as acquisitions decline at individual institutions, but to function well it will also require clear communication, a serious commitment, and a high level of trust.

Area studies librarians often represent their institutions within local, regional or national consortia that are attempting to solve some of the problems outlined above through coordinated cooperative action. Libraries are one of the few areas of activity within an institution of higher education that are capable of participating in such collaboration for the good of area studies as a whole, without significantly sacrificing

the competitiveness of the institution itself. However, even the librarians negotiating such commitments are faced with a puzzling dilemma that results from the tension between cooperation and competition. In the context of tight money within the local institution or university, the multi-disciplinary area studies program (including library collections) must compete with other programs (e. g., in the battle to fill vacant teaching positions in departments with area scholars, or in the campaign to retain area studies journal subscriptions in the face of system-wide serials cutbacks). In responding to such internal competitiveness, the area programs tend to emphasize the strength of their "core" coverage: they are at pains within the university structure to show that their programs respond to broad undergraduate and lower-level graduate needs with large constituencies. They want to demonstrate that they are neither *peripheral* nor unduly geared towards small, expensive *specializations*. On the other hand, in inter-institutional competition for outside funding (from Title VI, NEH, foundations and other sources), the area studies programs typically wish to emphasize their unique strengths and specializations that make them stand out from the crowd. As the teaching programs have come to rely on a greater mix of outside funding, they have moved along the continuum towards greater distinctiveness. But at the same time, as noted above, the pressures on area studies library programs have conspired to push these collection development efforts toward more "vanilla" collections, with greater and greater overlap and progressively less distinctive strength.<sup>[8]</sup>

If unchecked, this tendency will result in a wide discrepancy between the competitive strategies of the teaching programs (greater distinctiveness) and those of the library collections (tighter focusing on the "core" to the exclusion of "peripheral" specialized areas of collecting, resulting in greater homogeneity). Obviously, a "spumoni" program is ill served by a "vanilla" library collection. Can cooperative and coordinated library programs help to alleviate this imbalance? While efforts at coordinated collection development have historically been directed at the periphery ("We'll collect this exotic language if you collect that one, and then we can share them as needed"), this would seem to be the right moment in history to propose a test of the opposite approach. It should be at least theoretically possible for federally subsidized cooperative collection development programs to be directed at creating enduring mechanisms for the collecting and effective sharing of nationally identified "core" materials in area studies, thus freeing up some of the local material and human resources for the pursuit of the local specializations and unique strengths that are so essential to our national expertise on the different world regions.

Another benefit of consortial arrangements is that they can leverage funding through joint proposals to foundations and agencies, and they can pioneer creative interlibrary lending relationships that facilitate remote access to local collections. They can generate cooperative cataloging projects that enrich the national databases by adding more original cataloging and bibliographic records for materials that are not widely held. They can share scarce language expertise for both selection and cataloging, and they can engineer cooperative acquisitions trips, in which one librarian secures multiple copies of publications or a more diverse array of materials for distribution within the consortium. There are many benefits for this kind of organization among libraries, and such innovation should be not only acknowledged but rewarded in the Title VI proposal process.

A significant recent example of cooperation among libraries is the [AAU/ARL Latin](#)

[Americanist Research Resources Project](#), a joint venture among 35 institutions, including the [Library of Congress](#). Funding for the project came from a grant from The [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#) that was matched by contributions of \$3,000 each from participants. The project was launched in 1994 and has four principal components: 1) a database that contains searchable table-of-contents information for journals from Mexico and Argentina (each library is responsible for subscribing to and providing table-of-contents data for nine journals, as well as providing copies of articles through document delivery); 2) a digitization project to capture all the presidential messages from Argentina and Mexico in electronic form; 3) an effort to divide responsibility for collecting publications of non-governmental organizations from the two countries; and 4) a reallocation of monographic funds at each participating library to create deeper local collections on a particular country, while relying more on other institutions for coverage of other areas. The project was originally established as a pilot, and has been a useful model to test approaches to cooperation. Pilot projects are also underway among ARL institutions on Japan and Germany, to be followed soon by Southeast Asia, Africa, and South Asia.

One of the earliest lessons of the AAU/ARL project was that, in order to succeed and to have a wide impact, large-scale cooperative schemes need funding for staff and infrastructure. The Latin American project has relied on a Project Coordinator, and has invested in hardware and software. Commitments at the local level -- for example, to expedite requests received through interlibrary loan, and to catalog project materials rapidly -- are also critical to the success of any such enterprise. This kind of start-up funding will continue to be needed by libraries as they explore new ways of offering collections and services to an ever-wider clientele. Area librarians surveyed point to past efforts at cooperation that failed precisely due to lack of infrastructural support. This is one very important way in which Title VI funding can make a difference.

A different kind of collaborative project, outside the AAU/ARL structure, was developed four years ago by some of the members of the Committee on South Asia Libraries and Documentation ([CONSALD](#)), the North American coordinating body for South Asian library collections. Most of the members of CONSALD had been receiving hundreds of important journals from South Asia for up to thirty years on the PL-480 program. But even most of the English-language journals from the region, which are the vast majority, have never been rendered accessible by any indexing or abstracting service or index publication. The result was a situation of widespread and fairly easy physical access to an excellent national collection of some of the best intellectual output from South Asia, but virtually no bibliographic access to make that collection usable by scholars and students. To begin to rectify this situation, and recognizing that it would greatly benefit the field as a whole, some of the libraries supported by Title VI South Asia grants pooled their resources and contributed a portion of those funds to a centrally supervised project, coordinated by CONSALD, to hire an indexer to produce subject access to the last twenty years of English-language South Asia journals that are not elsewhere indexed. The resulting records have been added to the *Bibliography of Asian Studies* (produced by the [Association for Asian Studies](#)) which, after a grant from NEH, is now releasing the cumulative index on an inexpensive CD-ROM. This is an example of a successful experiment in using federal funding to maximize the value of our prior national investment in area studies materials by improving the bibliographic access to the distributed collection, through a cooperative project among area librarians.

Beyond cooperation among university libraries, there are other promising possibilities. The overseas offices of the [Library of Congress](#) have helped to strengthen the national collections, and might work with individual institutions and consortia in new ways to provide even greater benefits. The [Center for Research Libraries](#), in Chicago, has built notable collections in support of area scholarship, e.g., foreign dissertations, foreign official gazettes and central bank reports, as well as making a very important contribution by preserving a broad array of foreign materials through the regional microform projects that are hosted by CRL. [\[9\]](#) In late May 1997, CRL will co-sponsor with ARL and the [Library of Congress](#) an International Newspapers Symposium, which will focus on strategies for ensuring access to these critical resources and for archiving and preserving them.

## Issues at the National Level

The Foreign Periodicals Program, which barely got off the ground in the early 1990s before it was discontinued, offered libraries potential, if partial, solutions to some of the problems suggested above. Although it did not represent a large amount of funds, the program stimulated libraries to come together collaboratively with strategies to address acquisitions, preservation, and cataloging issues. There is no doubt that recourse to such a competitive, national-level program would be a tremendous advantage to research libraries in the present environment. Libraries are in a better position now to submit effective cooperative proposals because of a more acute awareness of the benefits of collaboration, and the experience derived from the successful implementation of more formal cooperative infrastructures such as contract-bound regional consortia (e. g., Committee on Institutional Cooperation, or [CIC](#), and South Asia Consortium - West, [SAC-West](#)).

The national debate about area studies vs. global studies that is underway, while of considerable concern to area scholars because of its many implications for new faculty recruitment, student training, and the allocation of resources on individual campuses, also has great relevance for libraries. Libraries will, no matter what the model of international studies in vogue, continue to need to support teaching and research on most regions of the world, in a variety of languages. The potential impact on library collections and services of a new emphasis on "global" vs. "area" studies would probably be felt most acutely in a two ways: a decrease in the number of foreign-language resources acquired, as more social scientists limit their research to English-language materials, and intensified pressures on library budgets to acquire more electronic resources, and/or networked access to them. Both of these threaten to have a negative effect on the provision of resources for particular areas as collecting becomes more general and diffuse and budgets are further stretched to accommodate the additional big-ticket items. Libraries contribute to the support of international research and teaching through the continuity and coherence in their collections, and therefore any threat to our ability to support strong collections for posterity (despite the waxing and waning of interest in particular regions or topics) seriously endangers future research.

Respondents to the survey commented on the irony of the fact that while many universities have announced their plans to "internationalize," library collections in support of area studies continue to be seen by many library administrators as

expensive to support, with both staff and acquisitions funds, and of minimal value because they are perceived as serving a relatively small user group. Foreign materials may seem marginal to the mission of the library as the pendulum swings strongly to the side of trendy electronic access, especially when library administrators are under pressure to "modernize" their libraries and transform them into showcases for newer electronic resources with broad popular appeal. As new technologies increasingly demonstrate their impact beyond the developed world, of course, the information that supports our international understanding will become more accessible, even though much area studies scholarship will still depend on the paper environment. Interdisciplinary and interregional work that goes beyond area studies will also require a mixture of formats, as more comparative approaches emerge and students and researchers find they need to know what has been published in more than one area on a given topic. What should the library collecting policy be in support of the "internationalized" university? How will it differ from what we are doing now?

One major new initiative that recognizes the importance of access to scholarship and library collections throughout the world is the [AAU/ARL Global Resources Program](#), co-sponsored by the [Association of American Universities](#) and the [Association of Research Libraries](#) and funded by [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#). The Program will expand access to foreign research materials while helping libraries cope with rising costs by developing distributed collections and expanding electronic document delivery. Building on the experience of three earlier pilot projects (on Japan, Germany, and Latin America), the Program will focus first on three additional areas: South and Southeast Asia and Africa. It will also develop a set of new initiatives that include: (a) identifying "lead institutions" for acquisitions from particular regions and electronic distribution of publications from each region; (b) establishing a Web-based clearinghouse to disseminate information on international projects that facilitate scholarly access to research materials; (c) facilitating linkages among projects; and (d) conducting symposia for faculty, both on-campus and at meetings of learned societies. The Program will build on existing structures and initiatives, including those of the [Library of Congress](#), the [Center for Research Libraries](#), and those involving North America consortia and institutions overseas.

Forging relationships with libraries throughout the world is one concrete way that U. S. library collections and staff both benefit -- and, ultimately, library users do as well. Exchanges of librarians, for example, the [Library Fellows Program](#) sponsored by the [American Library Association](#) with funding from the United States Information Agency ([USIA](#)), can further the development of collections as well as the professional development of participating library staff. Such exchanges can and should also be included in wider university-level partnerships with research institutions abroad.

The increasing number and complexity of factors affecting research libraries in the provision of collections and services and the commonalities among areas as they face the many challenges described in this paper suggest that sharing experiences and expertise would be a wise strategy. Each area has its own professional librarians' association, and they have individually made progress in addressing the needs of each area. The next step should be to move beyond focusing on each region separately, and to encourage communication, interregional collaboration and the development of joint strategies to overcome the acute challenges to our collective ability to support the development of international expertise. The creation of a Council of National Resource

Center Librarians would facilitate the joint identification of priorities for federal support and the development of proposals to address interregional issues for library collections and services.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Research libraries face multiple challenges in building and ensuring access to foreign collections locally, nationally, and internationally. Serious pressures on library budgets further exacerbate the infrastructural problems of acquiring and maintaining these resources, and of hiring staff who have subject and language capability and are trained in collection development, cataloging, and specialized reference. Additional challenges emerge as area studies resources experience the transition from predominantly print to a more technology-based environment. Cooperative approaches offer the most promising solutions to these challenges.

There are several possible avenues for federal funding to enable libraries to consolidate their efforts in support of international education and the development of broad international expertise. Primary among them is the creation of a national-level, competitive program, beyond local funding commitments to libraries, that focuses on technology and the dissemination of information. Such a strategy would facilitate the development of an array of projects, both institutional and cooperative, to enhance access to international collections and therefore directly enable libraries to support broader foreign language and international studies goals. In recent years, librarians have had increased experience with creative projects aimed at acquiring, indexing, cataloging, and preserving foreign materials. Thus, they would be particularly responsive to a program that would allow them to put to work the lessons of those projects in devising sophisticated approaches to multi-format scholarly access that utilize technology in new ways.

Title VI awards to individual centers generally include funding for library collections, travel and/or staff, but this is not always the case. The mandatory allocation of some funding for libraries within all Title VI grants would recognize the critical role that libraries play in support of centers. Using local discretion, reflecting institutional and consortial needs, center directors and librarians together can target with Title VI funding not only the three areas of traditional library support (collections, staff, and travel) but other needs as well, such as course development, internships, workshops, and travel for language training, all of which would contribute to the development of a future cadre of area specialist librarians.

There is good precedent for pooling some portion of local Title VI funds among centers and institutions to support cooperative library ventures, such as acquisitions trips and indexing projects. This kind of collaboration should also be encouraged and extended to include collection building, electronic resources, projects to enhance access to collections, and joint preservation programs. It is also a viable strategy for handling the start-up costs of the infrastructure needed for longer term collaborative arrangements.

Library needs must be viewed in the context of broader national support for the goals of international education and training. In area studies, the need to continue to acquire and maintain foreign resources in paper accompanies at every step the exciting

transition to electronic access, with the obvious potential conflict among priorities that such a dual track entails. As we face the 21st century, library needs can best be met by a flexible approach to funding that will both acknowledge the richness of individual collections and the value of local initiatives and stimulate the development of innovative, cooperative strategies to protect and expand access to a full range of resources for international education.

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[1]Jutta Reed-Scott, [\*Scholarship, Research Libraries, and Global Publishing\*](#). Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 1996.

[2]Stanley J. Wilder, [\*The Age Demographics of Academic Librarians: A Profession Apart\*](#). Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 1995. According to the study, 53.3% of area specialist librarians are 50 or older; 12.8% are 65 or older.

[3]The [Association of Research Libraries](#) (ARL) recently received a grant from [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#) in support of the [Global Resources Program](#) over three years. The Program, sponsored jointly with the [Association of American Universities](#), will expand access to foreign research materials while helping to contain costs for libraries by developing distributed collections and expanding electronic document delivery, as well as building on linkages to libraries and other institutions abroad.

[4]Nancy J. Schmidt, ed. *Proceedings, [Future of Area Librarianship Conference](#)*, July 13-14, 1995, Indiana University, Indianapolis. Bloomington: Indiana University Libraries, 1996.

[5]An approval plan is an arrangement between a library and a book dealer or distributor to ensure that recent publications of interest will be sent to the library automatically. The areas of interest are described in a profile, according to which the book dealer selects materials for the library (within a specified budget). The books are reviewed upon receipt and, depending upon the contract, can be returned if they are not wanted.

[6]The two bibliographic utilities, [OCLC](#) and [RLIN](#), use "machine-readable cataloging," or "MARC" records, as do research library computer catalogs. If catalogers have early access to the MARC record, e.g., directly from the vendor abroad, they can add local data and get the information on local holdings into the national databases that much faster, thus improving access to the collections.

[7]Libraries are able to expedite their cataloging when they can find "copy" in [OCLC](#) or [RLIN](#), meaning that another library has already cataloged the same book and the local library can use the same record, merely adding their holdings symbol. Original cataloging, or the creation of the first record in [OCLC](#) or [RLIN](#), is more time-consuming, requires the expertise of a professional cataloger, and in many cases language ability. Many libraries will identify those books in need of original cataloging and allow them to "age," while waiting for another library to provide the original cataloging (this despite the fact that a library providing an original record receives a credit with [OCLC](#) or [RLIN](#)), a strategy that clearly has a negative impact on access for scholars to some of the more specialized resources.

[8]The analytical framework of "vanilla" vs. "spumoni" collections was originally raised

in 1993 on the electronic listserv COLLDEV-L by Charles W. Brownson, then Humanities Coordinator (and now Director) of the Library at Arizona State University-East.

[9]The six area studies microform projects are supported by dues of member institutions and also seek external funding for special preservation projects. They are: the [Cooperative Africana Microform Project \(CAMP\)](#); the [Latin American Microform Project \(LAMP\)](#); the [Middle East Microform Project \(MEMP\)](#); the [Southeast Asian Microform Project \(SEAM\)](#); the [South Asia Microform Project \(SAMP\)](#), and the [Slavic and Eastern European Microform Project \(SEEMP\)](#). CRL also hosts the [Area Studies Council](#), whose members are the chairs of each area project.

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