

# Scholarship, Research Libraries, and Global Publishing

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ARL libraries face a frustrating paradox as they support area studies and international education programs: North American research libraries' coverage of the world's publishing output is diminishing at a time when demand for international information is increasing. This inconsistency occurs despite increasing emphasis, in the public and private sectors, on international interdependence, despite increasing commitments in research universities to fostering "internationalization" in both the curriculum and in research, and despite the exponential growth of available foreign language titles in general.

Over the past decade U.S. and Canadian research libraries have faced many pressures: expanding scholarly disciplines and the growth of interdisciplinary studies; the demands of scholars for new and expanded services; the increase in the number of formats collected; the need to preserve the collections from the ravages of decay; the move to online catalogs; and budget constraints that affect all library efforts. These challenges intensify the disparity between available financial resources to acquire global resources, a business community participating in a global marketplace, a research community working across international boundaries, and the information needs of a world undergoing dramatic change. Additionally, technological advancements and the movement toward an information society have brought increased opportunities and stresses.

North American research libraries' collection coverage of global publishing output, once thought to be comprehensive, is declining. Each year research libraries in the United States and Canada, in the aggregate, are able to purchase a smaller portion of internationally published materials than they did the year before. In response to difficult financial times, many ARL libraries have reduced the scope of their global information resources by scaling back the budgets for area collections in order to protect acquisitions of more heavily used English language materials. This results in serious gaps in collections and poses a long-term threat to research and scholarship. Given that foreign materials are frequently in-print for only a short time, these gaps cannot easily be remedied in the future.

In June 1991, with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, ARL began a four year study of trends in global information resources in ARL libraries. Scholarship, Research Libraries, and Foreign Publishing in the 1990's, the [ARL Foreign Acquisitions Project \[link to Foreign Acquisitions Report\]](#), was directed toward developing a clearer understanding of the forces influencing North American research libraries' ability to build and maintain collections of publications produced outside of the United States and Canada. The final report of this project, [Scholarship, Research Libraries, and Global Publishing](#) was completed in December 1995.

## Understanding the Challenges

The project findings underscore a pattern of retrenchment across most collecting areas and an aggregate reduction in the number of unique titles acquired from overseas. The most influential factors underlying this trend are a rapid growth in world book production and sharp increases in the cost of library materials acquired overseas. These upward trends witnessed over the past decade will not only continue but are certain to accelerate.

Additionally, global political, social, and economic changes are a powerful stimulus for new scholarly work. For example, dramatic shifts such as the collapse of the USSR, the emergence of nationalism in the successor states, the transformations in Eastern Europe, the rise of Asian economic powers, and the movement toward democracy in Latin America create new research as well as demands for new research resources. In a time of flux in international affairs, an inevitable conclusion is that the production of foreign information resources will continue to expand. Statistics on annual world production of book and journal titles show an estimated 45 percent increase between 1980 and 1990.

Not only has worldwide book production increased but during the same decade, the unit costs of this expanding universe of foreign acquisitions have sharply risen. The single most influential factor affecting prices of materials published overseas is the sharp decline in the value of the dollar against major currencies. The declining dollar results in higher prices for materials acquired from outside the United States and Canada.

Another trend identified in the project is that during the last decade research has become steadily larger in scope and more international. In some fields this represents the increased demands for research to solve specific economic or political problems such as environmental pollution or political instability. In other fields, the growing emphasis on cross-cultural analysis is a powerful stimulus. For example, the study of religious and cultural conflicts is creating demands for data from different corners of the globe. Scientific and technological efforts are increasingly collaborative on an international basis. As developments occur in laboratories around the world, scientists in the U.S. and Canada depend on awareness of these developments for progress in their own research. In addition, the results of research are increasingly being published outside North America. The expanding boundaries of research add to the pressures on libraries and their parent institutions not only to sustain but to expand access to international resources.

The detailed studies undertaken over the course of this project provide persuasive evidence of a growing gap between the level of acquisitions of overseas materials and the explosion of global knowledge. While the absence of uniform statistical data make it difficult to measure the exact dimensions of the aggregate decline, the evidentiary record arises from the assembled assessment data: analyses of national cataloging data for the period 1988-1994; fourteen area- and country-specific studies; surveys of bibliographers; surveys of about forty vendors supplying overseas materials; and five sampling studies. Although the needs for global research materials may differ depending on the specific world area, the commonality of the underlying problems is striking.

The study identifies the following nine factors as having the greatest influence over the state of global collections in the 1990's:

- Area-relevant library expenditures are natural and highly visible candidates for curtailment when institutional resources become constrained.
- The rapid increase in scholarly communication and collaboration across national borders and new scholarly perspectives, such as cross-culturism, are internationalizing scholarship itself.
- Cutbacks in foreign acquisitions are driven by local demands with little consideration of the effects on the entire North American access system for highly specialized global resources.
- In the aggregate, ARL libraries are spending more and more and yet are acquiring an ever-decreasing portion of the world's publishing output.

- Data indicate a declining rate of foreign language acquisitions, a decrease in the percentage of unique titles in many subject areas, and an increased concentration on core materials.
- Price trends of foreign publications document the sharp price increases that have occurred in East Asia, Latin America, Western Europe and other overseas regions.
- Publishing output in developing countries has increased by 58% between 1980 and 1990.
- The corollary costs of acquisitions, bibliographic control, and collection maintenance are disproportionately high for international materials.
- The pressures on research libraries by users to acquire more material from other countries have intensified particularly as electronic resources, audio cassettes and videotapes-have become more prominent.

## A Look to the Future

A central premise of the ARL assessment is that information technologies afford an unprecedented opportunity to rethink the ways research libraries manage global resources and to fashion cooperative strategies for ensuring the success of the aggregate holdings. Advances in computing and telecommunications technologies, together with the development of the Internet, now make it possible to leverage existing investments in technology and library materials to provide ubiquitous access to global research resources through the creation of a distributed, networked program for coordinated management of global resources.

During the next decade, research libraries will operate in an ever more interconnected world. A key issue for libraries today and in the future is: "surviving in an age of interdependence. Increasingly, individual libraries must act as if each is a part of a world library. Instead of being self-sufficient, each library must find ways to put materials from the world library into the hands of its own patrons and must stand ready to supply materials from its own collection to others, quickly and cost-effectively." [1]

The challenge of managing library collections in the 1990's entails both significant conceptual and structural-institutional changes. This applies not only in the domain of area and foreign language acquisitions, but in the management of research collections as a whole. Conceptually, building a network-based, distributed program for coordinated development requires changing the philosophy and culture of collection selection, management, and user access. For all libraries the challenges are how to manage the complex transition from print-based, institutional collections to national and ultimately international networked resources.

ARL libraries are strategically positioned to assume strong leadership roles in shaping the distributed digital libraries of the 21st century. The ARL project contributed to and benefited from the separate but closely linked work of the Association of American Universities (AAU) Acquisition and Distribution of Foreign Language and Area Studies Materials Task Force. The establishment of the Task Force in 1993 provided AAU and ARL a unique opportunity to define new cooperative programs. The Task Force created an action plan to ensure access to global resources within a "distributed North American collection of foreign materials." Building on the work of the AAU Task Force, ARL in partnership with AAU, has launched three demonstration projects to test the viability of implementing a distributed, networked, coordinated collection management program for foreign research materials. ARL's Research Collections Committee has charted the directions of a larger program in the [Strategic Plan for Improving Access to Global Information Resources in U.S. and Canadian Research Libraries](#). [2] The

process of implementing the [AAU/ARL Global Resources Program](#) has just begun, and there are already several insights gained from the three AAU/ARL demonstration projects and from other collaborative collection management efforts. It would be a serious error, however, to underestimate the complexity of implementing the Global Resources Program. Sustaining the momentum of the three demonstration projects and scaling up to a comprehensive program will require many organizations, including North American research libraries with strong collections of global resources, to work in concert and to build strong links with the scholarly community.

Mobilizing campus communities is an essential success factor. Borrowing from Richard Lambert: "The central problem is clear: how do we accomplish the aggregate goals...in a system in which disaggregation of education decisions is the dominant motif."<sup>[3]</sup> Within the U.S. higher education system, "the most dominant characteristic is a powerful culture of institutional autonomy."<sup>[4]</sup> Implicit in the move to build interdependent library collections is a fundamental shift in the culture or the expectations of faculty, students, and scholars. It is clear that users must change the ways they obtain library resources. It is equally clear that libraries must overcome deficiencies in interlibrary loan services and improve the delivery of materials to users. Resources will have to be adjusted and reallocated from those library operations "associated with building a self-sufficient collection" to "those associated with cooperative collection development and sharing."<sup>[5]</sup>

A successful implementation strategy will have to balance the inevitable tension between institutional interests and consortial needs. Central to success is building support among faculty and students for restructuring local collection development policies and access services. There are two challenges. One is to engage the campus community in shaping the long-term strategies for managing foreign acquisitions. The other is to develop a common understanding of both the current problems affecting access to foreign acquisitions and the proposed improvements through strengthened coordinating structures and electronic resource sharing.

Given the complexity and diversity of issues to be addressed and the manifold ramifications of restructuring library services, it is unrealistic to expect that the problems will be solved in their entirety or immediately. This is the time to act however, and to take maximum advantage of information technologies and networks, to move toward a multi-institutional, collaborative program that will expand North American access to global resources.

[Scholarship, Research Libraries, and Global Publishing](#) is available from ARL Publications, Department #0692, Washington, DC 20073-0692, (202) 296-2296, (email: [pubs@arl.org](mailto:pubs@arl.org)).

<sup>1</sup>Shirley K. Baker, "Introduction" in *The Future of Resource Sharing* (edited by Shirley K. Baker and Mary E. Jackson) in *Journal of Library Administration*, vol. 21, no. 1/2 (1995): 1.

<sup>2</sup>The plan builds on the final report of the AAU Task Force on Acquisition and Distribution of Foreign Language and Area Studies Materials.

<sup>3</sup>Richard D. Lambert, "International Studies and Education: The Current State of Affairs," *International Education Forum*, vol. 10, no. 1 (spring 1990): 6-7.

<sup>4</sup>Bill E. Frye, "The University Context and the Research Library," *Library Hi Tech*, issue 40 - 9:4 (1992): 35.

<sup>5</sup>Anthony M. Cummings, et al., *University Libraries and Scholarly Communication. A Study Prepared for The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation*. (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 1992): 142.

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