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Preserving the Diversity of Knowledge Sources

IN THIS ISSUE OF **FOCUS** we publish a summary of the International Coalition on Newspapers (ICON) survey of international newspaper collections in North American academic and research libraries. The survey's findings are alarming, but not surprising. For some time we have been hearing from scholars about the difficulties they are experiencing in obtaining back issues of newspapers, particularly foreign language newspapers. The ICON survey confirms the anecdotal evidence: news from sources in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and other regions of the world is no longer being adequately archived.

Most scholars and libraries rely heavily upon a few large institutions to preserve international newspapers. Those "libraries of record" are facing the same budgetary constraints as other libraries, and have had to curtail their acquisition, cataloging, and preservation activities. Under these conditions foreign materials, especially materials in non-European languages, are the first to be cut.

Things are no better in the digital realm, for other reasons. In the Mellon-funded Political Communications Web Archive Project (see [Political Web](#)), undertaken by the Center and several university partners, we are learning that many important digital "primary source" materials – statements by political candidates, proclamations by partisan groups, and information disseminated by NGOs, and more – are vanishing irretrievably from the Web each day. One of the Center's partners, the University of Texas Latin American Network Information Center (LANIC), determined that fewer than half of 226 political election sites from countries like Venezuela, Guatemala, Peru, and Colombia were still on the Web after five years; in some countries, such as El Salvador, many sites vanished in less than a year. The "publishers" of these materials, the activist groups, parties, and even governments that create the sites, have no vested interest in maintaining them beyond their politically useful lives. And very few of these kinds of sites are being preserved through the major extant Web archiving efforts undertaken by the Internet Archive, the Library of Congress, and others.

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Hence, important knowledge is disappearing, and important points of view on local and international events are being lost.

It is incumbent upon libraries to arrest this trend. With fewer actors and resources in this arena, cooperative action is necessary. Through the International Coalition on Newspapers, Foreign Newspaper Microfilming Program, and Area Microfilming Programs (AMPs) the Center for Research Libraries and its partner institutions identify, preserve, and make available to North American scholars critical materials from all parts of the world. In the months ahead we will seek ways to strengthen these programs and bring new resources to bear on them. Success will depend on developing partnerships with organizations from all sectors of the library world, with public, academic, and independent research libraries. It will also require the help of commercial publishers, like ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis, Thomson-Gale, and others. Such organizations can bring important capabilities to bear on, and in fact are already invested in, the effort to ensure long-term availability of important scholarly resources.

The challenge of preserving these critical but ephemeral materials is daunting. But the challenge must be surmounted for North American universities to maintain the depth and diversity of source materials upon which the creation of new knowledge depends.

Bernard F. Reilly
President

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ICON Survey Results: Disappearing News

Last summer the International Coalition on Newspapers (ICON) conducted a survey on the size, scope, and status of international newspaper collections at North American academic and research libraries. ("International" newspapers were defined by the survey as newspapers published outside the United States.) The survey findings suggest that newspapers produced in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and other regions – traditionally vital sources of information on the larger world for historians and other researchers – are not being preserved systematically or comprehensively. Faced with competing demands for collection space and funds, most libraries today rely heavily upon a few large institutions for access to international newspapers. At the same time, those "libraries of record" are themselves battling constraints in acquiring, cataloging, and preserving foreign materials, especially newspapers in non-European languages. Consequently, important documentary evidence and heritage materials are at risk.

The survey was designed to provide a picture of extant collection practices and policies in four main areas of activity: selection and retention; storage and handling; cataloging and access; and cooperative preservation. The data gathered is expected to inform future preservation planning and decision-making by ICON and its participating institutions.

The survey was distributed to CRL members and other academic and research institutions across the U.S. and Canada. Most of the 40 institutions that responded were libraries at large universities, described as "Doctoral Research – Extensive" in the Carnegie classification scheme. Responses were gathered by automatic web-form reply and email over a two-month period, and the data then compiled, analyzed, and assembled into a report. Click on [ICON Survey Results](#) for a PDF version of the full report.

Findings at a Glance

Using a combination of data and written comments, the survey report provides a cogent description of how the responding institutions' missions, curricula, research needs, faculty, and other factors contribute to library decisions. According to the survey libraries fall into four general categories with respect to their policies on preserving international news-

papers. The categories are:

1. **Non-collecting:** For these institutions international newspapers are beyond the scope of the collection. Non-collecting institutions generally include small college libraries and specialized research libraries. In some cases these libraries provide access to newspapers held elsewhere through interlibrary loan (for retrospective materials) or through online aggregators (for current and retrospective materials).
2. **Discarding:** The largest number of respondents – masters-granting institutions and many doctoral-level universities – were in this category. These libraries acquire current international newspapers to support local curriculum and student-body use, but discard them after a specified period, which can range from three months to ten years. Generally, "discarding" libraries purchase microform or rely on interlibrary loan and/or online materials to support historical research. Here newspaper titles generally receive full-level cataloging, but no special preservation work is done.
3. **Retaining:** Just over one in four responding institutions attempt to retain and make available indefinitely any of their international newspapers in hard copy. Such libraries are also likely to acquire some newspapers originally in microform; discard hard copy of subscription titles when microforms arrive; and discard titles altogether that are "regarded as primarily of value for research on current events" or titles known or "assumed to be" filmed and available through CRL or other consortia. For titles that they retain in hard copy, these institutions are likely to make use of remote and local storage facilities with favorable climate control, and undertake some conservation and reformatting. Retaining libraries generally catalog at the full level with holdings attached. There are few projects that digitize international newspapers, though interest is high in cooperative cataloging, reformatting, and preservation efforts.
4. **Preserving:** In only a handful of libraries do vast collections of international newspapers remain important to the organization's mission. Just three libraries reported collections of over 3,000 non-U.S. newspaper titles that are retained permanently in either print or microform. (CRL has holdings of about 7,000 foreign titles.) The three institutions – namely, the Library of Congress, the Library and Archives of

The survey results make clear that even at top research universities and national institutions, preserving international newspapers in hard copy is increasingly rare.



Canada, and the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library – are atypical of even the largest university libraries in the scope of their collections and the centrality of preservation to their missions. Even for these libraries permanent preservation of print is still the exception for current newspapers, as microfilm remains the long-term format of choice for preserving newspaper holdings that do not have significant “artifactual value” or “historical significance.”

The survey results make clear that even at top research universities and national institutions, preserving international newspapers in hard copy is increasingly rare. Moreover, where historical print runs are being preserved indefinitely, institutions are often unable to determine with precision what they hold and how those holdings relate to similar holdings elsewhere. Many institutions depend on consortia and sharing arrangements to meet their research needs, and accordingly, interest in collaborative filming and cataloging runs high.

For more information about the International Coalition on Newspapers and the full text of the survey report, visit the [ICON web site](#). The International Coalition on Newspapers is a cooperative preservation project supported by the Center for Research Libraries and the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Partnership on African Theses and Dissertations

The Association of African Universities (AAU) has enlisted the Center for Research Libraries to help develop and implement an initiative designed to disseminate the research products of African scholars. Under the partnership the AAU and the Center will work together to devise a sustainable economic model and intellectual property management regime for disseminating theses and dissertations produced by scholars at African universities. The program will build upon the foundation of the Database of African Theses and Dissertations (DATAD), a cooperative AAU initiative of eleven universities in ten African nations, directed by Project Coordinator Mary Materu-Behitsa of the University of Ghana. The AAU is an international non-governmental organization established by the universities in Africa to promote interchange, contact, and cooperation among university institutions in Africa and encourage increased contracts between its members and the international academic world. The Center's work on the project is funded by the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, an initiative of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

DATAD Origins

Recognizing that significant intellectual wealth is contained in the graduate theses and dissertations produced by their scholars, several African universities have created databases to preserve, organize, and make discoverable those traditionally unpublished materials. Although an essential first step, the databases tended to be constructed and indexed to serve individual institutions and local needs. The impetus for integrating and developing these local efforts into a global access system was prompted by the rapid proliferation of the Internet in the mid-1990s and was formalized at a 1998 AAU workshop in Nairobi, Kenya. The initiative first took root as a feasibility study, followed by a three-year pilot project that led to DATAD's launch at the University of Ghana in Accra in April 2003. To learn more, visit the [DATAD Web site](#).

The second and current phase of DATAD has five objectives:

1. Create an environment conducive to research and publication in Africa
2. Build capacity in African universities for the electronic collection, management, and

dissemination of theses and dissertations

3. Increase visibility and improve access to the work of African scholars, both within the continent and beyond
4. Develop copyright procedures and regulations for the protection of the intellectual property rights of African university graduates and researchers
5. Provide support for other AAU networking and capacity-building programs

Electronic dissemination of unpublished gray literature presents significant challenges. "Building capacity at each institution is one of the keys to success," noted Materu-Behitsa during a recent visit to the Center. "It requires patience." Dr. Materu-Behitsa indicated that several of the member libraries have adequate computer support, but others still rely primarily on paper documentation.

The Center for Research Libraries has assembled a team of specialists in scholarly communications and intellectual property, who will work with the AAU and member universities to formulate a business plan for ongoing, sustainable activities; and produce a copyright guide for managing intellectual property and copyright issues within the DATAD framework. The plan and guide will be developed in consultation with representatives of DATAD member institutions at a planning workshop to be held in February 2004, during visits by team members to several African universities, and through ongoing consultation with DATAD planners and other stakeholders from the African higher education and knowledge communities.

Sustainability

The development of a business plan is no small matter, especially when it involves synchronizing an existing international operation involving numerous institutions with differing administrative and operational systems, all within a rapidly changing, competitive international knowledge market. To achieve DATAD objectives, the blueprint must accommodate membership growth, ensure equity to knowledge creators and other investing parties, and generate a reliable, sustainable revenue stream.

In an age of automated communications and point-and-click data transmission, copyright and intellectual property issues require careful study and planning.



In an age of automated communications and point-and-click data transmission, copyright and intellectual property issues require careful study and planning. As in other nations and cultures, the goal is twofold: to create an authoritative global marketplace for African scholarship and research products, while ensuring that the benefits afforded by copyright and intellectual property law accrue to the authors and investing institutions.

Workshop

The February workshop will be the first step in developing a copyright guide for dissertations and other unpublished materials made available through DATAD. It will provide an opportunity for current and potential DATAD participants (i.e., university librarians, faculty, and administrators) to become more familiar with the rights and intellectual property issues peculiar to dissertations, theses, and other forms of grey literature. Presentation topics will include international aspects of copyright, the economics of scholarly communications with special bearing on unpublished materials, and practices adopted by other electronic theses and dissertations projects.

The workshop will also serve as a forum and consensus-building event on prospective practices and policies governing dissemination of DATAD information and content. The Center's team will solicit attendees' concerns about centralized archiving and electronic publication of materials as part of the workshop, and will also seek to learn more about participants' aspirations regarding the returns and benefits that their universities might derive from greater dissemination of theses and dissertations.



Increasing Use of Center Collections

To help libraries derive the highest possible benefit from their investment in the Center, the staff is working to make collection holdings more discoverable to faculty, students, library staff, and other users. In 2003 the Center re-engineered intake and cataloging processes, and achieved some good results: this year the staff added nearly 200,000 titles to the online catalog, bringing the total to over 760,000 records.

Beyond cataloging, the Center staff is finding other ways to increase collection visibility. It implemented a top-down redesign of the Center's Web site in 2003, making navigation and finding information intuitively easier than before. The site now features a list of archival collections, periodicals, books, and topical materials available on microform from the Center. Visit [Microform Index](#).

Focus, the Center's online newsletter, now contains more information about particular collections and collection areas, leading more researchers to CRL holdings through open-Web searches.

The Center staff also is "closing the distance" between the user and the Center's holdings by delivering Center materials more rapidly. Between October 2002 and October 2003, Center staff increased the number of interlibrary loans processed within 24 hours by almost half, and the number of requests delivered within 24 hours by 30 percent. As a result the Center staff is seeing increased use of collections: loans and document delivery are up 5 percent over 2002.

The Center's Web site now has information about approaches that some member universities have taken to enhance visibility of Center collections (visit the [Web site](#)). Investing time and effort in promoting the visibility of Center resources can help faculty and graduate students avoid the cost of unnecessary research trips; help interlibrary loan staff minimize time spent on materials needed for extended periods of time (eliminating the repeat requests required for extended loans from other lenders); and generally ensure access to a rich and diverse pool of resources for advanced research.

To support these efforts the Center recently made two new staff appointments:

Don Dyer, the new membership and communications coordinator, will work to get more and better information about the Center, its collections, and its programs to members, partners, and constituents. In this capacity he will edit this newsletter and annual report, and coordinate additions and changes to the Web site. He also will support the Center's efforts to grow its membership base and its partnerships with other organizations. Don comes to his new role from the Missouri Arts Council, where as program specialist he was responsible for program research and development, fundraising, and creating new private and federal partnerships for that state agency.

Morgan Elmore has joined the Center as Web and digital library specialist. Morgan will work closely with Technical Services, Access Services, and Acquisitions to maintain and add content to the Center's Web site, expand digital document delivery, and assist the Center and its members in making our collections more visible. Prior to joining the Center staff Morgan was a member of Cornell University's Digital Library and Information Technologies department where she performed a variety of technical, administrative, training, and design functions to enhance access to their library's resources.

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