



A BIMONTHLY REPORT ON RESEARCH LIBRARY ISSUES AND ACTIONS FROM ARL, CNI, AND SPARC

THE GLOBAL RECORD: UNDERSTANDING ITS USE AND ENSURING ITS FUTURE FOR SCHOLARSHIP

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A broad range of working scholars and librarians convened on March 24–25, 2005, to surface scholarly trends in the use of the global record and identify issues and build the community of conversation around strategies for ensuring the survival, preservation, and use of the global historical record. The conference was organized and hosted by Yale University on behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU)/Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Global Resources Network (GRN).¹ The GRN advisory committee participated actively throughout and will follow the conference with an enhanced planning process identifying next steps. Similar conferences held in other parts of North America may expand the conversation, and targeted GRN projects designed to improve access and use of such materials will also be under discussion. The conference was cosponsored by the Yale Center for International and Area Studies (YCIAS) and the Yale University Library, and took place in the welcoming and appropriate facilities of Luce Hall, YCIAS's home. There the walls are lined with maps that provocatively show different ways of viewing the world, both technically (different projections of a global community) and historically (maps from different times and places).

YCIAS Associate Director Nancy Ruther welcomed the group, and University Librarian Alice Prochaska expanded upon the themes and goals of the conference. She noted that discerning scholarly research trends is important for a whole range of academic disciplines. Documents; physical artifacts; the written, visual, and physical records in all their innumerable forms, are fundamental to living in an environment of laws and proof, to understanding our

identity and our universe, and moving forward our societies. Information in the virtual technological universe can be at least as vulnerable as in the physical—and in many ways even more so—to loss, destruction, and distortion. “If,” she noted, “we think about the ways in which documentation supports life, then we are also telling ourselves something about the fundamental importance of our work, and the immensity of our charge to get it right.”

Prochaska continued: “This conference brings together librarians, archivists, and academic administrators with scholars whose research depends on the materials libraries and archives provide. We hope for a wide-ranging and enlightening dialog here on the theme of preserving the scholarly record in the international sphere. We need to consider the trends in scholarship and the gaps in the record: where will the gaps arise in the future, and where is the record most vulnerable? What can we do to preserve vulnerable and endangered materials? How can the librarian’s understanding of what is possible, the threats and the opportunities, work most effectively with the scholar’s knowledge of what may be needed most and what may be most valuable in the future?”

Identifying the Challenges

The conference opened with a keynote address by Jonathan Spence, Sterling Professor of History at Yale. Spence is perhaps the most distinguished western scholar of Chinese history living and working today, well known for books such as *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. President of the American Historical Association for 2004–2005, Spence’s theme during his term of office was to promote awareness, preservation, and use of archival materials. His own career has drawn heavily on experiences in Chinese archives since the 1960s and he was admirably

prepared to give the conference its direction and intensity of commitment to common goals. Spence challenged conference attendees with key questions about access to world resources, such as: what is to be saved, by whom, for what purpose, where, and does “ambiance” of archives matter? Interspersed with these probing questions were tales of research challenges in archives from the U.K.’s Public Record Office (now National Archives) to remote hamlets in China.

David Stam, Librarian Emeritus of Syracuse University and a historian of libraries—and most recently of polar regions—addressed speakers and members of the GRN advisory committee on the first evening. He noted that while the issues being addressed now may feel new and different, they in fact have nearly everything in common with the burning questions facing scholars and librarians 30 or more years ago, early in his career. Like the proverbial iceberg, perhaps one tenth of materials are in view at any time, many are changing and disappearing—loss is inevitable. Resources are thinly stretched, it is hard to know where to begin archiving, and numerous tales of serendipitous discovery by scholars suggest that it is hard to know which materials will be useful in the future. He advised the audience to be pragmatic rather than perfectionist; to recognize that large segments of the record will be lost; to admit that subjective guesses are better than none; to cultivate scholar-librarian connections; and to retain optimism.

The subsequent formal sessions of the conference may be grouped into four categories: discussion of access to and uses of traditional media; discussion of uses of new media; working sessions on themes and issues; and a concluding discussion that included direction-setting.

Traditional Media and Formats

Speakers on the use of traditional media included two Yale faculty and a distinguished European librarian. Graham Shaw, Head of Asian, Pacific, and African Collections, and Program Director of the Endangered Archives Program, at the British Library, opened the second day’s sessions by reporting on exciting developments at the British Library, funded by the Lisbet Rausing Foundation, in a comprehensive program to support endangered archive projects around the world. The Endangered Archives Program focuses on less-developed regions of the world, marked by a keen awareness that the losses to archives are more often the result of human activity than natural depredation. The particular interest of the British Library is in archives in nonwestern countries and especially those in private, noninstitutional hands, but they survey a wider range of collections as well.

For each archive with which the British Library agrees to work, the project will be able to make a grant,

usually on the order of £50,000 to locate the collection, assure a suitable home, and take appropriate steps to make backup copies. (A condition of the arrangement is usually that the British Library itself receives such a preservation copy, whether microform, digital, or in another medium.) At the present time, the proposal review committee is looking at a first batch of proposals that will result in up to 34 fully formed projects, many of which the British Library hopes to fund on the first iteration. Among the collections Shaw described were home movies of Chinese family life in colonial Java and radio archives from the Balkans and Iran. Two-thirds of the first-round proposals come from scholars and others in North America and Europe, but three-fourths of the resources come from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Micronesia.

At the same time, the British Library is able to make a limited number of grants on the order of £10,000 for pilot projects that may lead to more extensive involvement and is able to grant four six-month bursaries per year for librarians and archivists from around the world to come to the British Library and work in their area of interest. The library hopes to build a community of global leaders and practitioners who will preserve and document important materials and, at the same time, build awareness of the importance of such activity and transmit a sense of best practices to colleagues around the world.

The second presentation in this session came from a professor/librarian team. Ben Kiernan, Whitney Griswold Professor of History at Yale, spoke of the history of Cambodia and its regimes (with six dramatic changes since 1945) and of the 1975–79 Khmer Rouge regime in particular. Kiernan is known worldwide for his work on genocide studies and especially for his deep knowledge of the history of Cambodia and the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime. With the overthrow of that regime in 1979, there came the surprising discovery that the Khmer Rouge had in fact been meticulous record keepers and documenters of their own savagery. (In the course of the day, a theme emerged: some of the most brutal regimes have been the most careful record keepers.) At Phnom Penh’s infamous Tuol Sleng prison, when the leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime—sensing their imminent overthrow—ordered the destruction of records, the prison commander shockingly preferred to spend his final hours in power assuring that the last of his prisoners had been murdered, so an extraordinary trove of records survived. At another provincial prison, an immense quantity of material survived, though much of it had gone up literally in smoke—used by local people as cigarette papers. Finally, in 1996, when Kiernan-led efforts were well under way to preserve documents, a

vital trove of records from the Khmer Rouge secret police came to light.

Richard Richie, Curator of the Southeast Asia Collection in the Yale University Library, then took the stage to tell of the trials and travails of assuring the preservation of these archives in Phnom Penh, where he himself had flown a World War II-vintage microfilm camera and set up the work flow that brought undeveloped film back to the U.S. The film was reviewed in the U.S. and, often enough, orders were sent back to Phnom Penh to reshoot pieces of the record that had not been satisfactorily imaged. The great value of this project lay in making the material far more widely available, but also in assuring the simple survival of the information by making it possible for microform copies outside Cambodia to give confidence that no internal power struggle could destroy a vital record of humankind's inhumanity to its own.

The third speaker in this series was Laura Engelstein, Henry S. McNeil Professor of History at Yale, a specialist in Russian and Soviet history mainly of the late 19th and 20th centuries. She took the audience through a tour of the adventures of Russian archives through the two great 20th-century regime changes, those of 1917 and 1991. The revolutionaries turned out to have a strong interest not only in documenting their own struggle, but also in preserving records of earlier times, as much to document the horrors from which they thought they had rescued the country as anything else. Even with superb archives, there are numerous real obstacles, including endless bureaucratic ones, as well as many political, and even more resource-based. For example, one of the treasured libraries that Engelstein has used most, formerly miserably inhospitable and cold, now is closed down for renovation or rebuilding. The archives themselves have now moved well outside normal city limits, are nearly impossible to access, and it is not clear when or if or where the archives will be opened again. Thus, for some time, authoritative study of imperial Russia will not be possible.

Enter the New Media

The session on new media archives introduced a similar team of scholars and librarians. David Germano, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, depicting himself as a recovering narcissistic textualist who had made himself into a new kind of

scholar by his engagement with primary materials and the contemporary digital practices of preservation and use, outlined his work on Tibetan and Himalayan materials and showed examples of the resulting Web-based archive that he and his colleagues are building. He described in detail the challenges of representing unusual texts and their contexts and interconnections that cross multiple cultures, nations, and institutions. His project is marked in particular by a strong sense of ethical responsibility to the often-beleaguered communities it studies. He demonstrated how the project team has combined video footage of scholars and poets with textual records of what they are saying on the video or of

the texts they are discussing, so that those with little or no familiarity with the languages can follow and understand the substance of what is being preserved. The project also includes the makings of a kind of Tibetan "OED"—of a very new kind, wherein participants around the world submit information of the kind that used to go on slips to a shed in North Oxford for the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but now the information can be input directly through a Web interface in a collaborative project spanning the globe. The final demonstration was of a gazetteer of Tibet and the Himalayas with remarkably deep and rich information and mapping that continues to grow more complex and useful, mixing textual, visual, audiovisual, and mapping materials. A three-dimensional navigable model of an important monastery was linked to database text and image libraries that give a full and vivid sense of the place and its community.

Next, Priscilla Offenbauer, Research Analyst in Area Studies in the Federal Research Division of the Library



AAU/ARL GLOBAL RESOURCES NETWORK KEY LINKS

Global Resources Network Progress Reports

<http://www.arl.org/collect/grp/pubs.html>

Global Resources Network at Center for Research Libraries

<http://www.crl.edu/grn/index.asp>

of Congress (LC), spoke as a researcher addressing the challenges of navigating a digital environment. Her work within what is effectively a research institute inside LC has her regularly producing reports for other government agencies on assorted topics such as current Chinese immigration/emigration, military history for a training program for U.S. Army generals, history of the German military, history and current state of Dutch and Danish space programs, and the worldwide history of human trafficking. For the latter project, she detailed how a wide range of gray literature that she brought to light was consequently collected and built into a database and digital archive by the client agency. She captured vividly how that study required bringing together and then preserving, ad hoc, materials that would not be discovered by standard research models. Her closing account was of the large-scale program the U.S. Army carried out for decades to train its general officers. Difficulties came, first in the 1990s, when what used to be done on paper was increasingly compiled in more ephemeral digital form, and then after September 11, 2001, when the whole project was veiled in security classification. As a result, the research materials she developed for the training became essentially unavailable.

The last speaker on this section of the program was Joanne Rudof, Archivist of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale. Her moving account described both the way in which new material comes to light today, 60 years after the end of World War II, and the risks to which materials are liable as media change. An important collection of witness testimonies was made by a researcher who died in 1961 and who had used reel-to-reel wire recording techniques. Mimeo-graphed transcripts of these recordings have been microfilmed, but a book published on the basis of these materials did such an ambitious job of re-editing and retranslating that there is real need to go back again to the most original form of evidence to check and compare the accounts. The Fortunoff archive opened in 1982 and has since been used by hundreds of visitors intensively. The results are more widely varied in scope and genre than would ever have been imagined, with books and articles in a dizzying variety of disciplines, documentary film, as well as substantial work with courts and other government agencies to identify witnesses and organize testimony. There is progress in preservation and upgrading of quality of, for example, the pre-1961 wire recordings, but at the same time, a veritable Noah's ark of video formats comes into the archive's hands, each technology requiring its own special handling. "Obsolescence is guaranteed," Rudof noted soberingly.

Engaging the Participants

The afternoon discussion and breakout sessions were, on

the evidence of the reports afterwards, wide-ranging and lively, responding thoughtfully to the morning presentations and adding to a sense of direction. Any account is necessarily impressionistic and scattered, but issues discussed included: the usefulness of open source principles and practices in assuring access and preservation; issues of rights and permissions (with such poignant questions as when and how permission is given by witnesses to tragedy for their accounts to be opened to scholars or published more widely); calculation of the right mix of players to have at the table for GRN strategic discussions (not only librarians, archivists, and scholars, but commercial publishers, learned societies, government agencies, and representatives of the museum community); progress on a registry of digital objects and progress on creation and use of Universal Resource Names; potential cooperative allocation of discretionary resources so as to increase capture of resources for our institutions and the scholarly common; the possibility of a systematic effort to identify archives throughout the world and with it an effort to communicate to archivists what their role and responsibilities can be; and finally the need for enthusiasts—the people who can make good things happen.

Trends and Approaches:

A Summation by Donald Waters

The concluding session was introduced by ARL Executive Director Duane Webster, who expressed the thanks of the AAU/ARL GRN and all participants to those who had made the day possible and introduced Donald J. Waters, Senior Program Officer at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, for final reflections.

Waters's wide-ranging talk was not simply a recapitulation of the meeting, but a work of important reflection in its own right. Has, he asked, the problem of global-resources archives been articulated sufficiently and with sufficient clarity? He identified two main issues: (1) primary and secondary source materials in other countries are not being collected comprehensively enough to sustain scholarship; and (2) new formats are emerging more quickly than we are keeping up with them. He proposed three ways to move ahead in response to these difficulties:

1. Focus on broader policy and economic issues that impact the collection of primary and secondary source materials.
2. Emphasize forms of cooperation and competition among libraries.
3. Build cooperation in technical, human, and methodological infrastructures.

From a new book, *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education*, by Mellon Foundation president William G. Bowen and other Foundation colleagues,²

Waters cited sobering statistics about the dwindling role of the U.S. in scientific and technical education and productivity, which is marked as well by the rising role of global partners in education. For example, the number of doctorates in all fields received by U.S. citizens in the last 30 years has actually declined by 5%, with even sharper declines in the physical sciences and engineering, but the total number of doctorates awarded here has grown strikingly, all due to foreign nationals working within our system. The implications of this for thinking about roles and responsibilities in collecting the global record need to be addressed.

But there are positive signs as well, of which Waters particularly emphasized the transformation of pedagogy from the theoretical to the practical, thus increasing reliance on primary materials for pedagogy. Rising capacity elsewhere may mean that global responsibilities can be more widely distributed around the world. Preservation of the global record is, after all, a global responsibility.

Economic and policy questions will become more urgent and require us to address issues of cooperation and competition, particularly as enterprises such as Google provide greater access to printed publications. The resultant penetration of the commercial sector into the academy increasingly makes it hard to distinguish libraries based on their holdings; they will instead be distinguished by their special collections of rare and unique materials. If distinction is based on special collections, then libraries are largely in competition and cooperation becomes inherently more challenging. At what levels should libraries compete or cooperate? At a minimum, they should cooperate effectively in formation of common infrastructure and organized distribution of finding aids, for whatever service is provided requires interoperability and speed of access. They can compete in the services they actually deliver. The organized dissemination of resources, moreover, will give rise to large issues of resources for the sustainability of these efforts on an appropriate scale.

The questions for Waters are: At what level should the Mellon Foundation exercise its interventions? What incentives are needed in the humanities to create and sustain such projects? The foundation discusses these topics with discipline-based groups of scholars and librarians on a regular basis. Three methodological issues have surfaced for him in these conversations:

- Language issues: Interest in language programs is lagging and dropping. Time to completion for

doctorates does not give time to comprehend adequately language and culture.

- Sustainability and business models beyond initial investment: There is a need for exposure to various kinds of sustainability options and models.
- Intellectual property: Legal protection is given in some countries to archives; now “archives” can be almost any information on any computer. Old definitions do not cover the current definition of archives. Libraries are short of legal expertise, which is closely tied to sustainability issues.

Waters concluded his remarks with an example from the Mellon Foundation’s engagement in a large project to document and preserve materials in the silk-road community of Dunhuang, China, where huge library collections were rediscovered early in the 20th century. The initial agreement to do this work was completely inadequate and so Mellon engaged in protracted and difficult negotiations, which required a combination of knowledge, creativity, and diplomacy.

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Personal Thoughts about Future Directions

Few pastimes are as informative and stimulating for librarians and archivists as hearing some of today’s leading scholars describe the ways in which they work, the deep meaning of that work for them, and the value of their scholarship for current and future generations. In a concentrated one-and-a-half days, the GRN conference hosted at Yale provided a delicious and all too infrequent collegial opportunity to listen, reflect, and plan.

The AAU/ARL GRN project grew directly out of the AAU Research Libraries Project, whose initial work in 1991–1994 recognized access to global resources as one of the main challenges facing research institutions. Increasingly, member universities had begun to position themselves as “global institutions,” demand for foreign materials to support scholarship and teaching was rising rapidly, and available resources were not growing sufficiently to meet the demand. The 1994 “Report of the AAU Task Force on Acquisition and Distribution of Foreign Language and Area Studies Materials” recommended technological solutions via a distributed, cooperative approach.³ That report specifically recommended three distinct pilot projects in areas of Latin American, Japanese, and German resources; each of the three projects has moved forward, variously, with the Latin America project finding its way with the most

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alacrity. Now, some 10 years later, the initial project grouping has expanded beyond the original Latin American Table of Contents initiative, which itself is long past pilot phase, finding a permanent place in the Latin Americanist Research Resources Project. The various subprojects are facilitating access to information of specific types for their regions of the world.

But, the gap between university ambitions and available resources has, if anything, widened. During the last 10 years, AAU and ARL member institutions have intensified their global ambitions and self-definitions. Yale, the institution I know best, is surely typical of many others in its emphasis on recruitment of the best possible students, faculty, and researchers from around the world; in developing and attracting world and educational leaders to its doors not only for diplomatic visits but also for leadership seminars in all aspects of higher education activity; expanding its research and study abroad opportunities; signing partnership agreements with universities in emerging countries such as China; opening courses or campuses abroad. I could go on.

The fact is that Yale's President Richard Levin has declared Yale to be a global university, and, the library is actively supporting that strategic vision. What does this mean for us? Our library, like many others, has had a long tradition of supporting individual area studies, with particular strength in seven of them and emerging activity on a smaller level with a handful of others. Our area curators and staff are terrific, and we continue to increase our investment in human resources and collections in global activities; there is never enough, of course, but still we are fortunate. The fact is also that the more traditional "area studies" way of looking at and thinking about our library is no longer sufficient. While we need to continue our area studies work, we also now recognize that much of what we do, the programs we participate in, and many of the staff we engage—not only in the humanities but also in the social sciences, medicine, law, arts, and much more—are international, global, committed to content and resources and people around the world.

In short, we are beginning to learn to think of ourselves as more than a group of area collections specialists; who we are internationally encompasses many assets and languages and nations. We are well positioned, both in collections *and* in human talent, to be truly global. What might this changing awareness and emphasis on the part of our library mean for the GRN project?

I believe the changing international scene in higher education strongly suggests that the GRN project might productively begin to shift from the individual linguistic and relatively narrow geographical project basis of the

GRN to date. The Yale conference was, in fact, very successful, through Donald Water's concluding talk and also the breakout sessions, in directing us to different ways of imagining a more comprehensive GRN. Various participants suggested that we might tackle not specific and regionally defined resources but, rather, enabling structures that will facilitate creation and access to these. Here is a list of only some of the possibilities:

- Create a registry of global access and digitizing projects.
- Identify and support technological practices and standards for creating such efforts and organizations defining such practices and standards.
- Work together with the Digital Library Federation through its new Aquifer project to develop a pilot, perhaps in a cross-disciplinary program, such as women's studies or democratic traditions.
- Train library staff to provide better types of services to readers (not just services focused upon regional expertise and language skills but also ever-growing interdisciplinary, cross-cultural topics of study and research).
- Seek resources in the form of public-private partnerships, learning to understand when these are and are not effective.
- Develop resources for crafting cross-border intellectual property and borrowing/lending arrangements.

Don Waters advised that libraries must determine where we can best cooperate as well as compete. GRN could, by implementing some of the suggestions above, position libraries to continue to add value to their institutions' global visions, at the same time supporting their competitive positions at home and abroad.

Note: The Yale Library created a Web site featuring the papers of the conference. Most of the papers are now available at http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/globalrecord/new_web/.

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¹ <http://www.arl.org/collect/grp/>

² William G. Bowen, Martin A. Kurzweil, and Eugene M. Tobin, *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2005).

³ <http://www.arl.org/aaufatoc.html>