



Library Development and the U.S. Consultant Overseas

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THE DECADES since World War II have been years of accelerating change in library development. The work of the U.S. library consultant overseas has been no exception. During World War II, American and Allied forces came in contact with the peoples of more remote and less developed countries, and, not unexpectedly, the aspirations of these people were raised. They saw education as a way of breaking through the roadblock of great wealth and social status as prerequisites for positions of leadership and decision-making. They accepted Western values and all that such acceptance implies and does not imply.

The pressure of these people for education placed new demands upon the all-too-meager national budgets of less developed countries. Government officials tried to meet the crisis by emphasizing quantity rather than quality in their educational programs, only to find neither possible. Well meaning outside assistance agencies frequently urged improved quality in educational programs, gave financial help, and loaned expertise in support of such programs. In return for their aid, the donating agencies often asked the developing nations to provide some of their most effective educators for training abroad or to work with the agencies in the development of educational reforms. The educators requested were usually those very individuals whom the ministries could least afford to spare from other urgent national tasks.

Officials in developing countries are naturally reluctant to divert scarce national resources, human or material, from traditional and on-going activities to support new and untried programs. They have had limited understanding of the value of libraries, documentation centers, and archives as an integral part of educational planning and less recog-

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dition of the role of these services in all sectors of the economy. What a resident representative of a foundation or an official of the Agency for International Development (AID) may have seen as a new and exciting challenge and opportunity, host country officials saw only as a problem and a commitment for continuing expenditures when the foreign assistance project was terminated.

F. Lalande Isnard, reviewing the state of librarianship in Africa, summed up the problem: "Library services, however, are valuable and there are few other national expenditures of such a modest amount which ultimately prove so profitable. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to show that this is so, for those who have a good library at their disposal cannot imagine what it would be like to be without one, and those without a library cannot imagine what services it could render them."¹

The need for library development and library consultants is frequently not recognized until late in a project, and, too often, supplying books or money for books has been considered library development. On occasion, development loans have provided funds for the construction of library buildings without the advice of consultants or an understanding of the activities which will be carried out within the building. Loan funds may have little or no provision for adequate staff, development of collections, or fiscal plans to meet recurring operating expenditures.

Money for library buildings and books is desperately needed by many countries. However, money alone is an inadequate solution to the problem of strengthening library services so that they might have a significant part in national programs of economic and social development. The philanthropic foundations supported library development when it was evident that such support would help achieve objectives of foundation projects. Carl White makes this point when he writes of the three major U.S. foundations: "Legally, trustees and officers of none of them are committed in the slightest to library development; yet they have all, as F. Champion Ward of The Ford Foundation once put it, found themselves 'backed into it.'"²

J. George Harrar, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, expressed a similar view when describing grant-giving policies of foundations: "Many people think of them as repositories of funds which are available for almost any purpose upon persuasive demand, rather than as philanthropies with carefully designed and continuing programs. . . . But it is obvious that The Rockefeller Foundation, if it is to continue to be true to its original mandate of combining continuity with a readiness to

change when circumstances require it, will necessarily have to decline to provide funds for purposes which, although worthy, are extraneous to its basic policy and program."⁸

White also illustrated the positive role of the foundations with the example of the Rockefeller Foundation, which, to avoid spreading itself too thin, gave library development an implementive role in the furtherance of special program objectives. Foundations, such as Rockefeller and Ford, working in concert, have provided initial support for a number of research centers, including the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in Mexico, the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria, and the more recently established International Center of Tropical Agriculture in Colombia. U.S. library consultants, working with their host country colleagues, helped to organize and develop documentation and information centers at these institutes, to train local employees, and to smooth the transition to locally managed institutions.

In the field of agriculture, foundations and foreign assistance agencies have attempted to establish an information management base at regional centers in a specific subject discipline. The foundations' efforts have been a significant force in the extension of modern philosophies and practices of library service in the lesser developed countries. Although assigned to develop libraries in support of these centers, the influence of U.S. consultants extended far beyond their host institution's and their sponsoring foundation's original concepts of the consultants' jobs. David Wilder's original assignment in Iraq, for example, was modified to enable him to advise the Ford Foundation on library development opportunities in the Middle East. John Urquidí's influence extended beyond his responsibilities at the University of Algiers, and at the end of his work he was a library advisor to the Ford Foundation office in North Africa. Paul Bixler is one of the U.S. librarians most knowledgeable about the current status of Burmese librarianship, and is an advisor to governments and foundations. Charles Gosnell is an advisor on Brazil. Robert Downs is noted for his knowledge of recent developments in Turkey, Verner Clapp is known for his past advisory services on the organization and management of the Diet Library in Japan, and Harold Lancour and Irving Lieberman are noted for librarianship in Nigeria. Paul Miles and Marion Milczewski are well known for their work as foundation consultants in Latin America, as is Frances Lander Spain for her achievements in Thailand.

Perhaps the greatest asset of U.S. or other foreign technical assistance advisors or consultants is their personal knowledge of those indi-

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viduals and institutions in their own countries which enable them to provide quickly the information needed to solve unique and unexpected problems in the field. In addition, the consultant's parent institution or organization routinely provides a continuing flow of material and information which may be adapted to local conditions. When the advisor leaves at the end of his tour or at the termination of the project, this linkage with the outside world frequently ends, and there is often no substitute planned or proposed. Foreign assistance agencies have focused their efforts on the development of specific institutions. They have not included as part of their program the establishment of a nationwide information management capability.

Isnard described developing countries as "countries without documentation."⁴ When speaking of Africa, he declared that the vast store of information available in published works such as yearbooks, manuals, and directories is little known. Moreover, information known to some may be unknown to others who need and can use it because an adequate dissemination system is lacking. One can estimate the cost of such a system, but "it is extremely difficult to estimate the cost of ignorance: can one calculate, for instance, what would have happened if the local fodder crops had been better used?"⁴

Those economists who were among the chief architects of the U.S. foreign assistance program of the 1960s held the view that if the gross national product of a developing country could achieve a healthy rate of growth, other aspects of nation-building would subsequently take place. Experience has shown that an increase in the gross national product does not necessarily mean that people will be better off than before. On occasion, their condition has worsened. For a nation to develop, the people must be literate, but millions of children now alive will never be able to attend school because developing countries are unable to create a comprehensive educational system such as the United States has; nor could they afford to maintain such a system if they had it.⁵ On the other hand, the educationally disadvantaged cannot be expected to wait indefinitely for change.

Some ministry officials concerned with social and economic development programs have indicated that books, library equipment, buildings, and the development of local professional leaders are important and needed. They have also recently indicated that an important immediate need is advice to help replace present project-oriented and uncoordinated library programs with planned, nationwide library service suited to their particular needs. United States officials could help these countries identify development needs and plan, organize, and imple-

ment feasible programs including library services, which would help narrow the gap between the have and have-not nations. At the same time, the current President of the United States has indicated that his administration intends to reduce substantially the number of U.S. government personnel overseas.

The decline in direct support by foundations and the U.S. government for library development projects and programs overseas through contracts with U.S. institutions and organizations has been somewhat compensated for by foundation grants made to local institutions, and by increased U.S. government contributions to multilateral assistance agencies such as the World Bank, AID, Inter-American Development Bank, and the Organization of American States. If the multilateral assistance agencies were to insist on the safeguard of professional library advisory services, including review and evaluation, as a condition of loans and grants, the result could be an improvement over existing methods of providing library development support. National interests will undoubtedly require the U.S. government to continue bilateral assistance programs, but the number and level of such programs will be reduced under the administration's present legislative proposals for foreign assistance.

If the development process depends upon national attitudes and institutions rather than primarily upon economic and technical factors, and if increased amounts of U.S. government technical assistance funds are to be channeled through designated institutions and international organizations, then UNESCO's Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives will have an increased opportunity to play a role in the developing countries. The department could encourage UNESCO member states to use some of the available assistance funds for programs within its area of interest and continuing concern. Such programs might include research on the nature of library development and its impact on economic development, planning of national library services, cooperative systems for the exchange of information and materials, development of standards for library activities and reporting, planning of school library systems, and studying the role of the public library in fundamental education.

Public library service in support of adult and fundamental education has long been a central theme of UNESCO programs. In 1947, Emerson Greenaway surveyed war-damaged public libraries in Europe at the request of UNESCO and drafted guidelines for public library service. In 1950, the UNESCO Seminar on the Role of Libraries in Adult Education, held in Malmö, concerned itself with the role of the public

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library in planning and implementing fundamental and adult education programs in developing countries.⁶ Among the results of the Malmö Seminar were (1) the initiation of a program of experts to work in member states on specific projects; (2) a fellowship program for training abroad; (3) assistance for model public libraries, which later resulted in demonstration units in Delhi, Medellín, and Enugu; (4) a UNESCO publications program, and (5) the establishment of the international meeting as an instrument in library development.

The Malmö Seminar and subsequent international meetings have demonstrated that the problems of library development are shared by many and can be solved through cooperative or joint action. Librarians at the operating level and ministry officials have worked together during international meetings to attack problems, many aspects of which up to that time had not been understood nor been the concern of governmental officials.

Since 1951, more than twenty U.S. nationals have served as technical experts by helping member states carry out such recommended UNESCO programs as: organizing documentation centers in Argentina, India, and Mexico; planning or organizing schools of librarianship in Israel, Greece, and Jamaica; organizing archival services in Tanzania; developing public library services in Colombia, Madagascar, and Israel; establishing library service in rural areas of Thailand; and developing university library service in Turkey and Thailand.

The recommendations of the UNESCO meetings of library experts since Malmö, which have been summarized in *Libraries in International Development*,⁷ reflect the thinking of the profession on the techniques of library development as well as a shift from UNESCO support for the establishment of pilot libraries and documentation centers to creating an environment in which library and documentation services might come into being and expand. During his tenure as director general of UNESCO, Luther Evans sought to encourage a more powerful and centralized direction to UNESCO's library programs through a better understanding of the nature and methodology of library development. With the arrival of Carlos Victor Penna at UNESCO headquarters, greater emphasis was placed on national planning for library services. His article on library planning⁸ remains a significant work, and the principles set forth have for some time been accepted and practiced by other organizations.

In speaking of the need for library planning, Marietta Daniels Shepard, chief of the Library Development Branch of the Organization of American States, declared: "The first step in library development in

Latin America should be the planning of library services on a national basis as an integral part of educational planning. Educational planning, in turn, should be an integral part of a country's national economic planning."⁹

Requests to the American Library Association for technical assistance overseas have increasingly been in the area of planning library services on a nationwide basis and for consultants to work in what the host country has identified as key problem areas in major sectors of library development and educational planning.

With an enlarged and more responsible role for the library consultant in the development process, the personal qualities of the consultant become a more important factor in the success or failure of his work. The dynamic personality and character traits sometimes prized in our competitive professional circles are not always welcomed in other cultures. Mannerisms and personality traits, ignored or overlooked in the United States, have on occasion taken on added importance in overseas situations and have so prejudiced colleagues and counterparts that effective two-way communication was difficult if not impossible. The consultant may be unaware that his very competent work will not be carried on simply because he has not been accepted fully as a person by the local authorities.

The overly organized librarian may find it hard to adjust to unstructured and changing work situations. On the other hand, the individual who lacks self-discipline may find it easy to accept the slower work schedules, delays and procrastination as a way of life, but more likely he will become disillusioned or frustrated by the hardships and problems of simply trying to live and work in a developing country.

The successful consultant will not project a stateside timetable for himself, set his sights too high, or push too hard. He should be sensitive about his role as an outsider advocating change; he should arrive at his post with a clear understanding of the objectives he wishes to achieve; and those objectives should appear realistic to local authorities. Final details are usually worked out in cooperation with host country officials. The consultant should feel no pressure to duplicate U.S. institutions or practices. His objective is to develop people, not institutions; his goal is to leave behind something lasting to which the local authorities will have a feeling of commitment. He works with his local counterpart as an equal and a partner. He is neither condescending nor subservient.

The consultantship should be long enough to achieve desired results. Too often the length of time required is underestimated and commit-

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ments and funds wane with the lack of immediate and visible achievements. However, quickly established, imported carbon copies of U.S. institutions only complicate further an already difficult condition in developing countries. What is needed are solutions which draw upon external ideas and experiences adapted to local needs, resources and situations. Creativity and adaptation require sustained efforts by imaginative and talented people—and take time.¹⁰

A good library consultant does not need to be an outstanding leader in his profession, but he should be able to transfer to a developing country all the knowledge and skills needed at a particular time and in a particular situation. He has probably developed a high level of listening comprehension because much of his work is done orally. He listens and observes; he sees and perceives. He is alert to cultural and attitudinal subtleties. He must be aware, at least in general terms, of the social organization and social dynamics of the host country, the aspirations and recent history of the people. The consultant's project manager—whether a foundation representative, embassy official or in the private sector—helps to guide the consultant around difficult or sensitive situations and helps him to anticipate and understand better the actions and reactions of his counterparts. However, the consultant should be capable of recognizing situations of impending difficulty before a crisis arises.

If the consultant is accepted, his professional relations with his counterparts will be relaxed and informal. When his counterparts feel free to visit the consultant's office or home to discuss matters not necessarily connected with work, the chances are that the consultant has been tested and accepted and the host country has committed itself to support rather than simply acquiesce to the consultant's project. The likelihood is great that the consultant's impact will be lasting and that his experiences will be professionally rewarding and personally satisfying.

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