

The Global Dimensions of Scholarship and Research Libraries

Finding Synergies, Creating Convergence

April 2013

Introduction

The *Global Dimensions of Scholarship and Research Libraries: A Forum on the Future* brought together faculty, administrators, librarians, and representatives from scholarly societies, associations, and funding agencies for two days in December 2012 to consider the future of research libraries and their role in advancing international scholarship and the globalization of the universities of which they are a part. The Forum, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and co-hosted by the Duke University Libraries and the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), covered broad ground. Participants considered shifts in the directions of research; the new global information pipeline; the tension surrounding traditional “area studies” programs and the transition to “global” thematic programs; the expansion and diversification of information formats and sources; and the challenges to libraries of new roles, demands, and means of access and discovery. The Forum synthesized trends in scholarly attention and in how universities are organizing to address overarching issues of relevance to more than one region, and the ways that research libraries are – or should be – responding to these changes.

This preliminary report shares a vision of the new, broad-gauged information infrastructure and services that will energize scholarship on issues of local and international concern, now and into the future. Its recommendations are offered as a point of departure for discussions among Forum participants and other stakeholders, whose responses will inform a more comprehensive final blueprint that proposes specific strategies to address the challenges of locating and using global information. Consensus around a few overarching principles will thus lead to a concrete action agenda.

From Area Studies to Globalization: The Challenge of Realignment

We have not yet reached a post-area studies world. Nonetheless, our traditional area centers—many with a long history of funding support from the now-waning U. S. Department of Education Title VI program—are increasingly viewed as the way of the past. Research library assumptions and practices are changing as well. Older models of “comprehensive” collecting are dead; multi-institutional collaboration within North America needs to be expanded or supplemented with broader, systematic global partnerships; most students and many faculty rely primarily on digital resources. While some elements of the decades-old “crisis in foreign acquisitions” still nag, it is time to worry less about the size and scope of our print collections and instead to emphasize digital means of discovery and access. By looking forward rather than to the past, and by capitalizing on new technological capabilities and global relationships, we can construct an innovative and robust network of libraries, scholars, publishers, and vendors that will bring digitally accessible foreign information resources to bear on all areas of research and learning.

The foundations for these transformative measures are strong. Broadening agendas for research and teaching are expanding scholarly (and therefore library) appetites for primary sources, news, and popular culture from all parts of the world. Our universities and societies are grappling with globalization and its cross-cutting issues of practice and public policy. Meanwhile, the worldwide output of scholarship, popular expression, and data continues to explode, with often-problematic marketplace trends further complicating the picture. Our research library collections have always reflected the international geographies of scholarship and print publication. Sustaining similar coverage today requires fresh thinking; a brief gloss on each of these themes will only begin to suggest the scale of change.

Evolving scholarly agendas

Traditional area studies scholarship remains vital and robust, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. But the perspectives of professional schools and policymakers in the global arena are increasingly prominent as well, and even in the arts and sciences scholarly attention is turning toward broad transnational issues such as financial flows, commodity chains, religion, energy and water resources, world music, and social justice. These topics, along with others like crime and disease, environmental stress and climate change, and cross-border movements of people and ideas, are international in scope. Many are being addressed by cross-national teams. All require robust access to international information.

The globalized academy

The globalization of U. S. universities has become a strategic mandate. Individual faculty members are engaged in broader and more frequent international scholarly collaborations, the components of global knowledge are changing, and digital communications are allowing more wide-ranging exchanges than ever before. University investments in global programs continue to accelerate. For example, new positions of vice provost for global or international affairs are increasingly routine. Early outreach efforts from professional schools to other countries or regions have grown into full-blown globalization programs that encompass many campus centers, departments, and schools, often with interchangeable faculty, students and collaborative research efforts. Partnerships with foreign universities and new overseas campuses are more and more common. As academic programs expand and globalization deepens its roots, the need for knowledge of many different cultures and histories is ever more urgent. Understanding the global is often based on knowledge of the local.

The student dimension

The changing student dimension is noteworthy as well. Whereas in the past some subset of students would go abroad for a summer, a semester, or perhaps an academic year, the college experience now often requires not just study abroad but deeper participation in-country in community service, a public health project, or a research program. Many returning students then continue their language learning and enthusiastically seek to build on their understanding of other cultures. Pedagogies based on case studies rather than discipline-specific knowledge further encourage global perspectives. International students in U.S. universities seek to apply what they learn to cases drawn from their home countries. The MOOC phenomenon ("Massive Open On-Line

Courses”) attracts global audiences, sometimes in the hundreds of thousands, to new modalities of distance instruction. These international participants again expect a global context for their learning, as well as open access to many resources for their research and scholarship. The continuing globalization of the curriculum will both stimulate and reflect these trends.

The landscape of global information

Publishing output across the globe continues to increase. A great deal of material is still issued exclusively in print format and remains very difficult to acquire. For its part, the digital revolution both propels globalization and embodies its effects. Today’s torrent of electronic expression shares the stage with a sustained flood of new analog materials; both are dwarfed by the tsunami of raw digital data. In the face of this overwhelming supply of information, even our most comprehensive libraries seem ever less significant. New intermediaries from outside the academic realm are shaping access to some market-based materials, even as users have to pick their own way through a growing mass of unmoored information. The environment is packed with challenges and possibilities.

Libraries and their collections

Over the years and the decades, area specialists in U. S. research libraries have painstakingly built up our expansive collections country by country, region by region. Particularly for the developing world, these U. S. holdings are often stronger than those in the countries of origin; they should be the pride of our higher education establishment. Area librarians, and the resources they make available, are necessary complements to experts in global topics and themes. The skills of our international and area studies specialists, and the richness and reach of the collections they oversee, are important foundational assets for global universities. Rather than being dismissed as marginalized relics of the past, these units of the research library should look toward a major role on a larger stage.

Nonetheless, the continuing strength of our international print holdings matches less and less well with emerging library approaches to research and learning. As we have noted, digital resources are increasingly central to the landscape of information production. Today’s users then expect readily accessible electronic resources as they conduct their work. New library services, as a general proposition, emphasize digital resources and tools. We need to address these realities in our strategies to sustain, celebrate, and fully utilize our analog holdings of international publications, while also building robust digital access and services for the future.

Recommendations

Our research libraries provide tools, content, and services to support the scholarly needs of our faculty and students. Library programs, and indeed our organizations as a whole, must align fully with our institutions’ evolving international objectives. Three closely linked, strategic recommendations will facilitate this transformation. Research libraries must energetically shift toward digital sources as they continue their support for international scholarship. They must fully internationalize all of their programs and services. And they must build active collaborations, on an international as well as national level, that embrace all relevant players and partners.

1. Aggressively pursue broad digital access to international information resources

The behavior and expressed preferences of our students and scholars reveal increasing eagerness for digital access to information. Not only do users anticipate that the resources they seek will be available in electronic formats, but they are ever less likely to seek out information that is not readily accessible online. A corollary is that knowledge and scholarship in digital form creates and accelerates its own demand: easy mechanisms for discovery and access lead to expanded usage and citations, reinforcing future use. While these attributes of digital resources today apply primarily to English-language resources—which comprise the bulk of the electronic universe now at our users’ disposal—enhanced digital access will similarly extend the reach and impact of non-English materials. Digital resources, finally, are by their nature accessible without regard to time and space. Students and scholars throughout the world, including in the countries that produced materials now held only in U.S. libraries, will benefit from access to resources that would otherwise remain out of reach. Digital technologies can also overcome the conundrum of unique materials that are consequently at risk, whatever their location, for want of surrogates that ensure back-ups as they also facilitate access.

Proposed areas for action

- Build a comprehensive, shared collection of public domain digital resources from around the world, engaging scholars and information experts from all fields and regions.
- Inventory and link current digital projects, identifying and actively addressing gaps in coverage.
- Work with publishers, vendors, and other partners to provide new resources in digital formats – whether born-digital or analog conversions – and including licensing terms and conditions that support resource sharing.
- Encourage scholars, worldwide, to deposit and/or digitize their own research materials and results in Open Access repositories.
- Explore new acquisitions mechanisms (for example “Catch & Release” collection development) to expand digital offerings, non-custodial archiving, and retention of scarce or unique patrimonial resources in their places of origin.
- Create and promulgate model agreements for international digitization partnerships.
- Work with national libraries, publishers, scholarly groups, and other appropriate agencies to resolve issues of intellectual property related to access and preservation.

2. Internationalize research library services and perspectives

Many U.S. research libraries, reflecting the priorities of their home universities, have geared their collections and services to English-speaking users seeking English-language materials. Diminishing library budgets, an emergent insistence on acquisitions that reflect immediate user demand, and the emergence of English as the *lingua franca* for scientific publications (which are also associated with marketplace distortions that have skewed library expenditures toward exorbitantly priced journal packages) all reinforce these tendencies. The mandates of globalization, by contrast, require broadly international collections, perspectives, and skills. Global universities require libraries that reflect this imperative in all of their services.

Proposed areas for action

- Engage faculty and students conducting research abroad as “agents” to identify relevant digital and analog sources, and to help build networks for future collaboration.
- Ensure that all library services and tools accommodate a full range of scripts, character sets, and languages.
- Develop programs and services that bring international expertise and perspectives to services hitherto based in U.S./English-language sources and scholarship. For example, economic analysis or research in global public health should as a matter of course be informed by international resources and perspectives. This will also reinforce the bridge between traditional “area” librarianship and emergent global concerns.
- Develop staff training programs that ensure generalized awareness of international and global perspectives as services are provided.
- Assess the implications for libraries, as well as desired outcomes, of MOOCs and other online teaching.
- Recognize the demand by increasingly “globalized” students and faculty for research materials from beyond the traditional English-language collections, and implement collecting policies to reflect that demand.

3. Broaden and internationalize library collaborations

Research libraries in the United States have a long history of cooperation that includes both formal consortia and ad hoc partnerships. Area studies resources, which can be difficult to acquire and which may then receive little use, have particularly lent themselves to cooperative action. Some region-specific efforts are now expanding to include both international partners and the scholars, publishers, vendors, and others who are engaged in creating and disseminating international information. Museums, non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and other institutions concerned with knowledge and information are likewise relevant. We need to consciously construct a more comprehensive, multilateral, and distributed international base for collaborative action.

Proposed areas for action

- Pursue international activities within existing and new “global” programs by recruiting participants (and leaders) from outside the United States.
- Engage more fully with libraries and kindred organizations beyond the United States and Canada through umbrella organizations such as the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).
- Foster research library collaborations with non-U. S. institutions and particularly through universities’ international offices and campuses.
- Develop a better understanding of the potential roles and contributions of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), national libraries, foreign universities, and other organizations as partners in international digital initiatives.
- Explore international partnerships in the realms of user support, technical processing, and preservation, as well as collections and content.

- Promote international analyses of and responses to intellectual property issues, and global action to provide the most generous possible access to currently-produced information.
- Explore collaborations that have arisen in other countries and regions (for example Germany's distributed responsibilities for area acquisitions, European Union projects, etc.) as a basis for their further extension and also as possible models for new regional or international initiatives.
- Develop an inventory of successful collaborations and identify areas in which new partnerships would be beneficial.

Governance and Funding

The recommendations in this report challenge libraries to engage much more deeply with partners beyond their campus, their region, and their continent. This is not a call for a centrally administered program, but there is an obvious need for coordination and communication. The optimal governance model will need to be determined and might include the Global Resources Network of the Center for Research Libraries, another existing organization, or an entirely new entity. Whatever the structure, it will have to be broadly inclusive.

Internal institutional reallocations of funds will be needed to support more ambitious digital projects and partnerships, and external funding will be required to make a difference in the speed with which global information is made available. Foundations, funding agencies, and international programs all have a role to play and will be asked to consider providing support. We should think broadly and internationally, not only of the U. S. foundations that have contributed so much over the years but to others such as The Arcadia Fund, Fundación MAPFRE, UNESCO's Memory of the World, and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), all of which have demonstrated a commitment to preserving and making widely accessible global scholarly resources.

Next Steps

Post-Forum dissemination plans call for presentations to scholarly societies, library organizations, and area studies specialists, and for advocacy with university decision-makers as well as the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). This broad sharing of findings and recommendations is directed toward concrete suggestions and strategies to enact the recommendations, rather than endorsements alone. Each association, constituency, or initiative will thus be challenged to engage with the recommendations by defining its respective role(s) in accomplishing change. We will also post this report online and share it with additional policy- and decision-makers in order to elicit their proposals, comments, and suggestions. Nuanced understandings of the recommendations as they apply to specific communities will be essential to coherent, practical measures to align research library agendas with globalizing scholarship and teaching.

What this might mean, more specifically, is suggested as we consider a number of promising projects and approaches that were identified during the December 2012 Global Forum. Such initiatives as the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme, the University of Texas's pioneering work with Guatemalan police archives, the West Africa pilot acquisitions project of the

Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), and Harvard's Program for Latin American Libraries and Archives (PLALA) all exemplify activities with strategies and goals to review and perhaps refine in light of the Forum. Structures and groups such as the Library of Congress Overseas Operations Program (LC/OVOP), CRL's Global Resource Network projects, or HathiTrust, among many others, will also play a role. A complete inventory of work that is either already underway or that has the potential to enrich the collective collections of global and digitized scholarly resources will further ensure that our recommendations build from a solid foundation.

We will thus broaden the conversation, engage a wide range of individuals and institutions, and implement or reinforce concrete actions based on the recommendations in this report. While there are different and important roles for each stakeholder, we expect that each group will examine how the recommendations overlay its own aspirations and activities, and then take specific steps to advance the ideas advocated. The world is changing rapidly, and there have been many, many meetings and discussions about what to do about "foreign acquisitions." We are eager to generate ideas from both organizations and individuals and promptly incorporate them into an ambitious and solid action plan.

Conclusion

Society, scholarship and our universities are increasingly focused upon and responsive to today's global environment. Cultural expression, scholarly communication, and data are moving toward digital modalities of creation and use. The scale of meaningful activity in support of these shifts has clearly surpassed what libraries—and their institutions—can accomplish on their own. New perspectives and approaches are essential as the entire scholarly community addresses this emergent context. We have both the opportunity and the responsibility to develop a coherent strategy to advance international scholarship. The Global Forum's recommendations will move us decisively along this path.

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Dissemination

The associations and organizations with which the report will be shared include the following. Other international and foreign-based organizations will be identified in consultation with partners.

- African Studies Association and its Africana Librarians' Council (ASA/ALC)
- American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS)
- American Historical Association (AHA)
- American Library Association's Chief Collection Development Officers (ALA/CCDO)
- Asian Studies Association and Council on East Asian Libraries (ASA/CEAL)
- Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies and its Committee on Library and Information Resources (ASEEES/CLIR)
- Association of American Universities (AAU)
- Association of College and Research Libraries and its Western European Specialists Section (ACRL/WESS)
- Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA)
- Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL)
- Association of Research Libraries (ARL)
- The British Library
- Center for Research Libraries (CRL)
- Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia (CORMOSEA)
- Committee on South Asian Libraries and Documentation (CONSALD)
- Conference of European National Librarians (CENL)
- Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC)
- Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)
- Council of National Resource Center Directors (CNRC)
- Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR)
- The European Library
- Europeana
- HathiTrust
- International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)
- Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)
- Ithaka S&R
- JISC
- Latin American Studies Association (LASA)
- Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche (LIBER)
- Library of Congress
- Middle East Libraries Association (MELA)
- Middle East Studies Association (MESA)
- Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM)
- Social Science Research Council (SSRC)