Libraries in Times of War, Revolution, and Social Change

W. Boyd Rayward and Christine Jenkins

Issue Editors

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# Libraries in Times of War, Revolution, and Social Change

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The pillage and burning of Iraq’s National Library and its National Museum in the spring of 2003 sent cultural shock waves around the world. “Stuff happens,” Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. Secretary for Defense, declared offhandedly, dismissing these events. But such events, and the variety of responses that they evoke, raise a number of urgent historical questions to which the articles in this volume represent tentative answers.

The collections and services of libraries and related agencies, such as museums and archives, are important components of social and institutional memory. They are both physical places of intellectual work and highly symbolic places. They represent national and cultural identity and aspirations. They are venues for individualized access to educational and cultural resources. They are also part of an infrastructural continuum for disseminating information, forming opinion, and providing literate recreation. At one end of the infrastructural continuum lie telecommunications, mass media, and more recently the Internet and the World Wide Web. Libraries have traditionally been situated at the other end of this continuum as places of access to the historical diversity of opinion represented in cumulating collections of printed materials, though in the digital era they are clearly moving to a more central position on this continuum.

Libraries, Information Infrastructure, and Revolution

Those who write (and those who read) the history of wars and revolutions have tended to focus their attention on creating (or consuming) inevitably dramatic narratives. An important aspect of these narratives is the causal framework of antecedent, contemporary, and subsequent political, economic, and social developments by means of which the narratives are given coherence and explanatory power. Each of the large categories that
may be used for historical analysis—the social welfare of a people, the structure and interaction of social classes, the nature and conditions of the economy and trade, territorial changes, the interrelationships of the institutions of church and state, the mechanisms of government and the national and international dimensions of political relationships, and ideas of patrimony and cultural heritage, for example—involves at some level an encounter with aspects of the production, communication, and use of information and the mechanisms and practices by means of which such encounters become possible.

It can be argued that information infrastructure—the organizational arrangements, technologies, and practices by means of which information is routinely generated, disseminated, and used within a society—is a basic and all pervasive social “glue.” Both social continuity and social change are dependent on and are supported by this infrastructure. The great libraries of the past, as part of this infrastructure and in so far as they—or records of them—continue to exist, present themselves to us as monuments to the past with all the inertia of warehouses or museums. This is no less true of the great national and research libraries of the present except that they integrate records from the past with those of the present in a distinctive and vital process of historical continuity. Within all of these libraries the recorded heritage of the societies of which they are part gradually accumulates and is preserved and organized for present and future use. Social, cultural, political, religious, and economic practices of every conceivable kind may be reflected in these records. Libraries tie the present—and what is authorized in the present by being incorporated into the collections of libraries—to the past. One might say that their function is to appropriate the past for present purposes. Such libraries often represent the intellectual and cultural authority that an individual or an institution has attained. This authority exacts a special kind of social deference both in the historical period in which it is first recognized and subsequently, especially as the library moves from the private to the public sphere.

Our great national and research libraries are subject themselves to what is usually a slow process of change over time in terms of what they do, how they do it, and for whom. Nevertheless, the substantial buildings in which their physical bulk is manifested are designed to suggest weight, solidity, permanence, and continuity. Libraries so housed are designed to evoke awe, even reverence, toward that which underpins, anchors, and outlasts the evanescent events of daily life. These libraries are often incorporated into the apparatus of government and higher education, where they reflect the power and prestige of the state.

Other libraries are created for special purposes by individuals, local communities, the professions, and commerce and industry, but they have similar functions. They are designed to support the activities of individuals in a local community or the personnel of various organizations and enterprises. Whatever their intellectual scope and physical dimensions, these
libraries also create both a physical and symbolical presence and a sense of organizational identity, permanence, and stability.

During the last several centuries, the history of most nations has been marked by war and revolutions. Some of these wars and revolutions from a Western vantage point are considered to be epoch marking: the English Civil War, the American Revolution and the American Civil War, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the two world wars. That same perspective has yet to be attained for more recent struggles that lie outside a Eurocentric frame of reference, even though the West has often been involved in these struggles militarily and continues to find their outcomes politically and economically troubling. Here one might instance the anti-colonial struggles in Latin America, Africa, and India, and more recently the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the advent of the revolutionary regime of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the theocratic ascendency in Iran, the internecine struggles in the Balkans, and, of course, the ongoing warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq. Equally important have been the political and social transformations associated in South Africa with the imposition and then destruction of apartheid and in Germany and Eastern Europe with the onset and cessation of the Cold War.

As a cultural icon the library's role has been in part to act as a special kind of permanent repository of written heritage. As such, pairing “the library” with revolution and transformation, with turbulence and conflict, seems an odd juxtaposition of antithetical ideas. However, the library and librarians have always consistently played a role—though perhaps rarely a central one—as either victim or agent in the events that characterize periods of social upheaval. Here one might instance the public library acting as a key agency for the Americanization of immigrant populations during the U.S. Progressive Era and libraries as sanctuaries of subversive thought that were subjected to the massive book-burning spectacles orchestrated by the Nazi Party in Germany in 1933. At that time there were pressures to have popular libraries assimilated into the institutional arrangements of the State as instruments of National Socialist ideology. In Russia, popular libraries and special recommendatory reading programs operating through them were viewed by Lenin and his wife Krupskaia as powerful instruments in achieving the ideological transformations they desired in the post-1918 revolutionary communist state. The deliberate, targeted destruction of the National and University Library in Sarajevo in 1992 in the course of the Balkan Wars was as much an attempt to erase the cultural memory of an ethnic or national group as it was to demoralize a city’s population. By contrast, the destruction of the Cambodian national library collections in Phnom Peng by Khmer Rouge pig keepers and others in the mid-1970s occurred casually and carelessly through indifference, ignorance, and ideological blindness.

The destruction or loss of libraries can act as a formidable symbol around which to mobilize opinion and support not merely for the reconstitution
of the libraries but also in affirming the value of the cultural heritage and national identity that these depredations had seemed to threaten. One thinks of the international response to the Germans shelling the library of the University of Louvain in both world wars and the response to the destruction of the library in Sarajevo to take just two examples spanning three quarters of a century.

And so we come to the historical questions that are evoked by an offhanded phrase: “stuff happens.” In times of war, revolution, and violent social change, how have libraries as congeries of collections and services but also as physical and symbolical places appeared to the various protagonists—to the revolutionaries in their efforts to overthrow, reform, or replace the existing social and political order and to their opponents who wish to preserve the status quo? How have ordinary people—children, professors and students, civil servants, the man and woman in the street, those involved in the trades and professions, for example—fared in their access to and use of libraries and the literature and other resources libraries contain as they have tried to carry on their daily lives and fulfill the responsibilities of their various occupations? How have libraries and related agencies for the transmission of ideas and cultural and social values and for the shaping of opinion been used and with what effect as great social and political movements—revolutionary movements—begin to take shape and get underway? When, why, and how have libraries variously been pillaged and destroyed or appropriated and reorganized to serve a conqueror or a successful revolution’s purposes?

**Library History Seminar XI, October 27–30, 2005**

These questions lay behind the proposal of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois to the American Library Association’s Library History Round Table to hold the eleventh five-yearly Library History Seminar sponsored by the Round Table at Illinois. The subject proposed for the seminar was “Libraries in Times of War, Revolution, and Social Change.” The seminar took place October 27–30, 2005, at the university’s conference center at Allerton Park and was dedicated to Professor Don Davis, longtime editor of *Libraries and Culture*, on the occasion of his retirement from the faculty of the University of Texas at Austin’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science.

Papers were invited on themes such as the following:

- Books and libraries as agents of cultural memory to be protected, appropriated, or obliterated
- Library collections and services as instruments of political power in providing or withholding access to information
- Libraries as places of refuge, solace, and practical help in times of war, revolution, and social change
• Libraries and their contents as cultural patrimony and as booty
• The nature of the revolutionary cultural and political regimes in which libraries are situated and the attitudes of the regimes to literacy and learning
• And the responsibilities of the international community in creating and enforcing policies and procedures for the protection, reconstitution, and restitution of cultural artifacts, including books and libraries

The twenty-seven articles that follow are drawn from the papers read at the seminar. They have gone through a rigorous process of review. They are not a systematic account across all nations and periods but a reflection of a varied body of scholarship relevant to the general questions with which we began this introduction and to the themes listed in the paragraph above. The articles range in time and place from ancient China, through the Paris Commune of 1871, the First and Second World Wars and the immediate aftermath of these wars, especially in Europe, and to modern Iraq.

There is a special cluster of articles about aspects of the Second World War. These are in a sense led off by Kathy Peiss’s masterly account of the development and implementation of the U.S. policy of protecting books and other cultural resources during the course of the war and of the role of librarians, scholars, and ordinary soldiers in carrying out this policy. All of this was pointedly at variance, as Peiss points out, with the lack of such policies in Rumsfeld’s Iraq. Nabil Al-Tikriti’s paper documents some of the immediate consequences for libraries of the destabilization of Iraq. But the problems he discusses continue and are given vivid and unsettling life by the diary that Saad Eskander, director of the Iraq National Library and Archive is maintaining on the British Library’s website. An article in the New York Times reports on the diary and offers excerpts from its latest entries for January 2007, such as:

..., he was having trouble repairing the Internet system; the Restoration Laboratory “was hit by 5 bullets”; and “another librarian, who works at the Periodical Department, received a death threat. He has to leave his house and look for another one, as soon as he can; otherwise, he will be murdered.”... In mid-January, he published a chart on the impact of sectarian violence on his staff for just the month of December. It included 4 assassinations of employees and 2 kidnappings, 66 murders of staff members’ relatives, 58 death threats and 51 displacements.

But in addition to an account of a major library currently in the midst of a war, we have intriguing, perhaps unexpected, and sometimes moving analyses of libraries during the Second World War, in the Theresienstadt Ghetto, for example, in Finnish hospitals, in the American Library in Paris with its formidable protector, the Countess de Chambrun, and of the discussions that took place in Japan about the role of libraries in that wartime society.
Another group of articles is devoted to aspects of Chinese history. Hilde De Weerdt studies the dynastic struggles that led to the dispersal and then attempts to reconstitute the imperial library during the Sung dynasty in the twelfth century. The complexity of what this meant in terms of collecting practices and attitudes to the material collected is extraordinary. The articles of Ping Situ and Chengzhi Wang study the long, eventful history of two ancient libraries that have survived into the present. The unresolved and continuing struggle over ownership within the country of one of these collections is captured in the title of Chengzhi Wang’s article, “Badly Wanted, but Not for Reading: The Unending Odyssey of The Complete Library of Four Treasures of the Wensu Library”—now wanted in different localities in China for economic and cultural reasons. This kind of contemporary struggle is also the theme of Marek Sroka’s account of a similar struggle half a world away from China, a tug-of-war that has gone on over the ownership and location of the music collection of the Prussian State Library. After World War II the collection ended up almost by chance in the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków, Poland, where it remains, in a sense as the spoils of war, despite numerous attempts to have it repatriated to what is now a unified Germany.

Another group of articles is concerned with children and their reading in wartime. These articles are international in scope. They range from Melanie Kimball’s portrait of children’s services at the St. Louis Public Library during the First World War, to Debra Mitts-Smith’s account of the beautifully named “Le Heure Joyeuse” in Belgium after the First World War, to Chris Lyons’s account of the founding and development of the Notre Dame Grace Library in Montreal, Canada, during the Second World War.

Yet another group of articles is concerned with libraries not so much in times of war or revolution but in times of radical social upheaval. Here are accounts of the desegregation of the Houston Public Library during the 1950s and, a generation later, of the attempts of the American Library Association to determine what its role should be in shaping library responses in a period marked by widespread and rapid social change. But in this group too is to be found an account of the complex role of libraries as places of refuge as well as places of information and education during the apartheid era in South Africa and an account of a provincial Russian library system struggling to respond effectively both to the opportunities and the problems created by the fall of communism.

It is not our aim to give an account here of every article in the collection, though each paper has what we believe will be an interesting story to tell. We hope, however, that this volume of Library Trends will be full of surprises for both the systematic and casual reader. In this brief introduction, our aim is only to give the reader a sense of the intellectual background for collecting
the papers together in this volume, as well as the variety of the papers and the range of perspectives, localities, periods, personalities, institutions, and analytical frames that they represent. We wish also to offer our thanks to the contributors for their patience and responsiveness to what was sometimes an intense and for some disquieting editorial process. They have allowed us to provide something extraordinary to our readers who, we hope, will enjoy and be informed by the papers as much as we have enjoyed and been informed by them in preparing this volume for publication.

Appendix: Library History Seminar XI, University of Illinois, October 27–30, 2005

This issue of Library Trends could not have happened without what was a very successful seminar on Libraries in Times of War, Revolution, and Social Change. The following organizational details about the seminar are provided for the historical record.

Organizing Committee

The University of Illinois organizing committee members were indispensable and active players in organizing the seminar, seeking funds, and reviewing abstracts for papers to be presented at the seminar. They are listed here with heartfelt thanks:

Don Krummel, Professor Emeritus, Graduate School of Library and Information Science
Nelly González, Professor of Library Administration, Head of Latin American Library
Al Kagan, Professor of Library Administration, African Studies Bibliographer
Karen Wei, Professor of Library Administration, Head of Asian Library
Jo Kibbee, Associate Professor of Library Administration, Head of Reference
Miranda Remnek, Professor of Library Administration, Head of Slavic Library
Barbara Ford, Mortenson Distinguished Professor and Director of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs
Susan Schnuer, Assistant Director of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs
Steve Witt, Associate Director of the Center for Global Studies
Lynne Rudasill, Assistant Professor of Library Administration, Global Studies Librarian

Honorary Committee Members

Alistair Black, Professor of Library History, School of Information Management, Leeds Metropolitan University
John Y. Cole, Director of the Center for the Book, Library of Congress
Donald G. Davis Jr., Professor of Library History, School of Information,
University of Texas at Austin
Christine Jenkins and W. Boyd Rayward were co-chairs of the organizing
committee and of the seminar.
We wish to place on record our appreciation of the invaluable help of a
number of students and above all of Kathy Painter of the Graduate School
of Library and Information Science who managed all of the logistical detail
of the seminar with consummate skill, good humor, and patience.

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- Office of the Associate Provost for International Affairs
- The Graduate School of Library and Information Science
- The University Library
- The Center for Global Studies
- The European Union Center
- The Center for African Studies
- The Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center

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Notes
   Peiss and Nabil Al-Tikriti in this issue.
2. http://www.bl.uk/iraqdiary01.html
W. Boyd Rayward was educated in Australia and the United States where he re-
ceived an M.S. degree from the University of Illinois and a Ph.D. degree from the
University of Chicago. He is currently professor in the Graduate School of Library
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deanship positions in the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago and
in the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. He was editor of the
Library
Quarterly
from 1975 to 1980. He is currently North American editor of Library
History
and has recently become co-editor with John Unsworth of Library Trends. His
research examines the history of the international organization of knowledge. Recent
studies have been on Paul Otlet’s ideas in relation to hypertext and the beginnings
of modern information science, a number of utopian schemes of knowledge orga-
nization including H. G. Wells’s idea of a world brain, and, from a historical point of
view, the implications of digitization and networking for libraries and museums. He
is currently preparing for press a volume of contributed papers entitled *European Modernism and the Information Society.*

Christine Jenkins is associate professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she teaches courses in youth services, young adult literature, and literacy. Her research explores various aspects of historical and contemporary connections between texts and young readers. A former school librarian with an M.S. in library and information science and an M.A. in English/children’s literature, she received her Ph.D. in library and information science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1995; her dissertation is a historical study of the role of U.S. youth services librarians in defending young people’s right to read during the early Cold War era. Her work has appeared in *Library Quarterly, Library Trends, Libraries and Culture, Horn Book Magazine, VOYA, School Library Journal,* and *Book List.* She recently co-authored (with Michael Cart) *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969–2004* (Scarecrow Press, 2006). Chapters by Jenkins are included in *Learning, Culture, and Community in Online Education: Research and Practice* (Peter Lang, 2004); *Books, Libraries, Reading, and Publishing in the Cold War* (Library of Congress, 2002); and *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In* (Ablex, 1996).
Abstract
For the first time in U.S. history, the protection of books and other cultural resources became an official war aim during World War II. Examining the broad historical process by which this policy was formed and executed, this article focuses on three key factors: the new role of intellectual and cultural elites, who forged close ties with the state; the expansion of intelligence gathering and its unintended consequences for the preservation of cultural material; and the extraordinary actions of individual librarians, curators, and ordinary soldiers on the ground, who improvised solutions to the problems of preservation and restoration.

In April 2003, as American combat operations in Iraq gave way to the early days of occupation, journalists reported widespread looting and damage to Iraqi museums, libraries, and archives. At a news briefing on April 11, responding to questions about the failure to protect Iraq’s cultural heritage, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld famously replied: “Stuff happens!” Complaining about the recurring broadcast of “some boy walking out with a vase,” he observed, “it’s untidy, and freedom’s untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.” He went on, “They’re also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that’s what’s going to happen here” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2003). The early reports indicated a catastrophic loss of art, archaeological artifacts, and rare manuscripts. Later investigations showed that Iraqi officials had removed many treasures for safekeeping, and that some American military officers had acted quickly to guard the National Museum and recover stolen objects (University of Pennsylvania Museum,
n.d.; Bogdanos, 2005; Johnson, 2005). Still, the destruction and disorder underscored the limited forethought given to protecting such resources. Freedom and fatalism seemed to go hand in hand.

Such planning was hardly outside the realm of possibility or imagination. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, in a directive of December 29, 1943, during the Allied invasion of Italy, addressed the protection of “cultural monuments,” by which he meant not only historical buildings and churches but also portable forms of culture, such as books and art. His words are worth quoting at length:

> Today we are fighting in a country which has contributed a great deal to our cultural inheritance, a country rich in monuments which by their creation helped and now in their old age illustrate the growth of the civilization which is ours. We are bound to respect those monuments so far as war allows. . . . Nothing can stand against the argument of military necessity. That is an accepted principle. But the phrase “military necessity” is sometimes used where it would be more truthful to speak of military convenience or even of personal convenience. I do not want it to cloak slackness or indifference.¹

The difference is striking across sixty years—in the message, tone, and assumptions of wartime leaders, and in the policies and procedures they oversaw. There are several immediate reasons one could give for the disparity between 1943 and 2003. The most obvious is that Americans esteem European civilization as their cultural inheritance and, perhaps, as a source of cultural superiority; Islamic tradition and Arabic culture do not have such resonance. This may well be true, but it hardly explains why the government instituted a program of cultural protection during World War II and but apparently did little in the run-up to the Iraq war. Americans’ Eurocentrism did not lead inevitably to Eisenhower’s directive, nor were present-day policymakers and the military unaware that cultural sensitivity was necessary in Iraq.

Why, then, was cultural protection a war aim in World War II? How was a policy effected, and to what extent did it address the specific question of endangered books and libraries among other treasures? How might we comprehend these efforts—and their limits—in the social, cultural, and political currents of the 1940s? Are there insights from the World War II experience that might help us better address the challenges to books and other cultural resources in current times of crisis and war?

At the outbreak of World War II, leaders of learned societies, philanthropic foundations, research libraries, museums, and professional associations began to anticipate the impact of war on cultural resources. The Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and other institutions put in motion plans to safeguard their most treasured documents and books. The leadership of the American Library Association (ALA), with its strong
internationalist bent, saw a prominent role for libraries on the home front. Indeed, when the United States entered the war, many libraries offered public programs, mounted exhibits, and created information centers on a host of issues, from defense jobs to rationing. Librarians joined those who mobilized the world of learning and culture for the national defense (Becker, 2005; Kraske, 1985; Lincove, 1991).

At this time, a small number of individuals turned their attention to the looming devastation of European culture, with the hope of finding ways to safeguard it. These were, by and large, men of the nation’s intellectual and cultural elites. After the fall of France in June 1940, Harvard faculty formed the American Defense–Harvard Group to combat isolationism and provide intellectual backing and expertise for the war effort. Paul J. Sachs and George L. Stout of the Fogg Museum of Art, spurred by reports from abroad, worked with the leadership of the Metropolitan Museum and the National Gallery of Art to push for a federal commitment to protect cultural resources. David Finley, director of the National Gallery, used his political connections in the War Department, the Office of Strategic Services, and most crucially with Supreme Court Chief Justice Harlan Stone to approach President Franklin Roosevelt with a plan to safeguard cultural sites in war areas. The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) had begun its own discussions and established a Committee for the Protection of European Cultural Material in January 1943; led by William Bell Dinsmoor, director of the Archaeological Institute of America, its membership included Archibald MacLeish, then Librarian of Congress, and Solon Buck, archivist of the United States. It too lobbied for a commission.²

Roosevelt approved the plan, and in June 1943 the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas, chaired by Associate Justice Owen J. Roberts, began its work. Cooperating with the Harvard Group and ACLS, the Roberts Commission provided maps and lists of cultural sites to the military and identified army personnel qualified to safeguard cultural resources in the field of battle. Although it included the Far East in its mission—including “war areas” in its title—it remained focused on the threat to European civilization. The first Monuments Officer, Harvard classicist Mason Hammond, was sent to North Africa in 1943 and then accompanied the troops into Italy. The Allied command created a unit called the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section (MFAA), whose small band of officers tried to cordon off historic buildings, minimize looting, and give first aid to art and books; when the war ended, the MFAA turned its attention to the recovery and restitution of cultural objects.

This was a remarkable decision: the first time the American government had established the cultural protection of art, books, and historic buildings as a war aim. The importance of cultural property had begun to be recognized in international law since the late nineteenth century, but vaguely
stated principles had produced few concrete results, even in World War I. By the early 1940s, a convergence of events, memories, ideology, and individuals led cultural leaders to transform their mounting alarm into action.

New methods of organized violence—from the aerial bombing in World War I and the Spanish civil war to the Nazis’ systematic attacks on property and persons—had intensified awareness of the vulnerability of artistic and intellectual resources. The destruction of books in particular loomed large in the collective memory of intellectuals and cultural elites of the time. The ruin of the University of Leuven’s library, as German soldiers stood by and watched the flames, was one of the shocking moments of World War I; it conveyed modern warfare’s threat to civilization (Graves, 1929). The Nazi book burnings of 1933 similarly opened a window onto the violent tactics and fascist ideology of Hitler’s new regime. Many people would come to see “libricide,” as Rebecca Knuth (2003) terms it, as a crime against humanity. Not everyone took the measure of this event at the time—Patti Clayton Becker (2005, p. 22) notes that the library journals did not comment on it—but influential intellectuals and politicians condemned the Nazis’ actions and thousands marched in protest in American cities (Kantorowitz, 1944; Stern, 1985).

Information about the fate of cultural institutions trickled out of Europe in the earliest years of the war in personal correspondence, through encounters with refugees, and from statements by governments in exile. Some events, such as the second destruction of the Leuven library and the bombing of Coventry Cathedral, received coverage in newspapers and on radio. But much of the available information circulated only among professionals in cultural fields. During the Blitz, British librarians and museum staff wrote their American friends and colleagues, assessing damage to their collections and suggesting air raid precautions; their letters were often reprinted in professional journals. Although many valued works of art, manuscripts, and rare books had been sent to safe havens away from the urban centers, incendiary bombs destroyed large portions of the libraries at the University of London, King’s College, and the Guildhall. “To a book-lover, it is heart breaking to see so many books in such a sorry plight, soaked with water or charred by fire,” commented the librarian at Richmond. By 1942 and 1943, Germany’s systematic looting of occupied countries, including the plundering and forced sale of art collections in Belgium and France and the wholesale destruction of culture and learning in Poland, became more widely known.

During the interwar years, the sense of culture’s fragility had been countered in various ways by civic, professional, and voluntary organizations. The campaign to rebuild the Leuven library, for example, involved the Carnegie Endowment, Herbert Hoover’s Commission for Relief in Belgium, and countless college students, alumni, and schoolchildren. The library profession had taken on a number of international commitments...
during and after World War I, for example, the Library War Service and the American Library in Paris; the international orientation of the ALA leadership—despite the apathy or opposition of many rank-and-file librarians—began in this period. The robust response of men at leading universities, learned societies, research libraries, and museums during World War II thus built on a history of private initiatives. They knew and worked with each other and possessed the confidence and authority that elite status and expert knowledge often produces. This must have been true of earlier generations of cultural leaders. What was different in these years was their growing intimacy with the state.

The New Deal established important precedents for a governmental policy toward endangered cultural heritage. In the 1930s the federal government had defined a state interest in cultural matters, through such domestic programs as the Federal Arts Project and the Historical Records Survey, and in initiatives in public diplomacy, notably the Division of Cultural Relations in the State Department. New national cultural institutions emerged, such as the National Archives and the National Gallery, founded in 1934 and 1937 respectively.

The individuals who lobbied to protect cultural monuments in wartime were not necessarily New Dealers. Rather, they had made close personal connections with key members of the government—on the Supreme Court, in the State Department, among Roosevelt’s set of advisers, and with Roosevelt himself. David Finley, for example, had hitched his star to Andrew Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury under Calvin Coolidge; Mellon created the National Gallery of Art before he died, and Finley became its founding director in 1938 and a key figure in Washington. Archibald MacLeish likewise moved effortlessly between the worlds of culture and politics. A poet, playwright, and writer associated with the left, MacLeish became a member of the Roosevelt administration, serving as a speechwriter, Librarian of Congress, head of the Office of Facts and Figures, and later as an official in the Office of War Information and the State Department. Both Finley and MacLeish used their connections to promote cultural policy in wartime.

In turn, government officials and military leaders embraced the proposal to protect art, libraries, and cultural sites for both pragmatic and idealistic reasons. The decision came as they planned the invasion of Italy. Officials in the Civil Affairs Division and the Schools of Military Government, making preparations for occupation governments, were especially receptive. Although concerned foremost with feeding, housing, and providing security to local populations, they also addressed the need to restore such social institutions as libraries, schools, and museums.

During the early stages of combat in Italy, civilian and military leaders saw that culture would become a battleground in the war for public opinion—in the United States and in Europe. Bombing transportation, communication, and production targets inevitably threatened churches and
historic buildings that dotted the Italian landscape. The Vatican repeatedly pressured the Allies to protect these sites, and Roosevelt’s advisors were fearful of offending the sensitivities of Catholic voters, including many of Italian descent. But the military responded not merely to a voting bloc but to a broader, if diffuse, public that found meaning in the world of books, art, and culture. As New York Times columnist Anne O’Hare McCormick wrote, “A great many oddly assorted Americans are deeply stirred and worried by the fate that hangs over Rome” (1943). As might be expected, she had heard from a classics scholar and a Catholic bishop, but less predictably from “a soldier in a Midwest training camp, from a woman worker in a Jersey munitions plant, from teachers and businessmen.” She concluded, “There can be no doubt that the American people’s conception of victory is to save everything in Europe that we can.”

Historians tend to ignore this constituency for high culture when they characterize the 1920s and 1930s as the era of motion pictures and radio. Librarians, along with educators and many commentators, certainly lamented the apparent triumph of mass culture and low-brow taste over the culture of arts and letters. But high schools, public libraries, and “middle-brow” book clubs all made versions of European art, music, and literature widely available, and they spread the idea that European cultural heritage was an important component of American national identity. Even radio attracted listeners who preferred Toscanini to soap operas; although only a small part of a day’s entertainment, performances of classical music and informative shows about books and culture were regularly broadcast in the 1930s. Whatever the extent of such cultural tastes, the wartime American government and military believed in the existence of such a constituency, and some counted themselves a part of it.

After Pearl Harbor, this sense of the value of European culture inevitably became politicized, fodder in ideological warfare. Fascist radio broadcasts maligned Americans as uncivilized vandals who would loot Europe, “materialists without intelligence and civilization,” “gangsters” who bombed religious and cultural sites “out of a sheer and senseless lust for destruction.” In their view, the United States had no true culture of its own. As one fascist newspaper in Milan observed, “Their art treasures are the longest and most ugly bridge in the world, the highest and most ugly building in the world and the largest and most ugly statue in the world.”

Perhaps Americans saw a hint of truth in these charges, as the military went out of its way to disprove them. In step with Eisenhower’s 1943 directive, they always underscored the primacy of saving soldiers’ lives but repeatedly asserted that, with precision bombing and military discipline, the cultural heritage of Europe could be saved as well. Journalists were invited aboard the planes that bombed Rome to witness how the Air Force carefully protected sacred sites, and newspapers regularly ran aerial photographs to show that no damage had occurred (Matthews, 1943; Dasenbrock, 2005).
Government officials and editorialists forged an explicit connection between European cultural heritage and American ideals of democracy and freedom. “A history of civilization and liberty is written in the artistic and historic monuments of Europe,” noted the Roberts Commission. But this history required a fabricated European past in which castles and cathedrals symbolized the Four Freedoms. One of the more tortured expressions of this view appeared in a letter to the New York Times praising the Acropolis and other treasured buildings of Athens as “government-made work . . . the result of an ancient New Deal,” thus sanitizing Greek slave labor into a Works Progress Administration program.\textsuperscript{10}

If individual works of art testified to the unique contributions of Europe, attention to the fate of books and libraries tied the New World to the Old in a different way: the printed word available to all, a cornerstone of American ideals. Thus the war brought about the increasingly political, even transcendent figure of the librarian as a front-line defender of freedom. Archibald MacLeish probably did more than anyone to produce this image. Even before Pearl Harbor, he had called on librarians to declare war against fascism. Describing the librarian’s profession in 1940, he wrote: “In such a time as ours, when wars are made against the spirit and its works, the keeping of these records is itself a kind of warfare. The keepers, whether they so wish or not, cannot be neutral”\textsuperscript{11}

These words resonate powerfully across the decades. But they raise the question, did MacLeish’s call to arms influence the making of a policy toward cultural protection in wartime? The place of librarians and archivists in this effort was, in fact, a vexed one. The mandate of the Roberts Commission and the military’s Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives unit included the protection of books and archives, but it did so more as an afterthought than as a primary mission. At the meetings of the Roberts Commission, only MacLeish spoke about the needs of libraries; he did so repeatedly, yet the minutes show that few of his colleagues responded substantively to his concerns and suggestions. In late July 1944—as the military grew more confident that victory was in sight—MacLeish observed that there were no archivists and only one librarian doing cultural work in the European and Mediterranean theaters of war. Nor was there an effort to locate looted library collections. “There is nothing in the field of books that corresponds to the work in the field of art,” he complained.\textsuperscript{12} By the end of the war, the number of librarians and archivists in the European theaters had increased, but they continued to feel sidelined. Sargent Child, who had been sent from the National Archives to Germany to organize the collecting and restitution of archives, repeatedly griped about the dominance of the “art boys.” As he put it to his contact at the Library of Congress, “God damn these little art empire builders.”\textsuperscript{13}

To be sure, the American policy toward cultural resources did protect a number of libraries and historic buildings holding private book collec-
tions. The MFAA officers in the field found frequent instances of looting, mayhem, and the thoughtless use of books and manuscripts. Local residents and Allied forces burned books and bookshelves for warmth in unheated buildings and placed manuscripts on hard floors for makeshift mattresses. In one case, a Monuments officer discovered a shopkeeper using eighteenth-century manuscripts for wrapping paper. The breakdown of troop discipline was especially apparent in Naples, where a special commission investigated damage to prominent buildings and educational institutions. It found that “Allied troops broke into the National Library on more than one occasion, and in addition to ransacking offices and leaving them in a state of great disorder, forced open a safe from which they removed seven 19th century gold medals.” Books had been strewn on the floors, laboratory equipment smashed, and animal specimens destroyed. MFAA officers tried to prevent troop billeting in such places and argued for posting guards and “off limits” signs; they also sought to educate officers and troops about the value of European culture.14

However noteworthy the Roberts Commission and the MFAA, their actions must be weighed in relation to other wartime activities. In a classic case of unintended consequences, the government’s need for intelligence had a greater impact on the fate of books than did the organizations whose mandate was cultural protection. The war brought librarians squarely into a relationship with the intelligence-gathering arm of the state through the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), as well as the intelligence units of the armed forces. Created out of whole cloth, the OSS remains famous for its unorthodox methods and talent. Although its alumni ran the gamut from Herbert Marcuse to Julia Child, the OSS usually recruited experts from Ivy League institutions and top-ranked research universities. Despite its reputation for glamorous exploits, much of its work, perhaps a majority of it, involved prosaic tasks of gathering and analyzing published materials. Its founder, William “Wild Bill” Donovan, believed that intelligence could be learned from open sources, and he sought broad-based, contextualizing information about, for example, industrial production, transportation patterns, and the psychology of the enemy.

Toward this end, the OSS set up an interagency group called the Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications (IDC) and recruited librarians, scholars, and others with linguistic ability and international experience to staff it. These included Frederick Kilgour and David Clift, who would become leaders in the library field after the war; John K. Fairbank, the noted China scholar; and Adele Kibre, a linguist, classicist, and experienced microphotographer before the war. The IDC established outposts in neutral cities—Lisbon, Stockholm, New Delhi, Cairo, and Chongqing among them—where agents could collect enemy newspapers, periodicals, and technical publications. Although they sent numerous originals back to the United States, the operation depended on
microfilm, which greatly reduced the weight and volume of materials for transport. Publications were microfilmed on the spot and sent to Washington and London for processing and distribution.  

Microfilm had emerged as a modern means of preservation and access by the 1930s, touted especially by the documentation movement. The war put this technology to the test. From a trickle in 1941—Donovan was thrilled when the first feet of microfilm arrived—microfilm reels soon flooded official Washington. In an eight-month period from November 1942 to June 1943, the IDC microfilmed nearly 82,000 published items and collected over 23,000 original publications; in the same period, it distributed nearly three-quarters of a million items to a variety of war agencies.

This massive microfilming effort itself preserved many publications that would otherwise have disappeared from the human record, including obscure journals with small print runs, underground newspapers, and resistance pamphlets. Indeed, the Library of Congress had hoped that the IDC would generally acquire publications in the humanities and sciences for its collections at a time when the European book trade was disabled and the fate of book stocks unknown. Early on, it had struggled with the OSS for control of the IDC, contending, in essence, that the IDC’s most important purpose was to ensure the continuity of recorded knowledge. The OSS won that battle, arguing that, for the duration, acquisitions must be instrumental, a means to victory in the war. Although it had not bent the IDC’s mission to its desires, the Library of Congress remained one of the chief recipients of original and microfilmed publications from Europe and Asia during the war.

Attached to the OSS, the librarians began to transform themselves, as Frederick Kilgour put it, “from an acquisition group to an active producer of intelligence.” This came about partly out of necessity. The microfilm bounty quickly proved a curse, as complaints poured into the OSS. Not only were copies indecipherable, but the compilation of materials seemed to have no rhyme or reason—an Italian newspaper, German technical manual, and French telephone directory might appear in quick succession. Over time, the librarians in the IDC’s Washington headquarters solved these problems by understanding their product more as information than as material texts. They created specialized subject classifications, indices to the microfilms, cross-reference cards, biweekly reports on new acquisitions, and abstracts of articles, and they even offered full-text translations to their government clients. The organization hired a legion of indexers and translators, many of them women and émigrés, to accomplish what computers do now.

In the field, too, IDC agents pushed at the constraints of their job description. They began to supplement microfilmed publications with their own observations and reports on conversations and rumors. Some became downright skeptical of the value of what is now termed “open-source in-
telligence,” arguing that publications had to be actively combined with agents’ assessments of people and events. “Much of this general plan for omnivorous and utopian book gathering . . . has no great bearing on the winning of the war,” field representative George Kates wrote from China in 1944. “Some of the most vital information that this organization can gather is not in printed form, nor does it seem likely that it will become so.”

Whether or not Kates was right—that the acquisition of publications made a limited contribution to the war effort—it is fair to say that this activity had a notable impact on cultural preservation. As the war in Europe moved into its final stages, the IDC became a smooth quasi-military operation. Its agents interrogated German prisoners-of-war in England about the location of library collections, archival records, and book stocks that had been moved and hidden. Working with military intelligence and regular soldiers in groups called “T-forces,” they followed the advancing Allied armies, combing through buildings, caves, and mines to cart out all forms of printed and archival material. This wholesale collecting effort had several purposes: to learn about the immediate military and political situation in Germany and Japan, to anticipate the intentions of the Soviet Union, to compile records for war crimes tribunals, to help establish the postwar occupation government in Germany, and to begin a process of de-Nazification by collecting and segregating Nazi publications.

Whatever the specific strategic intentions, the result was a considerable effort to preserve books and other cultural objects, one that simply had not been anticipated by civilian or military leaders. Despite their earlier planning, the T-forces, Monuments officers, and OSS men were unprepared for what they saw and found. Even as they encountered unbelievable devastation, they daily turned up treasure troves. Across the American zone of occupation in Germany, wrote one MFAA official in July 1945, “we now know of more than 800 mines, castles, country houses, churches, hospitals and other public buildings which contain works of art, archives and libraries.” Ultimately, they would find 1,400 repositories.

In a program of organized pillage, the Nazis had removed entire collections from Poland and other occupied countries and had seized a vast array of Judaica from Jewish homes, synagogues, and institutions for a planned “Museum of an Extinct Race.” German officials had also belatedly moved their own book collections out of cities, where Allied bombing campaigns severely damaged library buildings and archives. These collections had been relocated to various salt mines and caves, where volumes were often piled up willy-nilly. The status of the Prussian State Library suggests the enormity of the problem. When the Americans arrived in Berlin in 1945, they found few books still in the library building. Most had been evacuated to over two dozen sites, many in what would become the Soviet zone of occupation, as well as in Poland. Of the one and a half million volumes sent to one town in the U.S. zone, about one in eight had been lost or damaged;
others were never recovered when the owners of the storage facilities had themselves become refugees and could not be located (Poste, 1958, pp. 234, 257; Hill, 1946).

The MFAA repeatedly drew attention to the “tragic need for more personnel to cope with the staggering exigencies of the present situation.”21 The immediate requirement was to protect these sites by shoring up roofs and walls, moving materials away from damp and mold, and posting guards and off-limit signs. Looting by soldiers, visiting officials, and local residents was a particular concern. Looting could be systematic, but more often it occurred opportunistically and it was nearly impossible to control. The longer range goal, of course, was to figure out what to do with all the objects they had found.

The Allies discussed and agreed on some general principles about the disposition of cultural objects, but few decisions about policy and procedure were reached. Soviet and French claims for reparations muddied the issue of cultural restitution and no agreement was reached on a single policy covering the four zones of occupation. As Michael Kurtz (1985, 2006) and Leslie Poste (1958) have written, the American occupation government established its own policies toward looted and displaced cultural materials, setting up collecting points in the American zone where books, art, and other items were gathered, cataloged, and repatriated. Despite urgent requests, however, the MFAA received little support for this effort; a small number of American personnel, along with local Germans cleared of a connection with the Nazi Party, were assigned to this enormous task.

The contradiction—strong statements of American policies to protect and restore European cultural heritage but a limited commitment to implement those policies—should not be surprising. This was a new and uncertain venture for the government, whose foremost concerns were winning the war, safeguarding American troops, and ensuring a strong position for the United States in the postwar world. An exclusive focus on political and military leaders, however, obscures the extent to which wartime policy toward culture was made “on the ground,” by librarians, archivists, art curators, and scholars, as well as army officers and ordinary GIs. The chaos of a war-torn territory, its privations and illegibility, produced quick decisions and makeshift procedures. The policies themselves were ambiguous and left ample room for interpretation and enterprise. In caves, mines, and bombed-out buildings, these men found themselves improvising solutions to preserve and return the millions of books and objects they had discovered.

One of the more intriguing examples is Douwe Stuurman, who had been a Rhodes scholar and teacher at Santa Barbara College before he joined the army as an ordinary GI. On his own, he began retrieving Nazi books and pamphlets; future generations needed to know this history, he believed, and these publications would provide concrete proof. One day
Stuurman showed his archive to Sargent Child, and the amazed Monuments officer could not contain his excitement. Stuurman had “run from Vienna to Nürnberg like a brilliant open field runner—he has gained access to cellars, attics, storerooms—thru [sic] the help of German and Austrian scholars—and by playing no tricks with them so that they learned to trust him—has come up with the beacon.” With an unofficial nod from his major, who quietly loaned him trucks, shelving, and space in a warehouse, Stuurman had collected over 100,000 items documenting the rise and fall of Nazi Germany. The principled call to preserve and document was, for Stuurman, a necessary rejoinder to looting and indifference.

The MFAA curators, archivists, and librarians in charge of the collecting points across the American zone showed similar initiative and sense of ethical purpose, although perhaps without Stuurman’s flair. American civilian and military leaders had determined that the restitution of cultural property would be made to the nations from which it had been taken; each nation was then responsible for restoring works to private owners. They had not set up procedures for the collecting points, however, and simply ordered the MFAA personnel to develop them. Thus art historian Craig Hugh Smyth, put in charge of the Munich Central Collecting Point, quickly decided how to arrange the work process, creating, for example, separate “national rooms,” where representatives from formerly occupied countries could come and, with the help of an assigned curator, research the provenance of the cultural property there.

This procedure seems to have worked relatively well for many art and book collections, but looted Judaica—over 2.5 million books, in addition to art and sacred objects—were stateless items and posed an especially difficult problem. The occupation government established the Offenbach Archival Depot for these materials (Poste, 1958, pp. 333–95; Waite, 2002; U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d. b). Led by Jewish-American librarians and archivists, the staff had the anguishing task of searching for rightful owners and deciding what to do with books whose owners had been murdered or could not be found. Many groups laid claims to these orphaned books, including the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, which had relocated from Vilna to New York in 1940; and the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, whose research director was Hannah Arendt. The Polish government called for the repatriation of books stolen from Polish Jews, although most had been killed in the Holocaust; the Library of Congress wanted works whose owners could not be identified.

The Americans who worked at Offenbach were always aware of what the volumes represented—the displacement or death of millions of Jews—and they seem to have approached the task with a striking degree of reverence and empathy. “I would come to a box of books which the sorters had brought together, like scattered sheep into one fold,” Captain Isaac
Bencowitz wrote of his experience. “I would find myself straightening out
these books and arranging them in the boxes with a personal sense of ten-
derness as if they had belonged to someone dear to me, someone recently
deceased.” He observed, “How difficult it is to look at the contents of the
depot with the detachment of someone evaluating property or with the
impersonal viewpoint of scholarly evaluation.”

The experiences of Douwe Stuurman and Isaac Bencowitz offer evi-
dence that cultural policy during World War II, for all that it involved the
gaining of national advantage and prestige, simultaneously had a moral
dimension. Those who encountered looted books and art, bombed librar-
ies, and damaged churches felt gripped by the destruction they witnessed.
Librarians, archivists, and curators may have come into the battlefield with
an allegiance to cultural preservation, but others in the government and
military felt a similar sense of responsibility. As Major General John H.
Hildring pointedly observed to the Roberts Commission, “soldiers aren’t
the vandalistic people that some folks think they are.”

Certainly it was often difficult, even impossible, to navigate the cultural terrain of war by an
ethical compass; other considerations—from those of policymakers, with
their geopolitical strategizing, to such practices “on the ground” as looting
and black marketeering—often prevailed. But if culture is often a domain
for the instrumental projection of power, it never is only that.

War necessarily entails traumatic loss, and in the case of World War II
those losses were catastrophic. Governmental measures to protect cultural
resources were limited and not always effective. Policymakers took these
steps with an eye toward favorable public relations and the future interna-
tional standing of the United States. Their actions undoubtedly reflected
a Eurocentric understanding of human civilization. Still, the decision to
effect a policy for the preservation of culture was a highly significant one.
It had an impact in real terms, saving books, artworks, historic buildings,
and other material objects that do, in fact, speak to the continuities of the
past, to individual and communal efforts to create, to invent, and to un-
derstand. And in the longer term, these actions have helped to make the
idea of cultural preservation and restitution a legitimate one as an aspect
of human rights (Barkan, 2000).

What can we learn from the history of cultural policy in World War II?
There may be no direct lessons, but there are several points worth mak-
ing. The 1930s and 1940s nurtured intellectuals and cultural leaders who
believed in a relationship with government officials, policymakers, and
the military; they were able to draw on those ties when faced with the problem
of preserving culture in wartime. For many reasons, this relationship frayed
in the second half of the twentieth century. Reaching across the divide now
seems impossible for both sides. Scholars, intellectuals, and cultural figures
often prefer the purist’s position of outsider and critic to messy interactions
with civilian and military leaders. As was true in World War II, however,
recent wars in Bosnia and Iraq have spurred extraordinary efforts by individuals—in academia and the military—to preserve cultural heritage, restore stolen goods, document cultural crimes, and bring perpetrators to justice (Bogdanos, 2005; Riedlmayer, 2005). Their actions should inspire a new level of communication and commitment between the worlds of culture and politics. It would certainly be better to choose engagement than to rely on the law of unintended consequences.

Archibald MacLeish wrote in 1940, “It is the essential character of our time that the triumph of the lie, the mutilation of culture, and the persecution of the Word no longer shocks us into anger.” As he knew, freedom and democracy were bound up in the protection of and access to books, art, and culture. His diagnosis and prescription—a call to librarians, scholars, writers, and lovers of democratic culture to abandon neutrality and engage in its defense—continue to provoke and challenge us today.

Notes
7. For a sense of the networks and ease of access among cultural leaders, government officials, and military, see “Report on Washington Trip, July 7–10, 1943,” roll 61, Roberts Commission.
8. This discussion is somewhat speculative, but see Radway (1997), Rubin (1992), and Meyers (2000).


15. IDC records are scattered through RG 226, Records of the Office of Strategic Services (hereafter cited as OSS), National Archives and Records Administration; for a partial overview, see Wallace Deuel, “XXXIV. Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications,” OSS History Office, E99, box 95, folder 30, OSS. See also Richards (1994). For scholarly discussions of the OSS, see Mauch (2003), Katz (1989), Chalou (1992).

16. “Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications, November 1944, Acquisition and Distribution of Publications,” E99, box 115, folder 100, OSS.

17. “Report by the Executive Secretary to the Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications,” May 28, 1943, p. 4, E167, box 1, folder: IDC/Washington [rec’d]. Monthly Reports & Outpost Letters, 1943-45, OSS.

18. Ensign Frederick G. Kilgour, USNR, to Members of the IDC and the Far Eastern Advisory Group, “Excerpts from Letters Recently Received From George Kates in Chungking,” March 25, 1944, p. 2, E1, box 32, folder 1, OSS.

19. “See IDC Interrogations of Prisoners re Art, Archives and Publications” (binder), E66; OSS Mission to Germany, E81, boxes 1–3, OSS.


ARCHIVAL SOURCES


National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD. Records of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas [Roberts Commission], RG 239, Microfilm M1944.

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Badly Wanted, but Not for Reading: The Unending Odyssey of *The Complete Library of Four Treasures* of the Wensu Library

Chengzhi Wang

**Abstract**

The Chinese book project *Siku Quanshu (The Complete Library of Four Treasures)* was conducted at the Emperor Qianlong’s command starting in 1772. Thirteen thousand two hundred fifty-four books were collected nationwide and thousands of scholars were involved; 3,462 books were selected to make up the *Siku Quanshu* proper. Over 4 million pages were transcribed by thousands of copyists. Out of the seven copies made, only three copies survived the dramatic historical changes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries almost intact. This article traces the odyssey of the Wenshu Ge copy, particularly in the rapidly changing sociopolitical and economic contexts of the twentieth century. The emphasis of the article is placed on the description and analysis of its relocation in the early 1920s soon after China was transformed into a republic; in the 1960s at the height of the Cold War when China split from and confronted the USSR; and in particular, in the new era of reform and opening up for economic development since the late 1970s. After the turn of the century, the two-decade competition between Liaoning Province and Gansu Province for physically keeping the copy has become increasingly intense at the national, provincial, and local levels, and the competition has created significant impacts on library building and cultural development in the two provinces and beyond. The article examines important factors of culture, tradition, preservation, and modernization associated with the fate of the copy in hopes that the perplexing realities of Chinese history and society will be better understood as China has entered a new era.
Introduction

Si Ku Quan Shu (or Siku Quanshu, The Complete Library of Four Treasures, hereforth referred to as SKQS) was completed in 1787 in the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1736–1796) during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). It is considered to be the largest single publishing project in Chinese history. The four treasures (sometimes called the four branches or four categories) represent the major categories of traditional Chinese knowledge, namely, classics, history, philosophy, and literary writing. By “complete” was meant that the works represented the most comprehensive knowledge related to these categories. Seven official copies were made of the original manuscript of SKQS, but only three copies, including the copy of the Wensu Library, have survived. In general, post-Qing Chinese and Western scholars on Chinese classical texts regarded the project of book collection and publishing involved in the compilation of SKQS as a campaign of censorship known as “the literary inquisition of Qianlong Emperor” (Goodrich, 1935; B. Guo, 1937). Yet some researchers have analyzed the project from a different perspective, arguing that the book project was primarily a literary enterprise that coincided with what were largely independent censorship events (Guy, 1987, 1984; Mote, 1987). In East Asian librarianship, however, there is a unanimous consensus that SKQS is an essential resource for Chinese humanities scholarship, and the searchable electronic version that has been made of the copy of SKQS of Wenyuan Library in the Forbidden City is considered to be a resource of great importance to researchers (Guoqing Li, 1998; Mote, 1987).

The Wensu Library copy of SKQS was relocated in the early 1920s soon after China’s transformation into a republic. It survived changing hands to the Russians and then the Japanese during the period of the Second World War. It suffered further relocation at the height of the Cold War when China split from and confronted the Soviet Union in the 1960s. In China’s era of reform and opening up since the late 1970s, two provinces have fought each other to retain the copy. This article focuses on the nature of the collection and the odyssey of the Wensu Library set of SKQS from the eighteenth century to the present. It also examines the changing sociopolitical and cultural forces behind the recent struggle over the copy’s ownership and analyzes the unexpected results and impacts of the struggle on library development in China.

SKQS Collection

The project to create SKQS was initiated by Emperor Qianlong (1711–1799), perhaps the strongest ruler in Chinese history. During his long reign of sixty years from 1736 to 1796, the Qing Empire experienced unprecedented expansion. Most countries or regions neighboring current China were conquered and incorporated into the empire. The population
increased significantly to 300 million, and agricultural productivity and output grew dramatically. Social and political stability and economic and commercial prosperity were achieved (Woodside, 2002). Emperor Qian-long, an intelligent, diligent top-notch scholar himself, believed in historical exceptionalism in cultural rather than military terms and dreamed of cultural superiority over all past emperors. He sought partnership and cooperation with intellectuals, who cherished Confucian ideals to advance social order and public interests and wished to use the authority and power of the emperor to serve their own agendas (Guy, 1987; Wu, 1990; Woodside, 2002). Thus, cultural prosperity was also encouraged under Emperor Qian-long by the creation of numerous scholarly, publishing, and educational enterprises. The SKQS project may be the greatest of them.

“Much of the intellectual activity of the eighteenth century was carried on in the shadow of the imperial institution” (Fairbank & Reischauer, 1989, p. 232). In the SKQS project, Emperor Qianlong’s role was instrumental and crucial. His edicts and detailed guidelines were of vital importance for the development of such an unprecedented large-scale collection and publishing enterprise. Early in 1741, the sixth year of his reign, he issued an edict calling on provincial officials to search the nation for rare and valuable books in order to improve the collection of the imperial library. There was no response to this edict. Occupied by other priorities in his new reign, the emperor did not try to enforce it. However, in 1772, the thirty-seventh year of his reign, having turned sixty years old, he felt more strongly than ever a mission to expand his imperial library collection and improve knowledge transmission in China (Qi & Han, 1997). He wished to create a publishing project that would be even greater than the grand encyclopedia completed during the reign of his grandfather Emperor Kangxi (1654–1722). This project, Gu jing tu shu ji cheng (Imperially Approved Synthesis of Books and Illustrations Past and Present, or Grand Encyclopedia of Ancient and Modern Knowledge), had been undertaken by Chen Menglei (1650–1741) under the patronage of the emperor. It included 10,000 juan (chapters), plus a 40-juan index, and involved some 60 million characters. Its printing of sixty-four copies in movable copper-type started in 1720 and was not completed until 1728.

In the spring of 1772 Emperor Qianlong issued an edict ordering provincial officials to institute a search throughout the country for books of particular value for the imperial library. He reiterated the major points of his earlier edict of 1741 and elaborated his rationale for expansion of the collection of the imperial library. He noted that he looked to the writings of the past for inspiration in governance and worked hard everyday to master and apply the precepts of the classical canons. Though he had supported publishing classic literary and historical works and the current imperial library collection was already rich, he believed that there must
be other useful books not included in the collection, which a nationwide search might reveal and which could then be ordered or copied for inclusion in the imperial library.

He specified collection criteria. All classic works of the past dynasties that dealt with human nature and improving the social order should be collected and reviewed as the top priority. Various types of commentaries, annotations, and verifications of the classics, as long as they had practical value or significance, were to be selected for inclusion. Works of literature and criticism by scholars present and past should be searched for exhaustively and assessed carefully. Sample examination essays prepared for sale in bookstores, unimportant genealogies, and collections of correspondence, along with books of decorative calligraphy, should be excluded. Works by authors of little scholarship or whose writing was libelous, intended to frighten, devoted to flattery and praise, or simply trivial were to be excluded.

The edict also specified selection procedures. Books from bookstores were to be purchased at a reasonable price. Books with printing blocks from private libraries were to be printed and bound at the government’s costs. Manuscripts without printing blocks were to be taken for copying and returned after copying. Officials were ordered to seek out books in a careful way, without placing undue burdens on book owners. Because it was expected that the number of books to be collected from each province would be extremely large, to avoid duplication in what was sent to the capital each province was to submit lists of the titles of the books that had been collected along with abstracts of their contents for review by the court officials (B. Guo, 1937; Guy, 1987).

This edict was once again ignored. In the fall of 1772 the now eager emperor issued yet another edict emphasizing the importance of the collection project and ordering provincial officials to take action to collect books immediately. At the end of the year, Zhu Yun (1729–1781), a leading scholar official who held the position of Anhui Province education commissioner, submitted seventeen books representing the best scholarship of Anhui Province. Soon, other provincial officials followed suit. Zhu also submitted a palace memorial suggesting four publishing projects that should be undertaken in association with the imperial library collection project. In 1773 the emperor accepted and modified Zhu’s suggestions and gave the project the name, SKQS. He ordered the establishment of “SKQS Guan” (the Commission on SKQS). The commission created a number of positions under twenty-one carefully designated categories to which the emperor assigned 362 officials. They represented nearly all the important officials and leading scholars at that time, including those who had initially opposed the project. The SKQS project lasted nearly twenty years and employed as many as 15,000 intellectuals as copists (Fairbank & Reischauer, 1989, p. 233).

Included in SKQS were mainly books selected or reassembled from the imperial collections and books submitted by provincial officials or indi-
vidual book owners. Some of the rare books in the library were created by reassembling excerpts included in the *Yongle da dian* (*Yongle Encyclopedia*), the largest encyclopedia in Chinese history, which was kept in the imperial library. This encyclopedia, initiated by the Emperor Yongle (1403–1425) of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) at the beginning of his reign, was compiled under the general editorship of Yao Guangxiao (1335–1418), involved 2,169 scholars working for four years, and was completed in two copies in 1408. It included excerpts of 7,000–8,000 works compiled into 22,877 *juan*, plus a 60-*juan* index, with an estimated total of 370 million characters. In all, 522 rare works were recovered from assembling the excerpts in the encyclopedia, and 385 of them were selected for inclusion in SKQS. The rest were included in its byproduct, *SKQS Cun mu* (*List of Works Mentioned but Not Included in SKQS*). In addition to these works the imperial library contributed 327 titles to *SKQS* and 420 titles to *SKQS Cun mu*. Another 149 books created as a result of the emperor’s direct orders were also included.

As expected, however, the largest proportion of materials used in *SKQS* came from what was submitted by the different provinces. In the two years following 1772, a total of 10,519 titles were submitted for review, of which over 1,500 were selected for inclusion. Private book owners, particularly those with famous private libraries, submitted books of special value. Some wealthy businessmen also submitted rare books that they purchased. About 100 popular titles were also bought or borrowed from bookstores for inclusion (Qi & Han, 1997).

In all a total of 13,254 titles were collected for consideration for inclusion in the *SKQS*. Of these 3,461 titles were actually used for *SKQS* proper. Bibliographic information for 6,793 titles was listed in *SKQS Cun mu*, and about 3,000 titles were rejected or destroyed, mainly because they were deemed politically “incorrect.” The censorship that this seemed to involve and the persecution of book owners and authors, sometimes related to these books, sometimes not, have led to the project being described as a literary inquisition. The completed copy of *SKQS* was presented to the emperor in 1782, in over 79,000 *juan*, 6,140 cases, and over 36,000 volumes. In the next five years, 3,826 copists were hired to make seven copies by hand of the original manuscript copy.

The final product was the seven copies of *SKQS* proper, about 36,500 *juan* long each. In addition, several byproducts were created. A shorter version of the collection was compiled into *Essentials of SKQS* (*SKQS hui yao*). This contained the most important works in 11,170 *juan*, in 200 volumes. A total of 134 extremely rare and valuable titles form a separate work, *Wuying Dian ju zhen ban cong shu* (*Collectanea Printed From Assembled Pearls in the Wuying Hall*). These were in fact printed in moveable copper type, which was an innovation at this time. *SKQS zong mu ti yao* (*An Annotated General Catalog of SKQS*) was also compiled and printed. A list of titles and authors,
with abbreviated reviews, became *SKQS* jian ming mu lu (*Shortened Catalog of SKQS*) in 100 volumes. Finally, the scholarly apparatus of commentaries and notes arising from collating and verifying texts and editions was systematized into *SKQS* kao zheng (*SKQS Textual Verifications*) in 100 volumes.

While the books of *SKQS* were being complied, Emperor Qianlong ordered seven specially designed library buildings to be constructed in his palaces to be ready to house the work when it was finished. Four of the buildings were in the north: the Wenyuan Library in the Forbidden City; the Wensu Library in the old Qing capital in Shengjing, now Shenyang City (formerly Fengtian City) of Liaoning Province (formerly Fengtian Province, or loosely Manchuria); the Wenyuan Library in the Imperial Garden, or Yuanming Yuan, in Beijing; and the Wenjin Library in the imperial summer retreat at Rehe, now Chengde in Hebei Province. Three of the library buildings were in the south: the Wenzong Library in Zhenjiang and the Wenhui Library in Yangzhou, both in Jiangsu Province, and the Wenlan Library in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. The three in the south were intended to allow scholars to access the imperial collection. Of the seven copies, two (Wenzong and Wenhui) in the south and the copy of the Yuanming Yuan in Beijing were lost in war. One copy in the south (Wenlan) was severely damaged when the building was destroyed in war in 1861; the building was rebuilt in 1880. Only the Wenyuan of the Forbidden City and Wensu and Wenjin Libraries, all in the north, have survived intact.

**History of the Wensu Library Copy of SKQS**

Each extant copy of *SKQS* has had a distinctive history in the turbulence of the centuries since it was completed and shipped to its library. Compared to other extant copies, whose locations are generally settled now, the Wensu Library copy suffered more relocations and changing of hands than the others. Unlike the others its fate is still not settled in that there is currently intense competition over its ownership. The odyssey of the Wensu Library copy began at the start of the twentieth century when China went through a series of radical events that impacted every aspect of Chinese society and culture. There were civil wars, changes of government, foreign wars, the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), and the opening up and reform of the country since 1979. These social upheavals were reflected in the fortunes of the Wensu Library copy of *SKQS*.

In October 1900 the eight-power Allied Forces of the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Japan, Italy, and Austria-Hungary took over Beijing to suppress the anti-West Boxer Rebellion. Soon after this, Russia occupied much of Manchuria in northeast China and took control of the city of Shengjing, former capital of the Qing court and later Shenyang. Russian soldiers took custody of the palace of the Qing court in Shengjing, which included the Wensu Library and its collections. It was later reported that a number of volumes were damaged under Russian custody.
In 1911 the Qing Dynasty was overthrown by revolutionaries led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) and the Republic of China was founded. In 1914 Duan Zhigui (1869–1925), the army superintendent of Manchuria, moved the Wensu Library copy of SKQS from Manchuria to Beijing simply to please his boss, Yuan Shikai (1859–1916), the first provisional president of the Republic of China, then the most powerful figure in China. Notorious for using women to bribe higher authorities, Duan intended the use of the old and rare books of SKQS to glorify his master’s military and political success. In December 1915 Yuan abolished the republic and declared himself the new emperor of China. He was widely opposed and the republic was restored in March 1916. After Yuan’s death in June 1916, SKQS was stored at the Beijing Antiques Exhibition Institute in the Wuying Hall of the Forbidden City for eleven years (Tu Guo, 2001).

In 1922 Japanese representatives secretly negotiated with the Qing Dynasty royal family to buy the copy for 1.2 million dollars. When Shen Jianzhi (1887–1947), a celebrated professor of linguistics and history at the Peking University, learned of this he wrote a letter to the Ministry of Education to express his strong objection, and the deal was then aborted (Chu, 2004).

In 1925 the authorities of Fengtian requested the return of the copy. This request was approved by Duan Qirui (1864–1936), the chief executive administrator, then the highest administrative authority of China during the period 1924–26. The work was shipped back to Manchuria in nine fully loaded trucks. An inventory conducted upon receipt revealed that many volumes had been damaged or lost. The Education Ministry of Fengtian Province completed the set by copying the contents of the damaged or missing volumes from the Wenyuan Library copy stored in the Forbidden City. That year, the Forbidden City was renamed the Palace Museum and the Qing royal family was forced to move out.

In Manchuria the returned books were first stored in the Confucius Temple in Shenyang for two years before they were moved to the newly renovated Wensu Library in 1927. In January of that year, the Fengtian Committee for Protecting SKQS hired a curator for the books and a servant for the curator. It was reported that Japanese representatives approached the Shenyang Palace Museum for the purpose of making a copy of the set by paying 100,000 dollars. In February the Fengtian authorities announced that the troops stationed in the palace were to move out and the palace was opened to the general public, along with the Wensu Library and its collection.

In a meeting in late September 1927, the Fengtian Education Association promulgated seven regulations for opening the library to visitors:

1. **Hours:** 9 AM—3 PM
2. **People may not visit the library without the recommendation of the Education Association members**
3. Smoking is prohibited during the library visit
4. Books may not be opened without the approval of the Education Association
5. Visitors must behave in the library as instructed by the guard
6. The rules shall be changed at anytime when necessary
7. The regulations take effect immediately

The regulations were very restrictive. But this was probably the only occasion that Chinese library authorities provided access to rare books from the imperial collection to general library visitors; no official documents suggesting systematic access to such collections before or after this period can be found.

In November 1928 it was reported that the Fengtian-based Culture Society of the Northeast headed by Zhang Xueliang (1901–2001), the young ruler of Manchuria, planned to publish a reprint of the Wensu Library copy and offer the reprint copies to Chinese academic libraries. In December Zhang earmarked 200,000 dollars to begin the reprint project; he put Jin Liang (1878–1962), curator of the Liaoning Museum in charge of the project. In March 1929 Zhang convened a preparatory meeting of advisers, which decided that 500 copies, each of 36,000 volumes, were to be published in three years; printing costs were estimated to be about three million dollars. Zhang also sent a telegram to leading academic institutions in China to announce the ambitious plan that now included publishing the copy in photo facsimile, continuing the SKQS project by collecting and compiling books published after Emperor Qianlong, and emending and verifying texts (Guoqing Li, 2004). He convened another meeting in March 1929 on the project. However, no records have been found suggesting that the project went beyond this planning meeting. Publication plans were suspended probably as a result of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and Zhang’s humiliating retreat from Manchuria and the larger northeast in 1931, leaving the Wensu copy of SKQS behind for the Japanese.

A brief report by the Central Daily on October 1, 1931, suggested erroneously that the copy along with other treasures had been stolen by Japanese soldiers. When Manchuria was turned into Manchukuo (1932–45), or the Great Manchu State, a puppet state established by the Japanese military government, the Wensu copy of SKQS was placed in the custody of the Manchuria Library of Manchukuo. Although the Japanese had long been interested in this set of books, the army did not remove them to Japan, perhaps on the assumption that Manchukuo would be permanently controlled by the Japanese.

In August 1945, as the Second World War drew to a close, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. The Soviet Red Army invaded Manchukuo and attacked the Japanese army, which offered little effective resistance.
The Soviet army took control of the whole of Manchuria. In 1946 the Chinese Communists in their turn moved quickly to try to replace the Soviet Army, with which they had cooperated for a short time before the ruling Nationalist government could arrive. However, the Soviet Army transferred administrative authority of the regions to the Nationalist Army and withdrew from China according to the provisions of the treaties signed between the Soviet and the Nationalist Chinese government. Following this withdrawal, Jiang Fucong (1898–1990), director of the Nationalist Central Library of China, went to investigate the situation of the Shenyang Palace Museum and the Wensu Library SKQS. He reported that the Chinese Communists had taken some museum objects but left the SKQS books intact because they were ignorant about ancient rare books.10 This is probably not true in that a great number of renowned classical Chinese scholars had been recruited by the Chinese Communists.

In 1948, following their fierce offensives in Liaoning Province, the Communists successfully took the regional cities back from the Nationalists and eventually won control of the whole northeast. It was reported that the Ministry of Education planned to move SKQS away from the war zones to Beijing for safety and until the northeast was pacified. Later this plan was put on hold.11

On October 1, 1949, at the end of the 1946–49 civil war, the decree creating the People’s Republic of China was formally promulgated. However, the very next year, already devastated by war, China entered the Korean War, hoping to stop the allied UN troops headed by the United States from occupying Korea and bringing war to the Chinese border. In October 1950, while tens of thousands of Chinese soldiers secretly crossed the Yalu River Bridge to participate in the war, the Wensu Library copy of SKQS and other rare materials were shipped out of Liaoning. It was feared that American troops would attack China, especially the Liaoning Province, which neighbors Korea, and would endanger the copy stored in the provincial capital. The books were shipped to China’s northernmost province, Heilong Jiang Province, on the border with the Soviet Union, then considered a close ally. SKQS was first moved to a temple used as a makeshift school in Nahe County by the Nahe River. In summer 1952, when the river flooded and threatened the books, they were shipped to Beian County along with other rare books. In the middle of 1953, with a ceasefire between the United States and China and North Korea, the Chinese government basically achieved its original goal to check American military advancement. SKQS was then shipped back to Shenyang, but it was stored in a new facility near the Wensu Library (Chu, 2004).

Turning sour in the late 1950s, China-Soviet relationships underwent a further deterioration in the 1960s. Now there were not only ideological disagreements but also military confrontations on the border. With increasing military buildup by each side along the border and a large-scale Chinese-
Soviet war expected to break out at any moment, it was decided in 1965 that all the rare and special collections of the Liaoning Province Library and the Palace Museum in Shenyang would be moved to safe places in the countryside. The Wensu Library copy of *SKQS* was relocated secretly by train to Lingyuan County, now Lingyuan City, over 340 kilometers southwest of Shenyang (He, Mu, & Liao, 2004). In October 1966 the Ministry of Culture decided to move the copy secretly to a presumably safer site near Lanzhou, the capital of northwestern Gansu Province, where it was placed under the care of the Gansu Province Library. It was reported that Premier Zhou Enlai personally approved this move. The new site for the books was a military storage area in Gancaodian Township in Yuzhong County, a suburban area over one hour’s drive from the capital and over 4,000 kilometers from Shenyang. In 1970, at the height of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), a special fund of 400,000 yuan, a significant amount then, was allocated to building the improved storage facility for the copy (Tu Guo, 2001). During most of the Cultural Revolution, the regular library operations were discontinued, and it was impossible for both researchers and the general public to access the copy.

**Fighting over the Wensu Library Copy of *SKQS***

The Culture Revolution ended in 1976. In 1979, isolated, autarkist China started implementing its national policies of economic reform. The hyperpoliticization and centralization characteristic of the socialist planned economy that had gripped Chinese society for decades gradually gave way to depoliticization and decentralization after the introduction of a market economy. China began to open up to the outside world. Economic development became China’s top priority. The commercial value and economic benefits that might be generated from historical relics and items of cultural heritage became of increasing interest.

Partly driven by such considerations, in 1983 the provincial authorities in Liaoning Province first made it known to their counterparts in Gansu Province that they wanted to have the Wensu copy of *SKQS*. This request was repeated for a number of years. Liaoning Province offered to pay a mutually agreed upon amount of money in compensation to Gansu Province for the care it had taken of the copy since 1966. Yet, hesitant to return the copy, Gansu Province either did not respond or stated that the decision to return the copy had to be made by authorities at the national level.

Liaoning Provincial authorities claimed the Wensu copy of *SKQS* should be returned from Gansu because it had been sent there only for “temporary keeping,” or *dai guan*. It should be “returned to reunite with the Wensu Library,” so as to achieve *shu ge tongyi* (“unity of book and library”). Liaoning Province pointed out that the books had been stored in caves during the period of military confrontation between China and the Soviet Union.
Later, it had been housed for decades in makeshift storage facilities in Gansu that were inadequate to conserve and protect the books. In addition, given the fact that the relatively industrialized Liaoning Province lagged far behind other economically higher-performing coastal provinces, it was argued that regaining such an item of cultural heritage as SKQS would help its economic revival, particularly that of Shenyang City, the provincial capital.

Gansu Provincial authorities, however, believed that the ownership of the copy, like that of any important historical and cultural relic in China, belonged to nobody but the state, as stipulated by the Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics. According to this law, only executive departments of the cabinet, such as the State Council, had the authority to arrange the transfer, exchange, and loan of all cultural relics in China. Gansu Provincial authorities claimed that it held the original paperwork from the State Council when the Wensu copy of the SKQS had been sent to Gansu in 1966 for protection/management, or bao guan, not for temporary keeping, or dai guan, as Liaoning Province authorities had claimed (Chou, Shi, & Zheng, 2004).

Furthermore, Gansu Province pointed out that all the extant copies of SKQS had been separated from their original libraries, so that the Liaoning Province’s rationale of “unity of book and library” did not agree with the reality of the situation of the other copies. Moreover, adopting its rival’s argument, the Gansu Province was more economically underdeveloped than Liaoning Province, and having the Wensu copy of SKQS could help the economic and cultural development of Lanzhou City, its capital, and the province more generally. Last but not least, Gansu Province claimed that its natural environment, particularly its dry climate and high plateau, was the best for storing and protecting the copy from physical deterioration. This claim was even inscribed on a piece of public art in Yuzhong County!

In 1992, when the new Liaoning Province Library was completed and opened to the public, Liaoning Province’s Department of Culture submitted a request to the central Ministry of Culture for the return of the copy. Ignored again for four years, in 1996 the provincial authorities, having begun the construction of a small special facility in the basement of the new provincial library for storing the copy, submitted their proposal once again to the ministry. The Ministry of Culture then sent fact-finding teams to both Liaoning Province and Gansu Province. The ministry’s decision was in favor of Liaoning Province. In April 2000, the Ministry submitted its opinion to Vice Premier Li Lanqing of the State Council, who was in charge of national educational and cultural affairs, for approval and final action. In May 2000 Mr. Li approving the recommendation that the copy be returned to Liaoning Province but also commented: “It was critical for Liaoning Province to improve the housing conditions in an efficient and
scientific way.” In 2001 the small SKQS basement storage facility, which was claimed to meet conservation standards, was completed in the provincial library (Diao, 2004; Chen, 2004).

The long struggle over ownership of this copy of SKQS is interesting in that both sides utilized political resources and mass media in their campaign. In addition to the executive departments of the government at different levels, they appealed to the high-profile China National People’s Congress (CNPC) and the China Political Consultative Conference (CPCC). CNPC is the legislative organ of government while the CPCC is like the upper house in the Western parliamentary system. Each body had a network of offices from the national level down to the township level. Though they traditionally worked as “rubber stamps” of the Chinese Communist Party, in the reform era the two systems increasingly gained influence and power. Both Liaoning Province and Gansu Province, though utilizing the government, CNPC, and CPCC at city, provincial, and national levels, differed in their strategies.

Liaoning Province focused more on working to obtain favorable orders and decisions from above. Aside from managing to win the positive decision of the Ministry of Culture and State Council, Liaoning Province representatives to CNPC and CPPC repeatedly submitted official proposals (ti an) to request that the copy of SKQS be transferred (Diao, 2004). As late as the national conference of the CPPC in 2004, more than twenty-seven representatives from Liaoning Province submitted proposals calling on the Ministry of Culture and the State Council to order Gansu to return the copy of SKQS. As in earlier proposals they also agreed that the province should compensate Gansu Province financially for protecting the books for nearly four decades (Guo, Yu, & Gao, 2004). It was also pointed out that Liaoning Province had made an investment of about 450,000 U.S. dollars to build a new library facility to house the copy on its return. In fact such an investment was relatively humble and the construction of the small-scale basement facility in the Liaoning Province Library took almost six years to complete.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Gansu Province responded passively to Liaoning Province’s offensive. Later the province improved its strategies and began to utilize the CNPC and CPCC at the provincial level. To the surprise of Liaoning Province and others, on December 2, 2000, the “Decision on Further Protecting the Wensu Library SKQS” was passed by the Gansu Province branch of the CNPC. This local law was designed to keep SKQS permanently in Gansu. Emphasizing the copy’s significance for the economic and cultural development of the province, the law stipulated that the copy should be properly housed and ordered the planning and building of a new library specifically for the copy. The construction of this library began in 2003, and the elegant ancient-style library was completed in 2004, taking only one year and three months. The main library facilities met cutting-edge conservation standards. The complex also contained a
Guest Reception Building, a Storage Facility, and the traditional-style Stele and Pavilion bearing calligraphic inscriptions eulogizing the creation of the library. The new library represented an investment that totaled 50 million yuan, or more than 6 million U.S. dollars. This was a major investment for underdeveloped Gansu Province. It was reported that Gansu managed to obtain a significant amount of funding from the central government to help build the library. This is thought to have overshadowed Liaoning’s small-scale underground facility and to make Liaoning’s efforts to get the copy back less effective.

Gansu Province also founded the Society for Studies of SKQS on July 1, 2005. A national conference was immediately organized and hosted in the name of the society in Lanzhou on July 8–9, with participants invited from academic institutions in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Though the number of participants was relatively small, Gansu Province made the conference look national in scope. Mr. Li Ying, vice governor of Gansu Province, opened the conference and endorsed the society on behalf of the provincial government. In his welcoming speech, he reiterated that the rare natural environments, particularly the cool climate, dry air, and small degree of temperature variation in Gansu, were major factors for keeping the copy of SKQS there (Y. Li, 2005).

Partly because of the increasing decentralization and localism associated with the deepening economic reform in China at this time, decisions from the executive departments at the national level could not be implemented immediately or effectively without much coordination, negotiation, or compromise. The law enacted by Gansu Province contradicted the decisions of the central government’s Ministry of Culture and the State Council about the return of SKQS to Liaoning Province, and the local government prevailed. The national CNPC law committee was unable to turn into a bill the proposals that had been presented by representatives from Liaoning Province, in part because of an increasing number of more pressing issues that a rapidly changing China placed on the agenda of the law makers. According to law, proposals from the CPCC have to be responded to by administrative departments at the national level. The Ministry of Culture repeatedly responded to CPCC proposals about the copy of SKQS with nearly the same rhetoric every time: proposals were welcome and would be studied; more investigation was needed; and cultural relics should be protected as effectively as possible. Officials of the ministry admitted that they could do nothing to solve the dilemma. Thus, the fight goes on.

Conclusion

Two centuries after the publishing of SKQS, Chinese history in the late twentieth century is to some extent repeating the late eighteenth century’s flourishing economy, relative relaxation of ideological and political control, growing interest in ancient classics and cultural relics, and booming
publishing projects. However, in the highly centralized Qianlong reign of the late eighteenth century, the collecting, emending, publishing, and sharing of texts that the creation of SKQS involved represented a high degree of coordination, compromise, and unity of effort between government and intellectuals. In the late twentieth century the rapid rate of economic growth has not necessarily benefited the development of scholarship and libraries. Copyright violation, plagiarism, and commercialization have besieged scholarly publishing; public libraries have suffered from underinvestment and neglect by the government. The other three extant copies of SKQS (Wenyuan, Wenjin, and Wenlan) have been published but with much more in mind than making them available for library collections. Furthermore, the ongoing fight for the Wensu copy shows no signs of an emerging compromise between Liaoning Province and Gansu Province, nor any evidence of innovative coordination by the Ministry of Culture and the State Council to resolve the conflict and benefit library development.

From 1949 to the reform era, which started over two decades ago, cultural and library operations were generally centralized and often hyperpolitical. The fight we have been witnessing over the Wensu copy of SKQS was unimaginable then. The intensifying competition over the last two decades reflects the extent to which the national priority of economic development has galvanized China and affected Chinese library development. According to officials from the Ministry of Culture, the fight suggests that China, while experiencing relatively fast economic growth and creating more wealth, continues to place emphasis on the value of traditional culture and library development. However, the levels of expenditure suggest a contrary view. The per capita acquisition expenditures for the country’s public libraries reached an historic high in 2002, the most recent year that such data are now available, but the expenditure was only 0.33 Chinese yuan, or four U.S. cents. Liaoning Province’s per capita expenditures were 0.43 Chinese yuan, or about five U.S. cents; Gansu’s were 0.14 Chinese yuan, less than two U.S. cents. The number of public libraries at the county level in 2004 without a penny for acquisitions increased from 534, or 23.8 percent, in 2003 to 720, or 32.5 percent (Guoxin Li, 2005).

As discussed above, both Liaoning Province and Gansu Province were motivated by and fought for ownership of SKQS for purposes of local economic development. Paradoxically, except for the possibility that the provincial library, because it houses this set of rare books, may be used as a cultural heritage tourist attraction, it would be hard to understand how difficult-to-read ancient books could generate significant economic benefits and boost local development directly or indirectly. On the contrary, the conservation and management of these books and the provision of access service to researchers entail significant inputs of human and financial resources. Given the chronic underinvestment in public libraries and the lukewarm interest of political authorities in public library development
in the two provinces and in the country as a whole, the fight suggests how public resources can be used in high sounding but essentially misguided and counterproductive initiatives.

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**NOTES**

1. This article draws on newspaper accounts in the period involved using two databases made in Taiwan: the non-proprietary database of Shi jie ri bao (World Daily), or SJRB (http://icd.shu.edu.tw/search2/index.php), created by the Department of Information and Communications, Shixin University; and a portion of the Zhongyang Ribao (Central Daily), or ZYRB, of the proprietary database of Taiwan Newspapers of the TTS Group (http://hunteq.com/km.htm). Most newspaper articles are without authors and some are without clearly identifiable headings but appear as simple news items. The old Chinese newspapers generally had so few pages and were paginated by ban (block/edition) or ban ci (block/edition sequence), which are equivalent to page numbers.

2. "Fengtian Wensu Ge SKQS can que bu shao, xian zheng fa chao lu tian bu" [Fengtian Wensu Library SKQS lost many volumes, copying efforts are now made to complete the set], SJRB, June 26, 1926, p. 7.

3. "Fengtian SKQS you i hui Wensu Ge, tian she guan li yuan yi ren fu ze bao guan" [Fengtian SKQS was moved back to the Wensu Library, a curator’s position is opened for the books’ protection], SJRB, January 19, 1927, p. 7.

4. "Fengtian jiu huang gong huang ling jiang kai fang" [The old Qing Palace and Mausoleum in Fengtian will open to public], SJRB, February 22, 1927, p. 7.


6. "Si ku quan shu Dongbei wen hua she yi ji hua kai yan" [The Culture Society of the Northeast plans to reprint SKQS], SJRB, November 10, 1928, p. 3.


8. "Zhang Xueliang con shou yin Si ku quan shu" [Zhang Xueliang prepares to publish SKQS in facsimile reprint], SJRB, March 1, 1929, p. 6. "Zhang Xueliang shou yi Si ku quan shu" [Zhang Xueliang prepares to publish SKQS], ZYRB, March 3, 1929, p. 3.

9. "Xi zai, Si ku quan shu bei Ri ren dao qu" [What a pity! Japan stole SKQS], ZYRB, October 1, 1931, p. 3.

10. "Jiang Fucong Shenyang gui lai, tan jie shou Dongbei wen wu, tu shu guan nei Si ku quan shu wu yang, gong jun jie gu wu, bo wu guan shou sun" [Jiang Fucong returned from Shenyang, revealing the receipt of transferred cultural relics in the Northeast: SKQS in the library intact; Communists robbed museum objects], ZYRB, September 3, 1946, p. 4.

11. "Wensu Ge SKQS cun Shenyang zhan bu yun Jing" [Wensu Library SKQS is to stay in Shenyang for now, not moved to Beijing], ZYRB, August 31, 1948, p. 4.


16. The author conducted an informal interview with the library delegation officials from the Social Culture and Library Division of the Ministry of Culture when he received them at Columbia University and arranged their visits and accompanied them to other organizations in the city (September 15–19, 2005). He also conducted a telephone interview with a representative of Liaoing Province Library on September 25, 2005.


18. Author’s interview.


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The Discourse of Loss in Song Dynasty Private and Imperial Book Collecting

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ABSTRACT
This article investigates the discourse of loss during the period between the pillaging of the Song Dynasty imperial libraries and the dispersal of private collections in north China in the late 1120s and the rebuilding of the Imperial Library and private collections through the 1140s. It contrasts the different strategies taken by the court and private collectors in managing loss, in developing acquisitions, and in remembering war and peace through collecting.

INTRODUCTION
In 960 Zhao Kuangyin (r. 960–976) established the Song Dynasty (960–1270). Zhao was a general who had served under one of the many dynasties in which the Chinese territories had been divided after the fall of the Tang Dynasty (618–907). Twenty years later, in 979, Taizu, as he was officially called, fulfilled his ambition to reunify the Chinese territories. Taizu and his successor, Emperor Taizong (r. 976–97), succeeded in laying the foundations for a lasting empire, even though the Song Dynasty faced major challenges to its rule from the peoples living to its north throughout its three-hundred-year reign. In the early twelfth century the Jurchens, who first lived in the southern part of the area that became known later as Manchuria, began to pose a major threat to Song security. One of their leaders, Aguda, established a Chinese-style dynasty called the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) in 1115. Soon afterwards, in 1126, the Jin armies invaded Song territories in the north. In 1127 they crossed the Yellow River and captured the Song Dynasty capital of Kaifeng. Jin soldiers imprisoned the retired Emperor Huizong (r. 1101–25) and the reigning Emperor Qinzong (r. 1126–27). Following the capture of Kaifeng, hundreds of thousands
of remaining court servants, officials, soldiers, and commoners retreated south. Zhao Gou, Huizong’s ninth son, ascended the throne later in 1127 and became known Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–62). After moving back and forth between several cities along the Yangzi River, Gaozong and his court finally settled down in Hangzhou in 1138. By then the imperial libraries and private collections had suffered major losses. Throughout the 1130s and the 1140s court librarians and private collectors set out to restore the losses sustained during the invasions and the ensuing turmoil.

After the Jin armies captured the Song Dynasty capital of Kaifeng in 1126, they gained access to Chinese books and maps and the printing blocks with which some of these materials had been manufactured. During the peace negotiations that followed, Jin envoys transmitted their emperor’s desire for books published in the Song territories. For the first time since it had reunified the Chinese territories in 960, the Song court handed over books and documents that it had carefully kept from foreign eyes because, from its perspective, they contained confidential information about the Song state. In 1127 Jin soldiers carried off not only the two emperors but also a large but unknown number of books, maps, paintings, and printing blocks from the preeminent institutions of court cultural production, the Imperial Library and the Directorate of Education. They transported this cache of artifacts as well as additional materials captured from smaller court libraries on carts to the Jin capital of Shangjing (Manchuria, now Heilongjiang Province) (Z. Wang, 1165/1983, 11.19b–20a, 11.24b, 12.17a; Ren, 2001, pp. 712, 836; Winkelman, 1976, pp. 10–12). According to one very rough official estimate made shortly after the Jin invasions of 1127, about 40 to 50 percent of the Chinese books in existence in 1126 were lost in the turmoil and dislocation that attended the Song court’s forced move from northern China to the south (Ma, 14th century/1986, preface, 1.32).

Losses of this kind not only affected the imperial collections; similar accounts circulated about the disappearance of 50 to 100 percent of the holdings of private collectors, although the perpetrators were not always Jin soldiers. The most famous of these accounts is the odyssey of Zhao Mincheng (1081–1129) and Li Qingzhao (1084–1155), a collector couple who carted their collection by river and over land for about five years, discarding and losing things along the way, until only a handful of volumes remained (Owen, 1986, pp. 80–98). Other examples include the collections of Ye Mengde’s (1077–1148) family, who lost about half of their collection of over 30,000 juan; the collection of Wang Zhu (997–1057) and Wang Qincheng (1034–1101), father and son, whose collection was appropriated by a general who had promised to protect it for them; and the collection of Li Chang (1027–1090), whose catalog, extant yet incomplete, still preserves the memory of some of what was lost (Fan, 2001, pp. 89, 97, 102).

This article investigates the discourse of loss during the period between the Jurchen conquest of Kaifeng and the capture of the reigning emperor...
in the late 1120s, and the establishment and consolidation of the southern Song court in the new capital of Hangzhou through the 1140s. Within the discourse of loss both court officials and private collectors developed and defended strategies to recover what was lost. Discussions of loss moved beyond the nostalgic mental recollection of what was gone; the memory of loss was evoked time and again at court and among local elites as part of a strategy for restoring and expanding the imperial and private collections. This article contrasts the different approaches taken by the court and private collectors in managing loss and in remembering war and peace through collecting.

**RETRIEVING AND SHAPING HISTORICAL MEMORY: THE RESTORATION OF THE IMPERIAL COLLECTIONS**

Wang Zao (1079–1154) participated in the retrospective compilation of official documents dating to the last two decades before the fall of Kaifeng. This experience familiarized him with official accounts of the events of 1126 and 1127. He testified that nothing remained after the Jin soldiers emptied out the Imperial Library and the Directorate of Education: “Since the history of writing, and after An Lushan’s destruction of Chang’an [in the mid-eighth century], [the destruction of] the capital has never been so severe as today. All that had been amassed in the storehouses over the last 200 years has suddenly been swept away” (Z. Wang, 1165/1983, 12.17a.). Wang’s testimony voiced the court’s anxiety that when the Jin armies captured the Song archival record they carried with them the Song Dynasty’s achievements over the past 160 years and thus its political legitimacy.

After the retired Emperor Huizong and the reigning Emperor Qinzong were taken as captives to the Jin capital of Shangjing, Zhao Gou ascended the throne in 1127. His reign lasted for more than thirty years, but Gaozong faced questions about the legitimacy of his succession to the Song throne for the duration of his rule. The new Song emperor actively sought to gather the historical records of his predecessors. In effect this was his way of rescuing Song history from its northern captors. The recovery of the Song archival record was a precondition for the Song court’s continuation of its own history. It powerfully underscored the Song court’s refusal to give in to the logic of the dynastic cycle according to which the succeeding dynasty wrote the history of its predecessor based on the historical records it appropriated from the latter. The recovery of the archival records further underscored the court’s and high officialdom’s collective ambition to rebuild Song authority on the basis of dynastic precedent.

As soon as the Imperial Library was revived, first in Shaoxing Prefecture in 1131, private donations started coming in. During 1131 alone donations were reported from the families of high officials, one local official, one general, and one examination graduate without an official position (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.20–21). In 1131 the new Imperial Library
took in partial and complete copies of the archival compilations that had been produced up to 1126, including the veritable records (abstracts of the materials collected in the combined daily calendars of an emperor’s reign); the draft histories (collections of the archival records of several reigns, which served as the drafts for the dynastic history edited under each dynasty’s successor); the collected statutes (classified compilations of state documents), which court offices had been regularly compiling since the eleventh century; and similar but abridged compilations of “precious instructions” of the first six reigns of the Song Dynasty, which individual court officials edited (De Weerdt, 2006). The families of high officials further contributed a wide variety of compendia on ritual. They deemed these compendia of court, bureaucratic, and family ceremonies and conventions equally symbolic of the court’s intent to restore order on the basis of precedent and the ritual canon.

Court officials articulated the centrality of the archival and ritual texts to the continuity of the dynasty repeatedly in the following years. In 1132 the Imperial Library collections were moved to the new capital of Hangzhou. In 1132 and 1133 vice-directors of the Imperial Library and other court officials prompted the emperor to issue decrees requesting contributions from specific collections and collectors. In all but one case, the requests specifically demanded copies of the draft histories, the veritable records, and the collected statutes to fill in remaining gaps in the copies already collected (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.22–23). Other genres and titles requested at this time included texts written by any of the Song emperors, the correspondence of the former court official Han Qi (1008–1075), and the records of Councilor Cai Jing (1046–1126). These texts were needed to write the history of past reigns, and their presence in the Imperial Library and its associated compilation bureaus signified not only the new regime’s ability to recover lost books but also its control over the memory and the history of the Song Dynasty through the present and into the future.

The directors of the Imperial Library and other court officials concerned with rebuilding its holdings initially targeted private donors, mostly the families of prominent officials and monastic libraries. They relied on reports submitted by individual officials to identify prospects. Decrees of 1132 targeted Buddhist monasteries, which had in the past served as depositories for the works of prominent officials and writers (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.22). In their first response to the Imperial Library’s needs, officials reported on private collections in their vicinity and, within these collections, designated for court acquisition only those items that fell within the category of archival and historical collections, imperial writings, or the letters of prominent former court officials.

The method of acquisition differed. The court urged monasteries to part with the items in question. It charged the local prefect with the transfer. In decrees targeted exclusively at the collections of families or individuals,
the court suggested that the owners submit the works for copying. The originals were to be returned to the owners upon the completion of their duplication. The emperor granted rewards to those who submitted titles. In the early 1130s there was no standard scale of rewards. The requests sent out in 1132 and 1133 contained references to “handsome rewards,” but none specified what kinds of rewards came with what kinds of submissions. Instead, petitioning officials determined rewards on a case by case basis. Some donors received monastic certificates, ranging between five and ten. Each certificate granted the holder one tax exemption. These certificates could be used by the family itself or could be sold to others. Donors who were officials typically received a promotion in rank.

The rewards went back to precedents set in collection efforts under the second Song emperor, Taizong. In 984, Emperor Taizong decreed that those among the high officials who contributed titles listed in the eighth-century catalog of the Tang court but missing in the growing Song imperial collections should be rewarded for their contributions. For those who contributed missing volumes numbering more than 300 juan an official rank for a descendant was to be arranged depending on qualifications; those who submitted fewer juan would be remunerated based on the quantity of the materials submitted (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.15–17). The court accepted both donations and loans and rewarded them equally. Although some court officials in the early 1130s were aware that Song emperors had rewarded gifts of books and other artifacts to the Imperial Library in the past, this institutional memory could not be fully revived during the first years of the library’s reopening. In the absence of relevant archival records, ad hoc decisions immediately became precedents. One decree issued on November 29, 1131, referred back to a decree issued three months before in which an official received a promotion for his donation of one edition of the collected statutes (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.21). It was not until 1146 that the court finally answered the demand, first voiced in 1136, for the revival of a graded scale of rewards. Emperor Gaozong then invoked Emperor Taizong’s scale as a model, but it was modified in accordance with the changes that had taken place in Chinese book culture during the intervening 150 years.

Emperor Gaozong reportedly ordered that the new scale be printed for broad dissemination. It differentiated between officials and scholars (shi-ren). Officials who made large donations were given promotions; scholars who made large donations were either permanently or temporarily absolved from taking the prefectural civil service examinations. This gave them direct access to the triennial examinations at the metropolitan level. The addition of the category of the scholar-collector underscored the court’s recognition of the importance of the rapidly expanding class of examination candidates in the circulation of cultural goods. Studies of eleventh- and twelfth-century printing and book culture strongly suggest that the hundreds of thousands
of students preparing for the civil service examinations played a major role in the expansion of commercial publishing during these two centuries (Poon, 1979; Chia, 2002; De Weerdt, in press).¹

The new reward scale fit into an effort to broaden the search for missing titles. The court complemented its orders to specific collectors with general calls for submissions starting in 1133. It repeatedly issued general calls throughout the 1130s and 1140s. With the new calls came new techniques devised to heighten the effectiveness of the collection campaign. The general calls covered the whole empire, targeted public collections and private collectors of a variety of social backgrounds, and engaged central and local government offices in the collection campaign. The Imperial Library and the Historiography Institute took the lead in the search effort. Officials attached to these central collection and compilation agencies went on occasional scouting missions (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.25). Typically, however, they delegated this task to regional and local administrators such as the fiscal intendants, prefects, and county magistrates, instructing them to survey the public collections of prefectural and county schools, as well as the private collections (sijia) of high officials, retired and local officials, local scholars, and “the people” (minjian) or “the commoners” (shu). The list of donations preserved in the current edition of The Collected Statutes of the Song Dynasty (Song huiyao jigao) suggests that from the 1120s onwards the latter categories became more prominent as the court began to receive donations in increasing numbers from non–office holding examination graduates (jinshi) and scholars (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.20–29).²

As far as the categories of materials are concerned, the general calls for donations differed from requests sent to private collections and collectors. While the latter targeted specific types of materials and often specific titles, the vast majority of which fell into the category of archival and historical compilations, the court’s bibliographers showed a much broader interest in their appeals to all collectors. Materials in all four of the standard main bibliographic classes (classical texts and commentary, history, philosophical texts, and literary collections) came within their purview.

Despite the widening breadth of the Imperial Library’s acquisition policies, its search was also selective. The bibliographers compared extant copies of bibliographies and catalogs of the imperial collections, such as The Bibliographical Treatise of the Tang Dynasty (Tang yiwen zhi) and The Comprehensive Catalog of Venerating Literature (Chongwen zongmu), to the Imperial Library’s current holdings and posted lists of missing titles at the Petition Drum Bureau (Dengwen guyuan) and the Petition Depository Bureau (Dengwen jianyuan). Both of these offices were direct channels of communication between the court, local officials, and the common people. Local officials and commoners were allowed to submit first and second appeals to these offices when dissatisfied with the regular administrative authorities. The published lists simplified the library’s work. Until 1143, when this list ap-
pears to have been first published, the library had asked local officials to submit lists of titles from which the bibliographers could then make their choices. With centralized lists of missing titles, the court potentially avoided the review of duplicate titles.

Local officials also welcomed such lists as a convenient tool in their collection efforts. One local official prodded the court in 1143 to make the lists more readily available in print (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.26). He suggested that the Imperial Library have the catalogs printed in new editions that clearly marked which titles were missing. He explained that it was difficult for those in outlying provinces to copy the lists by hand and that lack of knowledge of the missing titles was likely to impede ongoing local collection efforts. Emperor Gaozong approved this request and issued a decree ordering the distribution of a printed list of missing titles to all prefectures in the same year. The Imperial Library published The Continuation of the Catalog of the Imperial Library Indicating Missing Books in the Four Repositories (Bishusheng xu biandao siku que shumu) in line with these efforts in 1145 (Van der Loon, 1984, pp. 12–14).

The printing and dissemination of the list of missing titles in 1143 was part of a consistent effort to render the court’s collection campaign more effective. Based on the list of donations in The Collected Statutes of the Song Dynasty, a steady flow of donations came in between 1131 and 1135. With the exception of the year 1134, the Imperial Library collected several thousand juan annually during the first five years of the campaign. The numbers of registered donations, however, showed a downward trend, and this decline was a sign of the waning interest among donors. The number of donations never again reached the level attained in 1131. Only one donation, consisting of one title, is on record for the period between 1136 and 1142.

In 1143–44 the collection was moved into a new building. In preparation for the move, it became apparent that the Imperial Library was still lacking a substantial number of titles that were, according to its librarians, available in private collections. Private collectors were thought, however, to be unwilling to contribute their treasures in the absence of clear and substantial rewards. An upsurge in the collection campaign followed to address these problems.

The renewed interest in developing the collection in the early 1140s was shaped by changes in the political climate. After a decade of reconstruction in the 1130s, court policy toward the Jin Empire gradually shifted toward a pro-peace stance. The nomination of Qin Gui (1090–1155) to the position of councilor in 1138 marked the beginning of the ascendancy of the pro-peace camp. Qin Gui had been captured by Jin soldiers along with 3,000 members of the imperial family and entourage in 1126. Originally an advocate of resistance against the Jurchen advances in the north, he began to espouse a pro-peace stance during his captivity. He escaped from his Jurchen captors and returned to the Southern Song court in 1130. At
the court of Gaozong, he advocated peace with the Jurchens in the north at whatever cost. Emperor Gaozong, whose position on the throne depended on the continued captivity of the former emperor Qinzong, became gradually convinced that a pro-peace policy would guarantee the consolidation of his rule over the southern territories. Between 1138 (when the peace conditions were announced) and 1155 (the year of Qin Gui’s death) peace with the Jurchens was upheld as the “court line” (Yu, 2003, 1:373). Voices transgressing this line were the object of political suppression.

In 1140, as part of a series of attempts on now Grand Councilor Qin Gui’s part to fashion the library’s collection and compilation activities according to the political needs of the pro-peace faction of which he was the leading proponent, he centralized the operations of the court’s collection and compilation agencies. He abolished the Historiography Institute and housed its operations under the Imperial Library (Huang, 1993, p. 52; Hartman, 1998). At the beginning of 1142 he arranged for his brother Qin Zi (?–1146) to be appointed to the vice-directorship of the library. Six months later Qin Xi (?–1161), Qin Gui’s adopted son, became assistant in the library. Within another three months Qin Xi was appointed to the vice-directorship, and in 1144 he became director of the Imperial Library. Through this reorganization and the subsequent restaffing Qin Gui established control over the historical memory of the dynasty. The library’s directors and assistants now decided what would be collected and what would go into the compilation of the dynasty’s archival and historical record.

Capitalizing on the political authority of his father, Qin Xi pushed through a series of campaign reform measures. First, he established the fixed scale of rewards that Emperor Gaozong approved in 1146 and had it printed and distributed to lower officialdom. He called for the submission of missing book titles as well as pieces of calligraphy and painting, which were also stored in the library. He insisted that the 1146 reward scale should only be used for donors whose books and artifacts had been reviewed and deemed rare at the library. Officials were only to compensate owners for those titles that were listed as missing or otherwise considered unique. This was a precautionary measure aimed at eliminating the deceit of those collectors and officials who donated common materials or stuffed book cases with heterogeneous materials to reap monetary rewards.

Second, Qin Xi exerted pressure on local officialdom to take the Imperial Library’s collection campaign seriously. In a report submitted in 1145 he charged that the gaps in the imperial collection were not due to the lack of leadership on the part of the central government but rather to the lackluster implementation of central directives in the prefectures and the counties. He noted that the collection of missing and rare materials had not been a high priority in local administrations and argued that this could be changed by providing clear incentives to local administrators. He demanded that the Imperial Library be given the authority to reward
productive administrators and to penalize those who continued to ignore its directives. The emperor granted him such powers; Qin Xi’s proposal that prefects be asked to submit regular reports on their collection efforts was accepted (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.27–28).

Qin Xi’s efforts seem to have borne immediate effect. The collecting campaign went through a second upsurge between 1145 and 1148. Two collections of several hundred juan arrived in the first year, followed by a large collection of 2,990 juan in 1147; all of these titles were listed as missing in the court’s catalogs. The donors were rewarded in accordance with the new scale, except for some minor modifications (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.25–29).

The librarianship of Qin Xi led, according to Mo Shuguang (jinshi, 1163), who directed the Imperial Library in the mid-1180s, to the restoration of the imperial collections (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.31; Chen, 1178/1998, p. 174). Qin Xi’s policies, however, illustrated not only the contributions to but also the detractions from the memory of war in book collecting. The pursuit of peace ironically resulted in the persecution of those who cherished the memory of war as policy. Qin Xi’s demand for greater authority for the Imperial Library in its supervision of the collection efforts of local administrators was not simply an answer to a collection campaign gone dormant; it fit into a concerted effort to scrutinize private collections and weed out those materials that were deemed incompatible with the new regime’s pro-peace stance. The defense of the pro-peace policy required in Qin Gui’s view the support of a history of the preceding decades that made the support for peace with the Jin Empire the preferred diplomatic policy and him the untainted protector of the Song Dynasty’s best interests. The reinvigoration of the collection campaign coincided with the imposition of a ban on privately compiled histories of contemporary events. Qin Gui proposed such a ban in 1144 and received the emperor’s support for a larger project to ensure the preparation of a uniform account of the history of the restoration of the Song Dynasty (Hartman, 1998).

Several cases have come down to us that illustrate the additional loss of books that resulted from the ban on private histories and the collection campaign of the early 1140s. Even though the collection efforts thrived due to the memories of war as an agent of loss recounted at the beginning, they were also a response to literate elites who kept alive the memory of war as a policy to be continued. According to contemporary accounts the families of those who had been advocating war with Jin and the recapture of the northern territories burned entire collections or, more frequently, letters, memorials, and historical accounts that could be deemed subversive in the eyes of local administrators or librarians at the Imperial Library committed to the pro-peace policy. The materials were in several cases burned as a matter of precaution, typically when the owners learned about the persecution of a like-minded soul.
The most famous case was that of Li Guang (1077–1155). Prior to the capture of Emperor Qinzong in 1126, Li Guang opposed negotiating territory with the Jurchens. In the 1130s he became an advocate for strengthening defenses along the Yangzi River, which had become the de facto border between the Song and Jin Empires. He agreed to serve as assistant councilor under Qin Gui in 1139. When the latter began to remove from office all generals who had served in the war against Jin, Li became a harsh critic of Qin Gui’s pro-peace diplomacy and argued that the Jin forces could not be trusted to abide by peace regulations. He was dismissed from office one year later. In 1147 Li Guang’s family burned his library of at least 10,000 jüan (M. Wang, 1195/2000, 7.174; Tuo, 1345/1977, 473.13760; Fan, 2001, p. 104).³ The collection of Wang Zhi (?–1145?) suffered a similar fate. He was dismissed from court around the same time as Li Guang. Qin Xi’s call to local administrators first resulted in the alleged confiscation of over half of the collection estimated at 25,000 jüan. In 1147 anxious relatives burned the other half of the collection (Hartman, 1998, pp. 93–94, 99–102; Fan, 2001, pp.106–8).³

The combination of active collecting and censorship instilled fear and paranoia among those related to or associated with officials ousted by Qin Gui. Soon after the death of Councilor Zhao Ding (1084–1147), who had been exiled to Hainan Island in 1147, his son burned the entire family collection of books and weapons (Huang, 1993, p. 60). Not all those fearing the impact of the Qin family’s cultural policies resorted to such extremes. Xue Jixuan (1134–1173) wrote that his father hastily removed those pieces in his collection that contained prowar sentiments and criticisms of the propeace policy and hid them in a separate cabinet. The effect of the campaign was reduced in this case, but Xue still blamed it for the dismal state in which he later discovered his father’s writings (Huang, 1993, pp. 60–61).

LOSS AS OPPORTUNITY: PRIVATE COLLECTORS AND PRINTING IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

When remembering the losses that resulted from warfare and the forced migration in the 1120s and 1130s, private collectors shared a common historical analogy. Several of them referred back to the destruction of private collections under the First Emperor of Qin in 213 BCE (Petersen, 1995). They were united in their estimation of the scale of the losses that resulted from this deliberate destruction, but they connected it to the subsequent restoration of the classical textual legacy. They attributed this restoration to the collective efforts of the community of Han Dynasty scholars. In Ye Mengde’s words,

I reflected on the fact that in the beginning of the Han Dynasty [ca. 200 BCE] it had not been that long since the time of Confucius, and, yet, after the chaos brought on by the Qin, fifty-one chapters of The Book of Documents had been lost, six chapters from The Book of Songs,
and the sections “The Officials of Winter” in The Rites of Zhou had been entirely lost. If this was the case for the classics, it must have been much worse in all other categories! Fortunately, the rest had been preserved in the collections stuck in the walls of private homes. What has been preserved until today is the result of scholars upholding [these texts’] transmission. (Ye, 12th c./1983, 4.1b)

Beyond their personal losses (well over 10,000 juan in Ye Mengde’s case), private collectors, following the Song migration south and the associated loss of texts, demonstrated grave concern over the impact of these losses on the cultural memory of the literate elite. Their response to the losses occasioned by the Jin conquest of the northern territories accordingly fell into two broad categories. First, they engaged in the same kinds of activities, albeit on a smaller scale, as the librarians at the Imperial Library. Several private collectors who had lost substantial parts of their collection in the 1120s and 1130s were inspired to undertake heroic acts of book collecting. Both Ye Mengde and Jing Du were known to have built their collections through the acquisition of handwritten copies (Fang, 1999, pp. 292–304; Ren, 2001, 1:805–6). The epitaphs written for collectors typically laud the care they took in collating their newly copied editions. These practices were a continuation of shared acquisition methods. Collectors who had been faced with the occasional burning or looting of individual collections resorted to the generosity of colleagues in reconstituting lost titles. More generally, copying by hand and collation were practices associated with the image of the true scholar-cum-collector (McDermott, 2005, p. 65; Y. Wang, 2005).

Second, private collectors differed from the court librarians and their superiors in their enthusiasm for private and government printing as a way to ensure the future preservation of cultural memory. Accounts of loss and the lack of scholarly sources in the decades following the Jin conquest of the north were frequently a pretext for the mobilization of private and government moneys for the printing of a wide variety of texts. Ye Mengde related his own efforts in this area in an inscription for “The Pavilion for the Assemblage of Books” (Choushu ge), a library he established for the common use of scholars in Jiankang in 1140:

In the beginning of the Shaoxing period, I became prefect [of Jiankang]. After the major military upheavals, we encamped the soldiers in linked camps. The walls of the city were thickly overgrown with thorns and brushwood; the scholars’ respect for ritual had not yet returned. When I searched for The Changes, I could not find it. Therefore, I greatly feared that the sacrifices would be abandoned. In order to establish a school and invite students I freed up 600,000 strings of cash from the military budget. With this money, I paid teachers and had the six classics printed. . . . Nowadays everywhere we are focused on what was lost. With every title that is engraved on woodblocks, the number of good things increases. It behooves us to share and spread this book collection in order
to be prepared for all eventualities. It so happens that we have 200,000 strings in reserve in the prefectural coffers. I do not dare to spend it on anything else, but use it to buy classics and histories. Overall we have been able to acquire a good number of juan. (Ye, 12th c./1983, 4.1a-b)

Ye Mengde undertook his school- and library-building activities while serving as an acting local prefect in Jiankang. His zeal for these projects and the large amounts of cash he allocated for them, however, were inspired by the difficulties he suffered as a scholar and collector to gain access to books. His emphasis on the lack of even the most basic texts such as *The Changes* provided justification for his printing projects. He envisioned his ventures in printing as contributions to a larger enterprise aimed at the preservation and dissemination of scholarly texts. Even though he voiced strong feelings about the decline in philological skills attendant upon the increased use of print technology, he shared the observation made by other contemporaries that print facilitated access to the basic sources of scholarly discourse. By extension, the wider distribution of print editions also increased the survival rate of texts. It did so even more effectively than the earlier Han scholars’ copying of texts that had been recovered “between the walls of private homes.”

The connection made in Ye Mengde’s inscription between the interest in things lost and their recovery in print is also evident in the postconquest activities of other private collectors. Jing Du, fiscal intendant for Sichuan in the early 1140s, allegedly spent half of his salary on the acquisition of books. Sichuan, a major player in commercial printing during the Song Dynasty, had suffered less destruction than the areas in the north and further east along the Yangzi River. Jing Du, therefore, was able to acquire substantial numbers of books. At the same time, he turned his attention to the dissemination of some of the materials he was acquiring. After he had collected a complete set of the seven dynastic histories from various sources, he had the histories engraved on woodblocks and distributed throughout Sichuan and beyond (Chao, 1151–1240s/1983, 2A.6b–7a).

As documented in Lucille Chia’s study of the commercial printers of Jianyang in northern Fujian, the twelfth century witnessed an unprecedented growth in printing, with the number of printing centers in Song territories increasing from 30 before the conquest of the north to around 200 thereafter (Chia, 2002, p. 66). The activities of Ye Mengde and Jing Du suggest that the development of commercial and private printing during the Southern Song period may have been boosted by the memory of lost books as well as by the increasing numbers of students preparing for the civil service examinations.

Moreover, private and commercial publishers also continued to circulate those texts that were weeded out during Qin Gui’s collecting campaigns. The best example in this regard is the first private history to be banned
under Qin Gui, *A Record of Rumors by Sima Wengong* (*Sima Wengong jiwen*; later also known as *A Record of Rumors from Su River* or *Sushui jiwen*). It continued to circulate independently and in excerpts throughout the twelfth century. This book was in all likelihood based on notes about court events taken by Sima Guang (1019–86) in the late eleventh century (Sima, 11th c./1989, preface). He took the notes in preparation for a history of the Song Dynasty, which was intended as a sequel to his more famous survey of Chinese history up to 960. This notebook was not printed until around 1145 in the commercial printing center of Jianyang. It was then part of the general interest in the recovery of materials that had allegedly become rare as a result of the war with Jin. Prior to its first documented commercial circulation, in 1136, Councilor Zhao Ding (1084–1147) asked for and received imperial permission to assign the noted historian Fan Chong (fl. 1090s–1130s) the task of recovering and arranging these notes. Zhao Ding noted that copies of Sima Guang’s notebook of court events had become sparse since the outbreak of war, but he expressed hope that it could be recovered from the private collections of scholar-officials.

One decade later this private notebook became suspect because of its connection to Zhao Ding, who had been ousted by Qin Gui in 1140 and had become a symbol of the prowar faction. Sima Guang’s great-grandson, Sima Ji, feared that the commercial publication could implicate his family as Qin Gui called for a ban on private histories. He submitted a memorial denying any link between this work and Sima Guang and asked that the book be banned and the printing blocks burned. His request was granted and his effort rewarded with a promotion, even though this cost him the ridicule of contemporary scholars, many of whom dismissed any doubt concerning its attribution. The emperor ordered the prefect of Jianyang to burn the woodblocks, but private catalogs, histories, biographical collections, and commercial encyclopedias from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries referred to it and quoted from it, suggesting that the scholars had access to it and remained committed to the transmission of cultural memory broadly conceived.

The enthusiasm among literate elites for the reprinting of rare titles was so extensive that in 1186, some forty years after Qin Gui’s revamping of the imperial collecting campaign, the director of the Imperial Library alerted the emperor that his collections needed to catch up with the many rare titles that had been reproduced in print locally in the aftermath of the Jin conquest:

> In the beginning of the Shaoxing reign [early 1130s] a decree was issued to borrow and collate books. By 1143 a decree was issued to search for missing titles. And in 1146 a scale was set up to reward those who donated books. Thereafter the [imperial] book collection became complete. However, by now, another forty years have passed. During the long period of peace, people all over the empire have
increasingly come to hold books in high regard. The fiscal intendants and prefects searched and obtained all the rare items in the collections of the scholarly elite. They often engraved them on woodblocks and produced government editions. I ask that a decree be issued to all intendants and prefects asking them to submit a catalog of the books produced in their jurisdiction to the Imperial Library. This Library should compare the catalogs to The Catalog of the Imperial Libraries during the Period of Restoration. If there are items that are not held by the Library, an order should be sent down to the relevant jurisdiction to obtain it. We hope that this will expand the collection of the Library (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4:31).

**Conclusion**

Imperial librarians and private collectors described losses to their respective collections in similar terms. While their methods overlapped to an extent (both used catalogs to find rare items and relied on hand copying to collect large numbers of items), their goals diverged. The imperial librarians’ efforts were guided by the imperative to reconstitute the Song Dynasty’s collections and its historical memory. By the 1140s the memory and politics of war steered the efforts to recover the imperial collections in opposite directions. On the one hand, the memory of war as loss motivated a very ambitious recovery program. On the other hand, the ongoing politics of war and peace established informal guidelines for acquisitions and inspired a campaign against materials that opposed the court’s propeace stance.

The recovery campaign was relatively successful. Within five decades the court was able to restore the Imperial Library’s holdings to its previous level of around 50,000 juan. While new acquisitions figured in this number, the court’s success also derived from a concerted effort to collaborate with private collectors, local officials, and commercial printers to acquire copies of lost books and archival collections. Librarians used extant and newly compiled catalogs of the Imperial Library as checklists for the recovery campaign and shared them with local officials. The expansion of print culture in the twelfth century aided the librarians’ efforts. The tens of thousands of literati preparing for the civil service examinations fueled the expansion of commercial printing in different parts of the Song Empire, which, in turn, led to a substantial increase in the number of private collectors. The court encouraged private collectors to make voluntary contributions or to make their holdings available for copying. The volume of such contributions picked up as the court developed a scale of rewards based on the rarity and quantity of the contributions. Accompanying legislation provided among other things for the establishment of professional copyists attached to the local bureaucracy. Commercial printers who cut new blocks duplicating lost editions issued by the Directorate of Education were required to submit these and other titles to local and court authorities for approval and deposit (Ozaki, 2003).
Despite the recovery campaign’s successes, the influence of factionalist debates over war and peace also resulted in further loss. Personal and political grievances led to the confiscation of private collections or their burning by fearful or recalcitrant owners. Legislation prohibiting the publication and possession of materials touching upon the question of war and peace also resulted in confiscations.

Private collectors associated loss with the scholar’s responsibility to transmit and preserve cultural memory. The task, prefigured in Han Dynasty scholars’ recovery and transmission of the classical legacy, was in their view facilitated by print technology. The private experience of loss justified large-scale printing projects. The twelfth-century enthusiasm for printing among local officials, private collectors, commercial publishers, and scholars in general was thus in part a response to the memory of war as loss. Despite Qin Gui’s legislation, editors, printers, private collectors, and scholars continued to invest in a wide variety of materials, including those that celebrated or embodied the memory of war as policy.

Notes
1. The new standard for the distinction between major and minor donations set in the 1146 decree further illustrates the court’s awareness that private collections had grown substantially since the late tenth century. The 300 juan bar, changed to 500 juan in the eleventh century (Xu, 1809/2003, chong ru, 4.17), was raised to 2,000 juan. This number does not reflect the average size of private collections but rather the total number of unique materials that a private collector was able to contribute to the Imperial Library.
2. The list includes the names of eight jinshi who made donations between 1131 and 1155; a handful of donors were solely represented by honorary titles given in recompense for their contributions, suggesting that they as well had not held prior office. In its record of donors and donations, the court did not list “commoners” as such. It only used honorary titles in reference to donors without official or examination ranks in the very documents that conferred the titles. For example, Zhuge Xingren, who in 1135 donated 8,546 juan according to one account or 11,515 juan according to another, was referred to by the bureaucratic title of “Judicial Investigator of the High Court of Justice” in the official list of donors compiled at court. According to a local history of Shaoxing compiled in 1202, Zhuge Xingren was a “plain-clothed” commoner (buyi) when he made the contribution (Shi, 1202/1983, 16.29b). The sources further suggest that some of the men listed as jinshi may have been examination candidates rather than examination graduates. Emperor Gaozong granted three of them exemption from the local examinations in exchange for their collections, the reward reserved for non–office holders according to the 1146 scale of rewards. Although such rewards were transferable to male relatives, it is possible that the designation jinshi functioned here, like the honorary titles, to upgrade the status of the donors. There are other cases where scholars arrogated to themselves the title of jinshi.
3. Both Wang Mingqing and the author of Qin Gui’s biography in The Song Dynastic History estimated the collection at around 10,000 juan. According to Kong Keqi, the Li family’s collection of books and inscriptions amounted to several tens of thousands of juan (Kong 1355/1987, 2.39).
4. According to Lu You, Qin Xi requested that the family donate its collection after Wang Zhi’s death in exchange for an official appointment. His son, Wang Lianqing (1127–1214) refused the offer and Qin Xi was unable to make the acquisition (Lu 1190s/2000, 2.20).
5. For a similar interpretation of the contribution of Han scholars, see You (1190/1983, 1a-b).
REFERENCES

In references to pre-modern Chinese sources, the first date refers to the first date of publication, the second to the date of the edition used. Dates are followed by division title if applicable, juan (fascicle/chapter) number if applicable, and page number followed by \( a\) and \( b\) for front and reverse sides of the page if applicable.

Throughout the references, the Siku quanshu edition will be referred to as SKQS.

Ye, M. (12th c./1983). Jiankang ji. SKQS.

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The Tianyige Library: A Symbol of the Continuity of Chinese Culture

PING SITU

ABSTRACT
The Tianyige (TYG) Library is the most ancient private library still in existence in China. It is also the oldest private library in Asia and one of the three earliest private libraries in the world. It was built between 1561 and 1566 by the Defense Minister Fan Qin during the Ming Dynasty. TYG witnessed the glories and the turmoil of the Ming and Qing dynasties, war, revolution, and numerous social changes and its own triumphs and downfalls. After 400 years of preservation and management by thirteen generations of the Fan family, in 1949 it was donated to the government at the time of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. The collection is strongest in local histories and imperial examination records during the Ming period. It is a remarkable representation of the Chinese private book-collecting tradition as well as a symbol of the continuity of Chinese culture and civilization.

THE TIANYIGE LIBRARY AND CHINESE BOOK-COLLECTING TRADITION
The book-collecting tradition of China can be dated back to the Zhou Dynasty (1100 BC–770 BC), more than 3,000 years ago, but substantial private libraries only began to develop later during what was called the “Spring and Autumn” and the “Warring States” periods (770 BC–221 BC). Confucius, Laozi, and many other distinguished intellectuals were among the earliest private book collectors (Ren, 2001, pp. 12–13). Private book collecting grew rapidly during the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties (618–1368). In the Ming period (1368–1644), it reached its greatest prosperity in the south of
China because this was the richest region of the country. The tradition of private book collecting had always had the aim of creating a cultural legacy for families as well as for society. Most book collectors were great scholars, researchers, and edition appraisers.

Sixteenth-century political stability, economic prosperity, and cultural dynamism resulted in the birth of the Tianyige (TYG) Library and many other private libraries around Ningbo, a tranquil coastal city near the Yangtze river, in the northeastern part of Zhejiang Province. Ningbo is one of the country’s oldest cities with a history dating back to 4800 BC. It was already a booming business and trade center during the Tang Dynasty (618–907). While thousands of private libraries/book depositories were created during Chinese history, TYG is the only one that still remains today as an independent entity with its original architectural structure and collections. The others have been destroyed by warfare, fire, or poor management. While some continue to have a form of existence as a collection of books, no others remain as a self-governing unit (Huang, Li, & Xu, 2002).

Fan Qin: A Visionary Book Collector

Fan Qin was the founder of the TYG Library. He was a successful and visionary book-collector who lived in the reign of the Ming Emperor Jiajing (1522–1566). Fan became an official at the age of twenty-six when he passed the highest imperial civil service examination (Yu, 2003b, p. 138). As a high-ranking administrator, he was assigned to official positions in many different regions. Unlike other book-collectors, who all favored collecting books on ancient classic studies, Fan had a keen interest in contemporary local histories and regional historic documents related to political affairs and examination records. He was able to acquire many valuable and sometimes unique copies of local records from places that were often remote and isolated. These regions had their own distinctive histories, records of which often could not be found elsewhere. Thus TYG’s collection is particularly valuable since Fan was one of the few people who collected these kinds of contemporary works of the Ming Dynasty. The TYG Library holds 370 Ming imperial examination record titles. This is 80 percent of all the Ming imperial examination publications in the country. Many of them are the only copies in existence (Xu, 2003, pp. 302–3). They constitute a vital resource for research on the Ming Dynasty (Ren, 2001, pp. 12–13). TYG held over 70,000 volumes by the end of the first generation of the Fan family; most of them were block-printed or hand-copied editions from the Ming period.

Strict Management System

That the TYG Library is still standing after more than 400 years is the result of rigorous rules that were laid down by its founder, Fan Qin, and the strict observation of these rules by his descendants. Before Fan Qin died,
he divided his property into two shares for his two sons, one share consisting of money, the other the library. His eldest son, Fan Dachong, chose the library as his share of the inheritance and promised his father that he would use part of his family income to take care of it. Dachong established additional rules for his children to follow in order to preserve and keep the collection together. He decreed that the library would not be divided like other family property after his death and that it was the responsibility of the entire Fan family to protect, preserve, and maintain the collection (Luo, 1993, p. 51). One rule stated that the library’s door could only be unlocked when all branches of the family members were present. Another rule prohibited smoking and drinking alcohol inside the library. Family members would not be allowed to attend the ancestor worship ceremonies for a year if they brought an outsider to the library. A punishment of no worship for three years would be invoked if books were taken out of the library for a loan. Anyone who dared to sell a single book would be disowned by the family. None of the Fan descendants violated those rules since exclusion from worshipping their ancestors was considered the most severe punishment possible (Yu, 2004b, p. 9).

This approach of mutual supervision and restraint prevented possession of the library becoming personal, prevented unrestricted visits to the library, and minimized the possibility of loss and dispersal of the collection. Most of the Fan male offspring were serious scholars. They were proud of having the TYG collection as their family heritage and respected the family regulations for the library. It is obvious that these rules made it difficult to use the collection even for members of the family, and they suggest that their main focus was preservation rather than usage. Over four centuries, generation after generation, the family repaired the building and managed and preserved the collection, until the library was handed over to the government in 1949 (Yu, 2003a, p. 271).

**Water Motif and Thoughtful Preservation Strategies**

In designing the library, Fan Qin gave considerable thought to strategies that would ensure its physical safety and the preservation of its collections. Besides warfare, fire was one of the biggest dangers for book collectors, and most of the other private libraries or collections were destroyed by fire. Fan Qin devised numerous ways, both symbolic and practical, to minimize this hazard. There were many water components in the library. A pond was built in front of the building to provide water to fight fires. The pond was also connected to a large lake in the city. The library was built of brick to prevent fire. There was a five-foot wide lane with a tall brick wall to separate the library from other residential dwellings in case of fire. All the ceilings in the building were painted with different water related designs—water plants, waves, water animals, and water gods. The library’s name was even derived from an allusion to water. *Tianyi* means “sky one,” which was taken
from a phrase of *Yi Jing* (*Book of Changes*)—“one room in the sky produces water and six rooms on the ground bring peace,” meaning a spring that produced water could prevent fires. The two-story library building was constructed with one big room upstairs representing the sky and six rooms downstairs representing the earth (*Yu*, 2001, p. 37).

Ningbo is a port city and the humidity is very high in certain months of the year. Fan Qin had the library built with windows on the north and south sides. He also had the book cases built with two openings, one in the front and another in the back with plenty of free space among books in the cases to allow air to circulate to avoid mold growth. The windows and the bookcases were opened frequently to decrease the humidity and bring fresh air into the facility. The books were taken out of the bookcases and completely aired twice a year. A special type of herb called Yun Xiang Cao was used to drive away moths. A particular kind of rock was put under the bookcases as a dehydrator to minimize the humidity problem (*Xu*, 2003, p. 87).

**Prosperity, Setbacks, and Revitalization**

Between Ming Emperor Jiajing (1521–1567) and the early years of Qing Emperor Qianlong (1736–1795), Tianyige enjoyed its most prosperous period. Before Fan Qin died, the collection had reached 5,000 titles and 70,000 volumes (*Yuan*, 2002b). During the stewardship of his son Fan Da-chong, his grandson Fan Runan, and his great-grandson Fan Guangwen, TYG’s collections continued to grow, though slowly given the family’s decreased income and their financial commitment to maintaining and preserving the collection. Over 400 titles had been added to the collection between 1644 and 1773. In 1665 Fan Guangwen, Fan Qin’s great-grandson, hired architects and skilled workers to build rockeries and expand the pond outside the library building, turning the facility into a graceful garden, which was designed to promote happiness, richness, and longevity (*Yu*, 2001, p. 83).

In 1673 Huang Zongxi (1610–1695) was the first outsider scholar allowed in the library. This was the first opening of the library to the outside academic world and suggests changing attitudes in the family to the use of the library. Huang was a nationally known political theorist, philosopher, and scholar of the Ming-Qing dynasties. He was also an important book-collector. His collection exceeded 10,000 volumes, but flood and fire destroyed four-fifths of his books (*Yan*, 1990, p. 1216–21). His visit to the library was approved by all branches of the Fan family, and it became quite a news story for the literary society of the time. He is said to have read every title in the library, and he compiled a bibliography of the rare materials, which made the collections more widely known. Huang also wrote an article, “Tianyige Cang Shu Ji” (an essay about TYG’s book-collecting), which is...
well-known among Chinese scholars and book collectors: “Finding books to read is difficult; collecting books is more difficult. However collecting books and keeping them together generation after generation is the most difficult” (Yu, 2001, pp. 9–10). From 1673 to the end of the nineteenth century, TYG was opened to perhaps only a dozen nationally renowned scholars (Yu, 2003b, pp. 71–72).

In the mid-eighteenth century the TYG library began to experience hardships and setbacks. The first major setback was related to the compilation of *Si Ku Quan Shu* (*SKQS*), known in English as *The Great Encyclopedia of the Four Treasures*, which was compiled from 1772 to 1782 for Emperor Qianling (reigned 1736–1795). It was an attempt to gather all known classical works before the Qianlong era into one colossal work, including philosophy, history, literature, art, political systems, social studies, economics, astronomy, geography, mathematics, medical studies, etc. (Langer & Stearns, 2001). The first set of the encyclopedia was completed in ten years, and another eight years were spent making six copies in the original style. The copying, editing, and correcting by hand required over 4,000 scholars, officials, copyists, and clerks. *SKQS* is the largest systematically compiled encyclopedic collection of Chinese classical works and is an invaluable scholarly tool (Qi, 1994, pp. 127–37).

In 1773 Fan Maozhu, the eighth generation descendant of Fan Qin, had to lend 638 titles (one title could contain multiple volumes) to the imperial court for this compilation, of which the text of 96 titles was included in the *SKQS*. Over 350 rare titles (some the only copies in existence) were also included in The General Catalog of *SKQS* (Yu, 2004b, p. 78). Although the emperor promised to return all the books after their use, very few of the volumes actually made their way back to the library. This was the first major loss for TYG since its foundation. However, Emperor Qianlong was amazed by the age and quality of the TYG collection, the library’s unique architectural design, and its imaginative and effective management and preservation strategies. He described TYG as the number one private library of the country (Yuan, 2003, p. 220–21). In 1774, as a reward for sharing so many valuable titles for the compilation of *SKQS*, the Emperor gave TYG a set of *Gu Jin Tu Shu Ji Cheng* (*Complete Classics Collection of Ancient China*), consisting of 10,000 volumes printed with bronze moveable blocks, and two sets of imperial paintings by the Jesuit missionary and artist Castiglione (1688–1766), *Ping Ding Jin Chuan Tu* and *Ping Ding Hui Bu De Sheng Tu*. The latter contained the poems of the emperor himself and his imperial seals. TYG also became the model for the seven imperial libraries that were to house the seven copies of the *SKQS* that the emperor had ordered to be constructed in different parts of the country. The seven libraries imitate the architectural design and the organizational structure of the bookcases of TYG, and all seven of them have water references in their names to lessen
the likelihood of fire (Yu, 2004b, p. 88). The preservation and protection strategies of the TYG Library were also adopted in many other private libraries across the nation.

The library faced other problems in the course of its history. During the Opium War (1840–42), British invaders broke into the library and took away dozens of titles. In 1861, when Taiping rebels were marching into Ningbo, a burglar took advantage of the havoc, broke through the back brick wall, and stole many books. Some were sold by the pound to a paper recycling factory, with many invaluable works became the raw material for making paper. Another highly organized robbery, however, created the most disastrous misadventure for the library. In 1914 a notorious robber named Xue Jiwei was sent by an unscrupulous Shanghai book vendor to sneak into the library (Huang & Hu, 2003, p. 285). He had a list of rare titles in hand and stole them title by title. He slept by day and worked by night for over ten days without detection (an unforeseen consequence of the family rules restricting entrance to the library). A boat was waiting for him in the lake outside the library. Another bigger boat was standing by a little closer to the seacoast to transport the stolen books to Shanghai. The library lost almost half of its most valuable titles as a result of this incident. The thief was eventually caught and put in prison (Yu, 2001, p. 133). Many of the books were purchased by Zhang Yuanji, who was in charge of Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan (the Commercial Press), to prevent them from being sold to foreigners. However, Zhang did not return the stolen TYG books; he kept them in the East Library, which was a public library under the administration of the Commercial Press. The number of visitors to this library increased significantly with the arrival of the TYG books. Unfortunately, this library was destroyed by Japanese bombs during the World War II (Yu, 2003b, pp. 73–74).

FROM AN ANCIENT FAMILY BOOK DEPOSITORY TO A COMPREHENSIVE CULTURE MUSEUM

At the beginning of the twentieth century, with the abolition of the imperial examinations and the building of a new public school system, the concepts of the modern Western public library began to spread in China. From 1905 to 1911 over twenty public libraries appeared in different places in the country. All private libraries or book depositories including TYG came under pressure to open to the public (Yu, 2003a, pp. 268–70). This was extremely challenging for the Fan family after their 400 years of hardship and sacrifice to keep the library in the family. In 1933, however, a powerful typhoon hit Ningbo and had the unexpected result of pushing TYG toward becoming a modern library. The library building and collections were damaged by the typhoon’s strong winds and rain. The Fan family could no longer afford to fix the building and the local county had to find the funds for the repairs. From this time on, the library became
jointly managed by a group called the Tianyige Management Committee, consisting of the Fan family and representatives of the county (Yu, 2003a, pp. 270–71). In 1935 the committee received their first donation, a collection of 1,000 bricks made from the Chinese dynasties from Han to Qing (50–1840). Each set of the bricks had its own unique designs, images, or characters and the reign titles of the emperors of the particular dynasties represented; they constitute an important research resource.

Because of its national recognition, the library did not suffer during the civil war. In 1949 the leaders of the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party visited the library and expressed their willingness to protect, renovate, and preserve the collections as well as the facility (Yu, 2004b, pp. 65, 118). This was one of the few agreements that these opposing political parties made. Because of the attention given to the library by leaders of the Communist Party, including Zhou Enlai, the premier of the state council, and the hard work of the TYG staff, the library escaped the destruction that occurred so widely during the frenzy of the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76. At that time, many families and cultural institutions gave rare books or precious items to the TYG Library to prevent them from being obliterated by the Red Guards. Ironically, by the time the Cultural Revolution ended the collection of the library had actually increased, which was something of a miracle (Yuan, 2002a).

The library and the collection were donated to the local government in 1949 at the time of the foundation of the new China. However, the Fan descendants now became government employees and continued to tend and manage the collection. By 1949, because of all the losses it had sustained, the collection consisted only of about 13,000 items. In 1959 it was listed as one of the most important cultural centers of the city. Two years later, Zhejiang Province declared it to be one of the most important cultural heritage centers for the province (Luo, 2002). The construction of a new three-story building of reinforced concrete was begun in 1976 and completed in 1981 to accommodate the increasing collections and usage of the library. The new building now houses 300,000 volumes of rare books and texts (Huang, Li, & Xu, 2002). In 1982 the TYG Library was included in the national register of cultural heritage sites by the State Council, and it was expanded into a comprehensive museum in 1994 for which the original building is used as an exhibit hall (Tianyige Museum, 2004, p. 12). With the acquisition of more land around the TYG Library, the local government has added buildings and gardens, transforming the once privately owned family library into a public cultural and historical museum. It is now called the Tianyige Museum and consists of a combination of specialized collections of rare classic texts, charming gardens, and cultural relics (Xu, 2003, pp. 270–71).

Given TYG’s unique collection of Ming local histories, a Depository Library of Local Histories was established inside the Tianyige Museum.
It is one of the three national depository libraries for contemporary local histories in China. The museum now has over forty staff members. More than half of them have a graduate degree or higher in the fields of library sciences, humanities, or history. Many are actively engaged in scholarly activities and have published numerous monographic works and research articles on the TYG Library, the Chinese book-collecting tradition, and other related topics (*Tianyige Museum*, 2004, pp. 3–4).

In order to promote and advance research on Chinese rare books and manuscripts, the museum launched a monographic series, *Tianyige Wen Cong* (Tianyige Literary Series) in 2004. It is the first specialized book series in China to focus on acquisition, collation, management, and preservation of ancient classic Chinese texts. Most of the editorial board members of the series are eminent scholars, many from the Tianyige Museum itself. It is hoped that this publication series will help the museum become a national research center for the study of the Chinese book-collecting tradition and of ancient Chinese rare books and manuscripts (Yu, 2004a).

**Summary**

By the 1940s, after 400 hundred years of vicissitudes, there were only 13,000 volumes left in the TYG Library. It is only since the founding of the new China in 1949, especially after the 1980s, with substantial renovation and allocation of resources provided by local and central government, that the library has been able to revive and thrive. In a period of 400 years TYG has been transformed from a privately owned library with highly restricted access to one of the most frequently visited cultural and historic heritage sites in China. As a result of donations, its holdings now exceed 300,000 volumes, 80,000 of which are rare books; many of them are the only copies in existence (Huang & Hu, 2003, pp. 287–89). And it is well on the way to becoming a national center for research on ancient Chinese book culture.

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Notes
1. Local histories, also referred as local encyclopedias, have been crucial resources for Chinese studies for the past 1,000 years as they cover information that is not usually available in other sources. These documents were often compiled by locally renowned scholars and were produced under the sponsorship of the local officials before 1949 and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China.

2. Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, the Commercial Press, was established in 1897 in Shanghai and moved to Beijing in 1954. It was the first modern publishing house in China; its main focus was publishing foreign academic works on philosophy and social science, Chinese language dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries, research works, and school textbooks. Dong Fang Tu Shu Guan, the East Library, housed a total of over 510,000 volumes including rare books, foreign language materials, periodicals, journals, and photographs. It was the largest library in China and possibly in Asia at that time. (Yu, 2003b, pp. 73–74).

3. I visited the Tianyige Museum two times during a China trip in October 2004. The museum is divided into three functional parts, the library, botanical gardens, and exhibits—a harmonious combination of an ancient classic taste and modern artistic elegance. As described in this article, it includes books with some editions more than 1,000 years old. It houses hundreds of wood printing blocks of the Ming Dynasty editions, as well as the bricks, with designs, characters, and imperial reign titles, from the Han to the Qing dynasties. It also has stone stele carved with information on local histories and imperial examinations of the Ming period. Those stone tablets used to be mounted on the ancient city walls of Ningbo, which were taken down when the city was developed and expanded.

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**Additional Works Consulted**


Ping Situ is a librarian with subject specialities in Chinese studies and Spanish and Portuguese language and literature at the University of Arizona Library. Her job responsibilities include collection development and management of the information resources in Chinese studies and Spanish and Portuguese language and literature, in-depth reference consultation, library instruction, liaison activities with the East Asian Studies Department and Spanish and Portuguese Department, and other library-wide endeavors. In 1985 Ping earned a B.A. in Spanish language and literature at Beijing Foreign Studies University. She continued her studies at the Beijing Foreign Studies University earning an M.A. degree in multi-culture and language exchange in 1987. Upon graduation she was awarded with a tenured faculty position at the same institution. Ping moved to Tucson in 1990 and in 1997 she began her studies again in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese of the University of Arizona, earning her second M.A. in the Spanish linguistics program and graduating in 2000. In 2001 Ping earned her third M.A. degree in information resources and library science at the University of Arizona and in the same year she joined the University of Arizona Library.
Loss of a Recorded Heritage: Destruction of Chinese Books in the Peking Siege of 1900

CHENG HUANWEN AND DONALD G. DAVIS JR.

Abstract
Late-nineteenth-century China suffered from a weak and declining central government, the incursions of Western interests, and a necessity to grapple with the demands of a modern national state. For sixty days in the summer of 1900 the legation quarters of Western governments in Peking came under siege by the Qing government and Boxer forces until finally relieved by an international military expedition. During the siege, the Hanlin Academy, a repository of Chinese bibliographical treasures representing centuries of cultural accumulation, suffered destruction through fire and pillage. From the immediate aftermath of the siege and throughout the century following, questions have been raised as to what actually happened and who was to blame for the atrocity. The observations of the British and other Western government officials differed from those of the Chinese participants. A variety of sources, some recently rediscovered, make fresh conclusions possible.

Introduction
The loss of recorded heritage has attracted the fascination of scholars for centuries, and no more so than in modern times. Since before Alexandria, the effects of natural and human disasters on books and libraries have received attention in lamentation, if not in description and explanation. In instances of expropriation and theft, cultural treasures may sometimes be returned to their place of ownership; in cases of loss to fire, flood, and other elements, there is little to be done. Individual incidents may include both kinds of threats. In the postcolonial and post–Cold War era of the past quarter century, delicate questions about cultural artifacts and books
have been raised and addressed, sometimes for the first time in a serious manner.

The destruction and dispersal of the bibliographic contents of the Hanlin Yuan (or Hanlin Academy, imperial center for scholarly studies) in Peking in 1900 is one such event that has stirred the curiosity of few historians. The 1996 International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) conference in Beijing proved to be a memorable opportunity to open and discuss the matter. The further research that resulted has continued a process of historical revision. Thus, this article seeks to outline the historical context of the event, review the actions leading to actual destruction, describe the significance of the collection concerned, assess the extent and consequences of the loss, and in conclusion, place the event and ongoing research in modern library history.

**THE BOXER UPRISING AND WESTERN INTERESTS**

The siege of the Allied Legations by the Boxers, known in China as the Yihetuan Movement, in the summer of 1900 was not an isolated series of events. It must be seen as one expression of mounting tension between the Chinese people and government and the Western powers with their commercial, military, and religious aspirations. Because the siege involved diplomatic missions of European nations, the United States, and Japan, it attracted worldwide attention in a way that previous incidents had not. For the Chinese, however, the two-month episode was, in the words of one historian, “of trivial significance” because it was eclipsed by the aftermath of humiliating concessions and crushing reparations.²

Nineteenth-century China witnessed a recurring cycle of “fragmentation and reform” as Great Britain and other powers resisted efforts of the Chinese to curb the opium trade, commercial exploitation, and missionary activity.³ Far too complex to detail here, but characteristic of the period, are the Opium Wars of 1839–42 and 1857–58 in the southeast, the Taiping Movement of 1851–66 in the central region and centered in Nanjing, the Muslim Revolts of 1855–73 in the northwest and southwest, and the loss of satellite states. All contributed to the effort to strengthen the imperial government through military preparedness and limited reforms. These initiatives suffered setbacks later in the century in disastrous wars with France (1880s) and Japan (1894–95), as well as from ominous threats from Russia.

The carving up of the periphery of the Chinese empire and the Yangzi River, with treaty ports and concession regions, brought both some adaptation of Western administrative practices as well as much antipathy to reflective Chinese citizens. A brief attempt at reform by Emperor Guangxu under the leadership of Kang Youwei in the summer of 1898 was stifled by the Empress Dowager Cixi who had in effect ruled China for the Qing dynasty since the 1860s. The cumulative frustrations of all these factors seemed set to break out again.
Shandong province, the province that had seen perhaps the greatest degree of recent encroachment by Western powers, was the source of a revived popular movement against foreigners in general, missionaries in particular, and most of all Chinese who had adopted Christianity. Beginning in 1898 the “Fists United in Righteousness,” as they called themselves—or “Boxers,” as they were known in the West—drew upon secret-society and magical rites, reminiscent of the Small Sword Society, Red Lantern groups, and the White Lotus sect of earlier times. Claiming to be invulnerable to bullets and swords and believing in folk mythologies that involved religion and street rituals, the Boxers called for the revocation of special considerations enjoyed by Chinese and European Christians and by 1899 had begun to destroy property and kill converts as well as foreigners in Shandong and Hebei provinces. At the same time a massive Yellow River flood seemed to call for desperate measures against nature and the foreigners.

The Western powers were shocked by the Boxer Uprising but saw in the crisis an opportunity to extend their influence and ensure their security. Thus, they looked to the Qing government to employ serious strategies to quell the Yihetuan Movement, while at the same time through negotiation (May 28–30) they prepared their own forces to take action. On May 31 more than 400 men of the Allied forces entered Beijing to “protect the Legations.” Shortly thereafter the Boxers entered the capital, preceded by scores of Western missionaries and thousands of Chinese converts. On June 10 the Allied force—consisting of 2,064 men representing Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United States of America under the leadership of British Admiral Seymour—landed at Dagu, on the coast. The next day the Boxers killed a Japanese diplomat, and the following day the Allied force took the forts at Dagu that guarded the entrance to Tianjin, the lifeline and railhead to Beijing. On June 20 a German minister was killed on his way to the Zongli Yamen (Office for the Management of Business of All Foreign Countries, or Foreign Commerce Office) in the capital. The next day the Qing government felt compelled to declare war on the Allied forces and ordered the imperial Qing soldiers and the Boxers, some 200,000 strong, to lay siege to the Legation Quarter, defended by about 450 guards. The siege would last until relief from an expeditionary force entered the capital on August 14, a struggle that the rest of world knew about primarily from the reports for the *London Times* by correspondent Dr. George Ernest Morrison, whose perspective of imperialism and antipathy to the empress dowager was thinly veiled (Yishu, 1986, vol. 2, pp. 638–55).

The Siege and Destruction of the Hanlin

The Siege of Peking—called by one historian “the episode best remembered abroad” of the Boxer Uprising—was a dramatic event that captured worldwide attention, which more minor incidents did not. It is not within


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the scope of this article to recount the story of the actual siege, its lifting, or its aftermath—exciting though these may be. Once the attacks began in earnest with the encouragement of the empress dowager, the Allied hostages and their Christian Chinese converts prepared for a siege of unknown duration. They consolidated their small area of control and fortification by withdrawing from the exposed extremities and resettling nearly 3,000 people into the remaining quarters.

Not long after the first assault on Saturday, June 23, when Sir Claude MacDonald emerged as commander-in-chief, the Chinese tested the perimeter of the western side of the enclave by burning an area of native dwellings south and east of the British Legation. Fire became a new frightening tactic. To the north of the legation was situated the Hanlin Yuan, a complex of courtyards and buildings that housed “the quintessence of Chinese scholarship . . . the oldest and richest library in the world” (Fleming, 1959, pp. 121–22). A late morning fire there was quelled and the compound cleared of Chinese troops (L. Giles, 1970, pp. 125–27).

The British became worried that the incendiary intentions of the attackers might include this vulnerable site, the buildings at some point being only an arm’s length from the British building walls. On the other hand the Allies, knowing of the Chinese veneration for their cultural heritage, felt that they would face no real destructive threat from that direction. Yet, on Sunday, June 24, when the winds shifted to come strongly from the north, the unanticipated happened: some of the buildings of Hanlin and the library that abutted the British building began burning on a bigger scale than that of the previous day. Peter Fleming summarizes contemporary descriptions: “The old buildings burned like tinder with a roar which drowned the steady rattle of musketry as Tung Fu-shiang’s Moslems fired wildly through the smoke from upper windows.” Through a hole made in their own wall that was near one of the Hanlin cloisters, the British Royal Marines hastened through the breach, followed by a motley crew of others who formed a human bucket brigade. To quote Fleming again,

Some of the incendiaries were shot down, but the buildings were an inferno and the old trees standing round them blazed like torches. It seemed as if nothing could save the British Legation, on whose security the whole defense depended. But at the last minute the wind veered to the north-west and the worst of the danger was over.

The fire-fighters had already demolished the nearest of Hanlin halls. The next one was the library.

An eyewitness, Lancelot Giles, son of Chinese literature scholar Herbert A. Giles (1937), described the situation of the grand encyclopedia of the Yung Lo emperor as follows: “An attempt was made to save the famous Yung Lo Ta Tien [now spelled Yong Le Da Dian], but heaps of volumes had been destroyed, so the attempt was given up. I secured vol. [section] 13,
345 for myself” (L. Giles, 1970). These volumes measured about one foot square and one inch thick.\textsuperscript{11}

The Chinese have long suggested that the British destroyed the library as a defensive measure. The primary British accounts, however, noting the direction of the wind, have maintained that the “Chinese set fire to the Hanlin, working systematically from one courtyard to the next,” to use Fleming’s words based on Morrison’s (1895) account. While it is true that the besieged British and their allies felt extremely vulnerable and fearful for their lives, there is another side to the story. Other evidence, exemplified by siege survivor and American missionary Arthur A. Smith, suggests that the fire was controlled in thirty minutes and the Chinese Muslim troops dispersed. It was then that the British defenders immediately began systematic destruction of most of the remaining buildings of the Hanlin, along with their precious contents. Some of the books were taken as booty by the curious. Others were simply thrown on the ground and still others tossed into lotus ponds and later buried—all later covered when the compound was leveled soon after the siege.\textsuperscript{12} Authorized and official interpretations not unnaturally have persisted to the present, despite credible evidence to the contrary. However, important as this issue is, it is eclipsed by the significance of the Hanlin Library itself and the results of its destruction by fire and looters.

**The Contents of the Hanlin Library**

The exact contents of the Hanlin Library are not known with certainty. No record of its collections survives. What is known is that the materials housed in it were irreplaceable. Among the collections was the noted encyclopedic collection of volumes, Yong Le Da Dian, commissioned by the Ming Dynasty’s emperor in the early fifteenth century, and the original texts of Si Ku Quan Shu, the Four Treasure Library.\textsuperscript{13} One of the largest works of its kind ever produced, Yong Le Da Dian was compiled between 1403 and 1407 by the Yung Lo emperor Chu Ti (1403–24), and consisted of 22,937 sections (or chuan), of which sixty were the table of contents. Altogether the nearly 23,000 sections or works in 11,095 handwritten folio volumes contained more than 370 million words—or twelve times Diderot’s famous encyclopedia of the eighteenth century (Zhang, 1986, pp. 3–4).

After a bloody accession and at the suggestion of chancellor Hsieh Chin, the emperor, a patron of literature, authorized and implemented the collection and copying of the literary treasures of China’s past and gave his chancellor the task of oversight. Headquartered in the imperial library at Nanjing, more than 2,000 scholars and many imperial officials participated in the compilation work, and some of them scoured the countryside for texts that had not been seen in the imperial library nor replicated since ancient times. Ultimately some 8,000 books from the earliest periods of Chinese
history through the early Ming Dynasties were included in this vast compilation. They covered an array of subjects, including agriculture, art, astronomy, drama, geology, history, literature, medicine, the natural sciences, religion, and technology, as well as descriptions of unusual natural events.

Because of the cost of woodblock cutting, the encyclopedia was never printed; it only existed in a single manuscript copy in Nanjing and then moved with the capital to Beijing in 1421, where it was housed in the emperor’s palace in the Forbidden City. After being threatened by fire in 1557, a second set was produced in the 1560s and housed in the Huang Shi Chen (the imperial archive). A third set was moved to the Hanlin Library during the period of the Emperor Yong Zheng (1723–36). The original texts of *Yong Le Da Dian* in Nanjing possibly perished by fire in 1449, and the first manuscript copy possibly perished in the collapse of the Ming Dynasty (Zhang, 1986, pp. 3–4). The only remaining copy was then housed in the Hanlin Library where, although venerated by scholars and emperors, it was gradually diminished through a variety of circumstances. Some items were stolen by collectors or speculators seeking precious items to keep or sell. Other items were lost to poor preservation and fell prey to environmental conditions, insects, and rodents. Warfare and fire accounted for the loss of another segment of the collection. Indeed, some calculations suggest that of the 11,095 volumes existing in 1407, only about 800 remained in 1900—the greatest number of losses occurring in the late nineteenth century (Zhang, 1986, pp. 12–13).

**Assessment of Destruction and Loss**

During and after the several hours in which the Hanlin complex burned, smoldered, and the buildings were demolished, the British and other legation personnel entered the library and rescued or simply removed or destroyed virtually all of the remaining volumes. Fleming relates:

> A few undamaged books and manuscripts were salvaged more or less at random by sinologues. Some of the hand-carved wooden blocks on which works of great antiquity were preserved found their way into the British Legation; they were used by the Marines for shuttering up loopholes and by the children, among whom “Boxers” was now the only fashionable game, for constructing miniature barricades.

> Otherwise, the Hanlin and its treasures, laboriously accumulated down the centuries, perished in a few hours. Vandalism so wanton and so decisive would have been hard to forgive if it had been committed in a conquered city as an act of retribution. History affords no comparable example of cultural *felo de se* [suicide]. (Fleming 1959, pp. 122–23)

Attributing this catastrophic calamity to an act of incredible self-destruction was a gratuitous claim by British commentators. It was their own countrymen and their allies who engaged in the vandalism. In any case, during the remainder of the siege, as destruction of intervening buildings
drew the battle lines closer, both Chinese and Allied fighters doubtless obtained additional artifacts as souvenirs.\footnote{15}

As mentioned above the Hanlin Library also contained a later series of classic books, the *Si Ku Quan Shu* (the Four Treasure Library), which was completed in 1782 during the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty. It consisted of some 3,500 selected titles in 36,000 manuscript volumes and included 385 books drawn from the *Yong Le Da Dian*.\footnote{16} Several copies of this set have survived. But the bulk of the fifteenth-century collection and the original texts of the *Si Ku Quan Shu* were irretrievably lost in the Hanlin fire.

In its waning years the Qing Dynasty established a national library. This was developed with the coming of the Republic in 1912. The national library, known by various names, initiated an effort to recover as many volumes from the collection of the *Yong Le Da Dian* as possible. More than 370 volumes, or about 810 sections, have been accounted for in China and elsewhere. In the early 1950s the Soviet Union returned 64 volumes from various repositories; East Germany returned 3 volumes in 1955. By 1959 the National Library of China possessed 216 volumes. There are currently 41 volumes in the United States at the Library of Congress. Chinese authorities have photocopied all known exemplars of the collection that were not in China. Two projects have begun publishing the extant works. Zhong Hua Shu Ju (Chinese Press) has published 797 sections since 1959; the Taiwanese published 742 sections of the collection in 100 volumes in 1962.\footnote{17} How many more volumes from this unique collection exist in European and Japanese research libraries or are in private hands is a matter of speculation. How many souvenir volumes, carried home by persons in the Allied Legations in 1900 and hidden away in attic trunks, is unknown. Some could yet appear.

**Conclusion**

The much celebrated siege ended on August 14 with the entry of the Allied troops into Peking. The attention of the world now rested on the aftermath, which is another story. The destruction of what remained of the Hanlin Library in 1900 through fire and pillage was apparently forgotten. Yet it is more than just a minor footnote of history. It has symbolic significance. First, it portrays the fragile nature of a civilization’s written heritage. Vast compilations seem to devalue the originals on which they were based; that is, what was not chosen to be copied and passed on was most often lost. Second, in the case of China, it illustrates the threat of a modernity that causes antiquarian interests to suffer when practical relevance is unknown or at least unclear. When a society seems to be moving ahead to a new era, the artifactual legacies of the ancient or even recent past seem of little interest except as curiosities. Third, in times of national upheaval, such as the Boxer Uprising, cultural treasures can fall prey to popular mass movements that do not appreciate them and even view their destruction as a positive thing. Unlettered groups destroy or allow to be destroyed...
books that represent to them the accoutrements of oppression. Finally, the destruction of the Hanlin Library, albeit a minor episode in national and world history for many, contains in microcosm the elements of the conflict of national cultures and the industrial powers of the nineteenth century, in which indigenous culture tended to suffer for a variety of reasons when other interests with greater power seriously threatened it.

In summary, this episode illustrates one of the results of a great nation’s disintegrating cultural structure—a system that had governed it for centuries—when it encountered the modern world. It contains all the explosive drama of the East-West encounter: elements of commercial exploitation, missionary zeal, and diplomatic interests, and military history combined with the emergence of new technologies. It is a microcosm of actions and their implications that continue to haunt civilization.

Notes
4. The standard treatments of the subject in English are Esherick (1987), Purcell (1963), and Tan (1955). A work from contemporary Chinese sources is The Boxer Rising (1967), in which there is a reference to official engagement in “plunder and incendiarism” that included the Hanlin (p. 51). Chinese treatments include the Historical Society of China (1957), Ming and Ching Archive (1959), and The Historical Data of the Yihetuan (Institute for the History of Modern Times, 1982).
5. The eleven legations included those of Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Russia, Spain, and the United States of America.
6. On Morrison, see (Morrison 1895) and his private papers (1895–1918) at Mitchell Library, Sydney. For a critical assessment of Morrison as a reliable source, see Seagrave (1992), which has extensive references throughout.
7. Although commercial and missionary enterprises and their personnel had been in serious risk for some time, the danger of the diplomatic community attracted the focus of the emerging global press. Though many participants wrote their memoirs of the event—most notably George E. Morrison, a physician turned reporter for the London Times—perhaps the most engaging single volume in English is Fleming (1959), reissued in 1983 and in several printings since that time. Although based largely on Morrison’s impressions, and thus somewhat one-sided, it is the major English account used judiciously in this article. Diaries of Robert Hart and others offer alternative interpretations of the context for the siege.
8. Unless otherwise noted, the direct quotations describing the Hanlin Yuan destruction come from this source.
9. L. Giles’s authentic account is one of the best British first-person narratives. The Australian National University Library has mounted a splendid collection of nearly 300 photographs of the siege and contemporary China in the Giles-Pickford Photographic Collection on its

10. O’Connor (1973, p. 134) emphasizes the incredulity that the Chinese would allow “use [of] the Hanlin Library—which was not only a library but the premier academy of the empire, the Chinese Oxford/Heidelberg/ Sorbonne—as an instrument of military operations.” The point is supported by Keown-Boyd (1991, pp. 106–7).


12. This is summarized by Smith (1901) and discussed by Seagrave (1992, pp. 376–378 and 538–40). According to Seagrave, “In general, the whole story of the Hanlin has been ignored by Western scholars.”

13. Brief mentions occur in survey articles by Wu (1974, p. 630) and Seymour (1994, p. 134). I am indebted to a research paper by Li (1989) prepared for a graduate seminar, Library and Information Science Since 1500, GSLIS, University of Texas at Austin, Spring 1989, which is the source of otherwise undocumented information. See also Huang (1989, pp. 280–82).

14. German sources on the siege, compiled by Herbert Birett as “Library History: The Destruction of Chinese Books in The Peking Seige of 1900—German Sources” (8 pp.), listed as Fire in Hanlin-Academy Beijing 1900/Brand der Hanlin-Akademie Beijing 1900 (1.12.04), retrieved from http.www.kinematographie.de/HANLIN.HTM.

15. O’Connor (1973, p. 135) relates the eyewitness accounts of Bertram Simpson, whose colleagues apparently did not appreciate his candor. Simpson describes an occasional “Sinologue” who would select an armful of rarities and dash back through the flames only to be met by marines “with a stern order to stop such literary looting.” However, he thought that some copies must have found their way out of the library and “may be someday resurrected in strange lands.” One such example of this occurred as late as the 1960s, when the British Museum acquired a volume taken by Captain Frances Garden Poole during the siege for £50.00 that was worth some £10,000.00 in the early 1990s (Seagrave, 1992, p. 539; refers to Grimstead, 1962).

16. These included 66 from the Confucian canon, 41 of history, 1,032 of philosophy, and 175 of poetry, according to Li (1989).

17. The University of Texas at Austin, among many other research libraries, has a copy of this set. Chinese authorities are urging holders of items from the Yong Le Da Dian to share them with them. See “Experts Urge Collectors to Share World’s Earliest Encyclopedia,” Xinhua News Agency, April 17, 2002, retrieved from http://service.china.org.cn/link/wcm/ShowText?infoid=31248&pqry=Yongle and Dadian. In conjunction with this request, the National Library of China has announced plans to digitize the 281 volumes under its control, of about 400 known worldwide. See “China to Digitize World’s Earliest Encyclopedia,” People’s Daily, April 19, 2002, retrieved from at http://service.cina.org.cn/link/wcm/ShowText?infoid=31120&pqry=Yongle and Dadian.

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The Paris Commune of 1871 and the Bibliothèque Nationale

GERALD S. GREENBERG

ABSTRACT
During the Paris Commune of 1871, communards assumed responsibility for administration of the Bibliothèque Nationale. On April 1 the Commune appointed Citizen Jules Vincent the library’s supervisor. Three weeks later, the Commune dismissed Vincent when it discovered that he had embezzled 10,000 francs that had been allocated to meet library expenses. Vincent’s behavior had immense consequences for the Commune. This article will examine how Versailles attempted to portray Vincent’s action as symbolic of communard deceit; how it became virtually impossible for the Commune to regain the trust of library managers and employees; and how Elie Reclus, a widely respected humanitarian and academic, was faced with the challenging task of managing the library and protecting its collection during the final five weeks of the Commune’s existence.

BACKGROUND
At the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War in September 1870, France was forced to sign a humiliating treaty with Prussia. Faced with this national disgrace, Paris watched in anger as voters proceeded to elect a government with a distinctly monarchist agenda. In response, the Parisian working class and National Guard rose in rebellion, calling for the commune to govern the city. The rise of the commune was quickly associated with violent memories of the French Revolution (1789–95) and the Revolution of 1848.

The Paris Commune of 1871 may have been the first great uprising of the proletariat against bourgeois exploitation, as Karl Marx maintained. While this interpretation of events is generally granted some validity, many
historians believe the principal cause of the rebellion to be the unpopular and provocative actions of France’s newly elected monarchist assembly, whose reactionary agenda served to unify diverse opposition forces in Paris, most of which could not be legitimately characterized as socialist in the modern sense of the word. Many French nationalists, already offended by the humiliating treaty that had just concluded the Franco-Prussian War, and still suffering from the long wartime siege, now watched as Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877), France’s newly elected chief executive, proceeded to lead the rural-dominated assembly in passing legislation anathema to most Parisians: cessation of the wartime moratorium on debts and rents, termination of further wage payments to the National Guard, and relocation of the national capital from Paris to Versailles. This combination of factors resulted in a broad-based Parisian rising that established the Commune on March 26, 1871.

The Bibliothèque Nationale had been closed since September 15, 1870, two weeks after the collapse of the French Army at Sedan, where Emperor Napoleon III and 100,000 of his men had been captured by the Prussians. When news of this disaster reached Paris on September 4, angry crowds swept aside imperial authority and proclaimed a republic. Long-suffering Parisians, besieged and fearful, may have taken hope from this bloodless revolution, but the atmosphere was one of chaos and apprehension. Library officials, under the direction of Jules Taschereau, sought to safeguard the collection. During October they packed the volumes into unmarked boxes and evacuated them (Dubief, 1961, p. 31). It was not until the Treaty of Frankfurt was signed on March 1 that serious thought was given to reassembling the library with an eye toward reopening its doors to visitors. On March 3 library workers began this process. No longer threatened by violent Prussian incursion, Taschereau and the other library administrators did not regard the potential for internal strife as reason enough to keep the Bibliothèque Nationale closed any longer.

Fifteen days later, Taschereau had a change of heart. Paris had risen in rebellion against what they regarded as an unjust peace treaty and the new monarchist government in Versailles. Taschereau had good reason to fear for his safety for he had aided the police in their actions against the communards of 1848 (Dubief, 1961, p. 31), some of whom, like Auguste Blanqui (1805–81), were still prime movers of Parisian radicalism. Accordingly, Taschereau left for Versailles shortly after March 18, delegating administration of the library to Henri Delaborde (1811–99), curator of engraving (“The national library under the commune” 1871; Dubief, 1961, p. 31). Delaborde’s first few weeks as administrator were uneventful. Taschereau’s departure did not spur a general exodus of library personnel, and the Bibliothèque Nationale continued to prepare for reopening as scheduled.
On March 26 Paris’s rebel leaders proclaimed the Commune. At first this event passed virtually unnoticed at the library. As might easily be imagined, administration of the Bibliothèque Nationale was hardly a priority of the communards. For eight days the library had gone about its business on its own, and it would enjoy this freedom for almost another week. A similar situation prevailed at the Louvre, where personnel considered themselves a free corporation for eighteen days until the Commune named artist Gustave Courbet (1819–77) superintendent on April 13 (Barbet de Jouy, 1898, p. 197). Louvre administrator J. Henri Barbet de Jouy experienced numerous conflicts with Courbet over the issues of democratic selection of administrators by artists, provision of office space for new artist/administrators, and requisitioning of funds for administration of the museum (Barbet de Jouy, 1898, pp. 198–204). At one point, Barbet de Jouy was told that his position no longer existed and that he should either resign or stand for election. Despite these clashes, compromise with Courbet proved possible, and Barbet de Jouy still considered the Louvre employees to be effectively in charge. The Commune, Barbet de Jouy mused, might even be viewed as having been protective of the museum, keeping it closed during threatening times and reopening it only when the artists’ federation was able to provide for its safe operation (Barbet de Jouy, 1898, p. 200).

**Jules Vincent**

On April 1, 1871, the Commune placed Citizen Jules Vincent in charge of the Bibliothèque Nationale. The announcement of this appointment, issued by the Commune’s Committee of the Interior and General Safety, was signed by Frédéric Cournet (1839–85), Émile Oudet (1825–?), and Théophile Ferré (1845–71). Its stated purpose was to guarantee the conservation of France’s past scientific glory for future generations (Journal officiel, 1872, p. 175). The unstated political purpose was to prevent the library from functioning as a center of counterrevolution under the leadership of library officials Léopold Delisle and Charles-Aimè Dauban, both regarded by the Commune as reactionaries (Dommantget, 1930, p. 14). Under the direction of Vincent, it was expected that library employees would take all appropriate measures to safeguard the collection and continue to discharge their duties under the Commune’s leadership. This staff included Jules Ravenel (1801–85), curator of imprints; O. S. Barbris and E. J. B. Rathery (1807–75), associate curators of imprints; Henri Delaborde, curator of engravings; Charles-Aimè Dauban (1820–76), curator and associate director of the Department of Engravings, Anatole Chabouillet (1814–99), curator and associate director of the Department of Medallions and Antiques; H. Lacroix (1814–99), curator and adjunct associate director of the Department of Medallions and Antiques; Léopold Delisle (1826–1910), librarian of the Department of Manuscripts; and librarians H. Baudement, Eugène Nuitre, Georges Duplessis, J. Guerin, and one Schmidt.
By all accounts, the collections at both the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Louvre were well protected during the period of the Commune despite numerous claims to the contrary issued by the government at Versailles. The appointment of Vincent at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the appointment of Courbet at the Louvre were political acts, aimed at guarding against possible counterrevolution. Both institutions were to be reorganized in the communard image with governance performed by committees of workers. Versailles’s false charges of vandalism represented the opposition’s political reply.

Vincent’s tenure at the Bibliothèque Nationale was destined to be a brief one, but its repercussions would prove to be a formidable obstacle for communard aspirations of reform. It is not clear how Jules Vincent came to be selected for his post. Nothing that is known of his background would suggest his promotion to such a position. Born in 1827, he was a gunsmith by profession. In 1860 he was convicted of fraud, a fact that was apparently not known to the Commune’s leadership at the time. His arrival at the library, however, did not cause immediate problems. Delaborde, acting head since Taschereau’s departure almost two weeks before, had the good sense to accept the reality of the situation. While not acknowledging Vincent’s legal right to the directorship, he was willing to establish a pragmatic relationship that would enable the library’s work to continue under existing conditions (“The national library under the commune,” 1871). Vincent appeared satisfied with this situation and promised not to interfere in the library’s operation (Dubief, 1961, p. 32). The Commune also decided to extend library employees exemption from service in the National Guard in order that they might continue their work uninterrupted (Journal officiel, 1872, p. 339). This exemption had been in effect throughout the Prussian siege of Paris. On April 22 Vincent announced that the library would reopen on the 24th (Journal officiel, 1872, p. 339). There is some question, however, whether Vincent played any part in the decision to reopen. This may well have been decided at a meeting of curators several days earlier (Dubief, 1961, p. 33) and, given the hands-off working relationship that had been established between Vincent and library personnel, seems plausible.

Vincent’s stewardship of the Bibliothèque Nationale was abruptly terminated on April 27 due to an apparent misappropriation of Commune funds (Journal officiel, 1872, p. 412) Although not officially reported until May 4, it appears that Vincent withdrew a total of 30,000 francs from the Commune’s Department of Finance and deposited only 20,000 with the library’s accountant, P. Boisard. This personal appropriation of library funds appears to have amounted to one eighth of all money provided to the library during the period March 20—April 30. Vincent attempted to explain the financial shortfall by contending that several library employees refused to accept the money that he was attempting to dispense to them. While it appears that at least some library staff chose to forego payment
rather than create the impression that they were accepting the legitimacy of the Commune’s authority, this hardly justifies the fact that 10,000 francs remained in Vincent’s possession. Curator Dauban was among those still intensely loyal to Versailles, and he was also instrumental in bringing charges against Vincent (Dubief, 1961, p. 33; Dauban, 1873, pp. 153–54). Perhaps it is debatable whether Vincent’s behavior was the result of dishonesty or ineptitude because the event was never properly investigated. Given Vincent’s previous conviction for fraud, however, one is easily led to believe that history was repeating itself. Certainly, the Commune needed to immediately disassociate itself from Vincent’s behavior. Vincent’s actions served to validate all the worst suspicions of the Commune’s enemies: the rebellious Parisians were little more than common criminals, their stated ideals mere cover for their mercenary schemes. Paris papers printed false reports that Vincent had stolen valuable artwork from the library (“The national library under the commune,” 1871). Versailles’s charges now seemed credible to many. The question facing the Commune was whether it was possible to repair the damage. They would attempt to do so on April 29 by appointing as Vincent’s successor noted scholar and scientist Elie Reclus (Journal officiel, 1872, p. 421). Named inspector of communal libraries and installed at the Bibliothèque Mazarine (Bourgin, 1907, p. 112) was journalist Benjamin Gastineau (1823–1903), destined to be the only communard library official to be captured and sentenced after the Commune’s fall.

**Integrity and Reform**

At the same time that Jules Vincent was apparently embezzling funds from the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Louvre was being reorganized according to communard principles. Now the library would face the same challenges. Elie Reclus (1827–1904), the library’s new director, was both a social reformer and a scholar, as was his brother Élisée (1830–1905). Trained for a career in theology, Elie Reclus studied at Geneva and Strasbourg, receiving his Doctor of Divinity degree in 1851. Three years earlier, however, he became a utopian socialist, greatly influenced by the ideas of Charles Fourier (1772–1837). After the fall of the Commune, Elie Reclus became recognized as a seminal anthropologist breaking new ground in an emerging academic discipline with his studies of primitive peoples (Ellis, 1927). Staff at the Bibliothèque Nationale, however, had not expected that a man of Reclus’s stature would work to advance the ideals of the Commune. They regarded him as a turncoat.

Both Vincent’s dismissal and Reclus’s appointment were accomplished by Edouard Vaillant (1840–1915), education delegate and member of the Commune’s executive body. Vaillant had been trained as an engineer and studied medicine before devoting himself full-time to social revolution. A friend and follower of Blanqui, Vaillant often played the role of communard compromiser, attempting to mediate disputes between the extremist
neo-Jacobins and the more moderate socialists. He was also vocal in his opposition to the killing of Versailles hostages, and in the last week of the Commune’s existence he joined with war delegate and Committee of Public Safety member Louis Delecluze in an attempt to negotiate peace with the Prussians. Nevertheless, Vaillant’s devotion to the cause of social revolution cannot be questioned. As education delegate, he ordered the complete expulsion of clergy from Paris schools.  

Reclus’s reception at the Bibliothèque Nationale was reflective of the staff’s attitude toward the Commune following their experience with Vincent. Upon arrival, he found the doors to his office bolted and needed the assistance of a locksmith to gain admittance. In addition, Taschereau’s nephew and library official Guérin made his implacable opposition to the new director apparent from the start (Dubief, 1961, p. 35). Reclus attempted to treat all employees fairly, but his appointment of heraldry scholar Joannis Guigard as associate director exacerbated matters. Guigard was a former employee of the library. He had been dismissed, however, due to his public attacks against library administration. It has been suggested that perhaps even more repugnant to library personnel was the fact that Guigard was very knowledgeable concerning the value of the monographic collection, and staff feared his ability to identify any precious volumes being appropriated for private use (“The national library under the commune,” 1871).  

At least one journalist commented that invasion of churches had been common during historical periods of social upheaval, but invasion of a literary temple was more of a shock (Dubief, 1961, p. 36). Despite this rare incursion, no books were lost, nor were any works of art at the Louvre sold despite frequent journalistic charges to the contrary. Reclus’s faith in the National Guard to protect the library’s holdings proved well placed, despite the soldiers’ general unfamiliarity with the material charged to their care. Had any books been lost, the communards and their cause would have been quickly discredited by their detractors. A journalist at the British Daily News cited the safeguarding of the library’s monographic collection as a greater accomplishment than protection of the Louvre’s holdings because it was much easier to dispose of books following theft than it was paintings (“The national library under the commune,” 1871). The measures that Reclus took to protect the library’s collection also addressed the question of internal security. As Elie’s brother characterized a problem common to many a research library, “more than one illustrious savant was at the same time a book thief” (Reclus, 1927). The situation was described by one historian as “pillage of the public libraries by the privileged” (Dommange, 1930, p. 15). In order to prevent material from leaving the library in any manner, Reclus at the Bibliothèque Nationale and Gastineau at the Mazarine, suspended all library loans (Bourgin, 1907, p. 112). Heightened security, of course, is readily viewed as distrust, and Reclus’s measures served to increase the tension existing between administration and staff.
On May 9 Reclus and Guigard resolved to exercise their authority in an attempt to establish a more orderly and disciplined workforce at the library. They announced that library employees would be required to sign an attendance sheet when reporting to work (Dubief, 1961). The librarians, led by Delisle, maintained that this demand violated the operational freedom granted to them when the Commune appointed Vincent on April 6 (Journal officiel, 1872, p. 175). While Vincent’s mandate makes no mention of altering existing library routines or procedures, it is clear that Reclus was authorized by the Commune to make more sweeping changes (Journal officiel, 1872, p. 531). The library staff’s recalcitrance now prompted Reclus to formally demand their allegiance to the Commune on May 11. The staff responded by circulating a petition declaring the Versailles government to be the only one deserving of their recognition (Dubief, 1961, p. 37; “The national library under the commune,” 1871). The confrontation had now escalated to the point that a working relationship between staff and administration was no longer possible. Consequently, Reclus proceeded to dismiss most of the staff, including Delisle.\(^{13}\) The stated basis for dismissal was absenteeism, evidence of which was supplied by the unsigned attendance sheets.

Had attendance documentation and allegiance to the Commune not been issues, Delisle would probably still have been discharged by Reclus because the manuscript librarian was firm in his belief that Reclus had no authority to make any substantive changes in library policy or personnel. This was especially true, Delisle maintained, when the issue was replacement of bibliographic specialists. By May 11 Reclus and Delisle were embroiled in yet another controversy stemming from Reclus’s decision to install Egyptian bibliographer Anys el Bittar as curator of manuscripts. Delisle’s candidate for the job was Jules Simon, Versailles’s minister of public education (Dubief, 1961, p. 38). Simon demurred, citing other priorities. There was no question that Bittar was qualified for his position, but Delisle insisted that his candidate, Simon, in his ministerial capacity, was the only man with authority to make personnel changes at the library. Delisle made it clear that he would refuse to accept Bittar’s installation as curator of manuscripts on May 12. This, Delisle believed, was the real reason for his dismissal.

In actuality, the issues of attendance, allegiance, and personnel change all center around the refusal of library staff to accept the authority of the Commune. Most were supporters of Versailles from the beginning, and their experience with Jules Vincent served to confirm them in their anti-communard stance. Perhaps Reclus could have proceeded more slowly in his efforts to reform library culture, but, as events would subsequently demonstrate, time was a precious commodity. Surely Delisle realized that Reclus and Vaillant would not consider granting Jules Simon an administrative role at the library, even had Simon been willing to accept one. Simon, a conservative republican and future prime minister (1876–77), had been influential in preventing continued resistance to Prussia after the
fall of Paris in January 1871 by forcing the resignation of Léon Gambetta (1838–82), who wanted to continue resistance from Bourdeaux. By accepting a post offered by Thiers in the Versailles government, Simon solidified his position as an enemy of the Commune.

Most of the librarians who were dismissed by Reclus on May 11 returned to the library the next day, having obtained admission as patrons (“The national library under the commune,” 1871, p. 6). With most of the library’s staff now occupying reading space in the public area, Reclus found himself in need of workers. He wrote to Vaillant, expressing his intention to begin hiring replacement staff immediately (Dubief, 1961, p. 39). Within one day, however, Reclus decided that reinstating most of the staff was a more practical option. It was not even required that the returning workers declare their allegiance to the Commune. Consequently, twenty-five of the old employees returned to service, joining six new staff that included Anysel Bittar and author/archivist Robert Halt.14

The reinstated workers still were hostile to Reclus, but did the director consider them a personal threat to his safety? Apparently dismissed curator Dauban believed so. He reported locating a message, sent by Reclus to Vaillant, asking for firearms to be delivered to the Bibliothèque Nationale for use by himself and Guigard (Dauban, 1873, p. 308). In the message Reclus states that he believes the dismissal of the library employees might result in an armed attack. The note is dated May 15, and the signature of “Reus” is only partially legible. Is it possible that the recent tension at the library caused Reclus to view former members of the staff now squatting in the reading room as a likely source of violence? There is no evidence to this effect. In addition, one must consider that Dauban’s animosity toward the Commune rivaled Delisle’s, and he cannot be considered an impartial chronicler of events. For these reasons one is not convinced of the note’s authenticity.15

It would be a mistake to characterize all librarians at the Bibliothèque Nationale as Versailles loyalists. At least two dismissed librarians, Baude-ment16 and Cheron, were good Republicans (Dubief, 1961, p. 40), but they were united with their colleagues in opposition to the communard administration. While most of the dismissed library staff returned to work, some did not. A few of the returning librarians decided to take up residence in the library, and they did not leave the building again until it was reclaimed by Versailles troops (“The national library under the commune,” 1871). Reclus found himself short on manpower (particularly loyal manpower) and funding. He had great plans to democratize library culture, but had neither the means nor the time to accomplish them. He allocated whatever funding Vaillant was able to provide him for maintenance of the library and its staff. This selflessness was appreciated by at least a few library personnel (Dubief, 1961, p. 40), but it did not compensate for the general hostility that he faced.
What Might Have Been

Reclus believed that the library should play a prominent role in the democratization of society. He shared Vaillant’s vision of a society where education was free and secular. Toward this end, he was determined to launch a public lecture program that would bring the masses into the library. Attendees would be inspired by educational messages delivered by socially progressive speakers. Reclus consulted with bibliophile Paul Lacroix,17 literary critic Jules Troubat,18 and Egyptologists Prisse d’Avesnes19 and Marchandon de la Faye.20 He hoped to enlist the assistance of professors at l’École des Chartres. This new vision of the library corresponded with Reclus’s ideal of a democratized society, one he shared with friend and advisor Aristide Rey, a disciple of anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76). Reclus also dreamed of replacing library administrator Delaborde with artist and republican soldier Adrien Tournachon (1825–1903).

Many of the individuals with whom Reclus conferred were strongly influenced by Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–69), the man who revolutionized French literary criticism by severing the academic discipline from partisanship and prejudice (Lehmann, 1962). He accomplished this largely through the rise of French newspapers such as Le Moniteur (1789–1868) and Le Temps (1861–1900) that published his critical articles. Their popular reception guaranteed that Sainte-Beuve’s essays, pioneering exercises in biographical and historical criticism, would continue to appear in a relatively independent forum. It was not, however, Sainte-Beuve’s portraits of great writers that influenced social progressives but rather his liberal ideas on public issues. After his appointment to the Senate in 1865, he championed public libraries,21 freedom of thought, and education, and it was these ideals that most impressed Reclus and his circle of advisors. Admirable though they were, it is questionable whether these social and educational goals could have ever been realized under the Commune given the direction that Paris’s leadership chose to take as their confrontation with Versailles progressed. In its final weeks the Commune took a more violent turn toward neo-Jacobinism, one that frightened even Jules Troubat and Robert Halt, Reclus’s associates who were closest to the communards (Dubief, 1961, p. 42). Even had there been time, the political atmosphere was not one within which new freedoms were likely to flourish.

The End

As late as May 20, readers continued to occupy the long tables of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Lissagaray, 1876, p. 236). Two days later the Commune’s experiment in library administration came to an end when the library closed its doors. The Versailles Army was quickly approaching, and the primary concern was the safety of the facility and its collection. Fortunately, the library did not occupy a position of strategic importance to the battle of Paris. The library was not even defended when Versailles troops arrived
on May 23 (“The national library under the commune,” 1871). As a result, the structure and its holdings were spared the ensuing destruction that was visited upon much of the city. Reclus, unable to reach the library on May 23, took refuge in the Bercy section of Paris (Reclus, 2000, p. 159). From there he escaped through Italy to Zurich. Of all the Commune’s library administrators only Gastineau was captured by the forces of Versailles. He was condemned to deportation and imprisonment. Reclus, Guigard, and the other library officials were condemned in absentia for insurrection, not the seemingly more appropriate offense of usurpation of government functions. Reclus and many others eventually returned to France following issuance of a general amnesty on July 10, 1880.

It has been said that “the Commune was a barricade, not a government” (Lissagaray, 1876, p.194–195). Its attempts to govern were characterized by an excess of liberty. Debate raged constantly and endlessly in the Commune’s governing bodies. Denied freedom for so long, the communards would not place restraints upon it now that they had power. There was an inability to act quickly and decisively in a time of crisis, a crucial lack of money, and in the end, very little time. The funding problem might have been remedied in the short run had the Commune decided to seize the banks, but funding was not the crucial issue at the Bibliothèque Nationale—time was. Reclus’s plans needed more than three weeks for realization. He was handicapped further by the animosity of the library staff, a sentiment born of loyalty to Versailles but fed by Vincent’s dismal administration. The Commune should be credited with providing protection for the library’s collection. That the Bibliothèque Nationale escaped the fire that consumed much of Paris in the Commune’s last days must be attributed to the fact that its location was not of strategic importance to the combatants. Perhaps Reclus and Vaillant might consider their goal of democratization of library culture to have been at least partially realized by the emergence and growth of public libraries and the evolution of societies that are more responsive to the needs of their citizens. Progress in these areas, however, when achieved, has required decades of hard labor to establish and protect, and it cannot be said that the work is ever completed.

Notes
1. Dauban was the author of Le fond de la société sous la commune (1873).
2. For more information on Anatole-Chabouillet and Lacroix, see Bibliothèque Nationale de France (2005).
3. Delisle published a four-volume history of the National Library’s manuscript collection (Delisle, 1881), after having assumed dictatorship of the entire library in 1874. During his tenure, which lasted until 1905, the library’s card catalog was completed. For further biographic/bibliographic details see http://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/delislel.htm. Delisle’s entry is found at http://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/delislel.htm.
4. Dubief (1961, p. 34) estimates that the Commune discovered Vincent’s criminal record about the time of his dismissal, and it may represent the actual reason for his termination.
5. Vincent’s withdrawal is reflected in a financial report published in the Journal officiel (1872, p. 466); library accountant Boisard’s note stating the discrepancy between funding
earmarked for the library and the amount he actually received is published in *Journal officiel* (1872, p. 522).

6. Lissagaray (1876, p. 176), The French journalist Lissagaray (1838–1901) was a Commune participant who spent the first five years of his exile writing this memoir. It was first published in Brussels in 1876. The first English version was published ten years later. Karl Marx’s daughter Eleanor was the translator.

7. Lissagaray mentions Gastineau’s appointment (1876, p. 185) but places him at the Bibliothèque Nationale; Dubief notes his condemnation and deportation (1961, p. 43). Gastineau published the 1870s newspaper *Le trombinoscope* under the pen name Touchatout.

8. Dubief (1961, p. 35). Elie Reclus’s brother Elisée, later a noted geographer, was captured by Versailles forces during combat at Châtillon. His death sentence was commuted to perpetual banishment after European scientists appealed on his behalf. He was an inmate at fourteen different prisons. According to Lissagaray, he succeeded in opening a school with a small library at Quérlern for the facility’s 151 prisoners. After operating for a short period of time, it was closed by Jules Simon, minister of public education (Lissigaray, 1876, p. 324). A third brother, Paul, joined Elie and Elisée in action at both the September 4 and March 18 Paris uprisings. The brothers published manifestos and journals in support of the republic. Elie was wounded in one hand during the violence. After serving in the National Guard, he was transcribing and classifying papers at the Tuileries and working as a social worker in the 5th arrondissement when named library director.

9. Vaillant’s contributions to the Commune are detailed extensively throughout Frank Jellinek’s *The Paris Commune of 1871* (Jellnik, 1965, pp. 154, 225, 226, 291, 292, 296, 308, 353, 404). After the fall of the Commune, Vaillant fled to Britain. He was sentenced to death in absentia. In England he secured a lectureship at London University and became an intimate of Karl Marx. He returned to France in 1880 after the government withdrew the death sentence and was elected to the National Assembly in 1893. A brief biography can be found at http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FRvaillant.htm.

10. Similarly, Barbet de Jouy (1898, p. 200) would not even give Courbet a room at the Louvre until the Commune forced him to compromise.

11. The appointment was officially confirmed on May 6 (*Journal officiel*, 1872, p. 482).

12. Barbet de Jouy (1898, p. 202) refuted such allegations as pure fabrication.

13. *Journal officiel* (1872, p. 531). The *Journal officiel* lists twenty-four names besides Delisle: Aumoitte, d’Auriac, Bellifent, Bertal, Bréhant, Chabouillet, Chéron, Claude, Cortambert père, Cortambert (Richard), Courajod, Depping, Frank, Julien (Stanislas), Klein, Lacaban, Lavoix fils, Marchal, Noël (J.), Paris (Paulin), Rousseaux, Soury, Thierry-Poux, and Zottemberg (a specialist in oriental manuscripts). The *Daily News* reported that a total of sixty-five employees were dismissed.

14. Halt, author of *Papiers sauvés des Tuileries suite à la correspondance de la famille impériale* (1871), was a member of a commission charged with collecting, classifying, and publishing the papers of the Tuileries.

15. Dubief (1961, note 40) considered the text a forgery.

16. He was the subject of an autobiography (1875) by Julien Trvers (1802–1888).

17. Lacroix (1807–84) known as “le bibliophile Jacob,” was a scholarly writer, editor, and bibliographer.

18. Troubat (1836–1914) was secretary to literary historian Charles Sainte-Beuve and executor of his estate.

19. Achille-Constant-Theodore Emile Prisse d’Avesnes (1807–79) was a writer, engineer, linguist, and humanitarian who embraced Islam and spent his life meticulously studying and documenting the historic and artistic contributions of ancient Egypt and medieval Islam. See Mary Norton (1990).

20. He was co-author with Prisse d’Avesnes of *Histoire de l’art Égyptien d’après les monument* (1878).

21. From 1840 to 1848 Sainte-Beuve was employed at the French Institute’s Mazarine Library.

**References**


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From Refuge to Risk: Public Libraries and Children in World War I

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ABSTRACT
During World War I public libraries in the United States functioned in multiple ways as civic spaces. This was particularly true of libraries in large, urban centers with diverse ethnic populations, many from countries involved in the conflict. For children, the library was a refuge that provided story hours, reading material, and space dedicated to their needs. Just before the end of the war, the influenza pandemic broke out and children were not allowed in the library building. In a few short months, the library went from being a refuge to being a health risk for children.

INTRODUCTION
In the early twentieth century public libraries in the United States functioned in multiple ways as civic spaces. In addition to furnishing reading and viewing material, libraries offered free meeting space for large and small groups, presented free public lectures, and provided reference and other kinds of assistance to patrons. During World War I, even before the United States formally entered the war, public libraries were a source of reading material for people wanting information about the conflict in Europe. This was particularly true of libraries in large, urban centers with diverse ethnic populations, many from countries involved in the war. Children, far from being unaware of current events, were just as concerned as their parents with the war and its effects on both Europe and the United States. Public libraries were a refuge that provided both information and a meeting space for children and adults alike, though the types of activities held in this public arena changed over the course of the war.¹ Before the war ended, however, a new threat emerged. The influenza pandemic
of 1918 had a far more direct and devastating impact on public libraries when public spaces where people gathered in large numbers were declared a health risk. The St. Louis Public Library (SLPL) provides an example of one such urban library that served a diverse community and provided a variety of services to children and adults throughout the war, both before and after the United States entered the fight.

**The Library as a Civic Space**

On January 8, 1912, the St. Louis Public Library opened its new central library building. The imposing edifice, designed by Cass Gilbert, was the culmination of a twelve-year-long project to construct new purpose-built library buildings throughout the city. The project was funded, in part, by Andrew Carnegie, who gave St. Louis $1,000,000 with the understanding that half that sum would go toward branch buildings and the other half to the central building. The Central Branch building was symbolic of the significance of the public library to the civic life of the city. The massive columns at the entrance to the library, the huge staircase leading up to the door, the names of important writers inscribed along the proscenium around the circumference of the building, the marble floors and columns inside the entryway, the elaborate lighting fixtures, and the high ceilings were all reminiscent of a cathedral. It was, as noted by architectural historian Abigail Van Slyke, part of a “City Beautiful cultural center built apart from the actual central commercial part of the city and reinforcing Victorian ideas of culture as its own special realm” (Van Slyke, 1995, p. 82).

Prior to the construction of the Central Branch, six smaller, neighborhood library buildings had been built, scattered throughout the city. The first, Barr Branch, was opened in 1906, and the last, Divoll, opened in 1910. The importance of these new branches was not only that they visually symbolized the commitment that St. Louis made to support a public library, but also that the buildings enabled St. Louis librarians to expand their work to reach a larger population by bringing the library closer to the neighborhoods where people resided instead of making people come to the library. In addition, each branch, including the large Central Branch, had a purpose-built children’s room separated from the adult reading room. For the first time, the library had space dedicated solely to children. New space allowed the library to house collections specifically for children, and in turn this necessitated the presence in each branch of librarians dedicated to working with children. In 1906 the St. Louis Public Library hired, for the first time, librarians trained specifically to work with children.

By 1910, when Arthur Bostwick became head of the library, the six new buildings were open with only the Central Branch building remaining to be constructed from the Carnegie endowment. Bostwick had previously worked in New York City as head of the Circulating Libraries, and one of his first decisions in St. Louis was to reorganize the library’s work with
children in accordance to the way it was done at the New York Public Library. He hired a supervisor of children’s work, a newly created position, to oversee and coordinate children’s work in all the branches. With the completion of the Central Branch building, the children’s department was an established, organized entity. Each branch, including Central, had one or more children’s librarians. They met on a monthly basis to coordinate their work. In addition to working inside the library buildings in the children’s room, they went out to the public. They worked with public and private schools (there were no school libraries in St. Louis in the early twentieth century); they distributed books and told stories on municipal playgrounds in the summer; they met with parent and teacher organizations to discuss children’s literature; and they told stories to organizations such as the Society for Ethical Culture, the Missouri School for the Blind, and the House of Detention. In the period immediately preceding the war, St. Louis children’s librarians achieved a cherished goal: they had at once adequate space and trained personnel to reach out to children all over the city and connect them with good literature.

Serving a Diverse Population

St. Louis, like many other cities in the early twentieth century, had a significant immigrant population, largely from Eastern Europe, but also from Italy and Ireland. Some immigrants were second generation. Some were newer immigrants whose children had been born outside of the United States. In addition, there was a large African American population, as well as people descended from the French settlers who founded the city and a large German-American population from pre–Civil War German immigrants. Children’s librarians (and other librarians as well) catered to this diverse population, with each branch attempting to understand their particular population and meet its special needs, though “tailored within acceptable limits” (Wiegand, 1989, p. 3). In a 1915 article, Josephine McPike noted:

> When we think of many foreigners of different nationality together, there comes to most of us from habit the idea first suggested by Mr. Zangwill of amalgamation. I think most of us at Crunden do not like to feel that our branch and others like it are melting pots; at any rate of a heat so fierce that it will melt away the national characteristics of each little stranger, so fierce that it will level all picturesqueness into deadly sameness. Rather, just of a glow so warm that it melts almost imperceptibly the racial hate and antagonism. (McPike, 1915, p. 855)

Though she expresses an aversion to the concept of amalgamation, McPike and other St. Louis children’s librarians tended—like many of their counterparts throughout the country—to generalize the characteristics of their young patrons based on their ethnic background. However, they also made clear distinctions between the personalities and tastes of individual children.
Early Years of the War, 1914–1916

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, the library reacted by “making a special effort to secure a large and well-rounded collection of literature about the war, in all languages and in all forms—books, pamphlets, broadsides, posters, series and periodicals of all kinds. All sides and all points of view are represented.” The war was problematic for St. Louis because of the large and influential German population. German-language books about the war were shelved separately with other German-language books, “as the German readers consult only the books in that collection and the war books in German are lost to them if kept with those in English.”

The branches had varying experiences in the early war years. Some, like Cabanne Branch, found that war books were in demand for adult readers. Popular titles included Pan-Germanism by Roland Greene Usher, The Secrets of the German War Office by Armgaard Karl Graves, Germany and England by John Adam Cramb, and Fredrich von Bernhardi’s Germany and the Next War. Other branches, such as Barr Branch, did not have unusually heavy demand for books about the war, despite the fact that it was located in the “German South Side” of the city. The Central Branch reference room had an upsurge in clipping activities due to the interest in articles about the war. Librarians added maps of countries involved in the conflict and exhibited them. Increasing numbers of books, articles, and postings on bulletin boards were defaced. If patrons disagreed with an article, they wrote on it. Portraits of royals and generals “are especially liable to defacement with opprobrious epithets . . . the Library has received strenuous protests against the display of portraits and other material relating to one of the contesting parties without similar material on the other side to offset it.” Librarians were caught in the middle. Patrons protested if they felt that their side was not being adequately represented, but librarians found that their efforts to remain neutral were made more difficult because “some of our readers apparently [regard] neutrality as synonymous with suppression of everything favorable to the other side.” In some cases, librarians simply took down all displays to avoid conflict.

Divoll Branch children’s librarian Anna Mason tried to think ahead to what might be needed when school started in the fall. On August 10, 1914, she wrote: “the general European war will result in a large amount of reference work on history as soon as the schools open next month. Have been looking over what material we have on Napoleon, Franco-German war, etc. . . . worked on our books of European history indexing material likely to be called for in connection with the present war.”

Other librarians noticed that children were not as interested in the war as they had expected. “I have been greatly interested by the fact that the high school boys and girls never ask for anything about the war. Not once during the winter have I seen in one of them a spark of interest in the subject. It seems so strange that it should be necessary to keep them offi-
cially ignorant of this great war [sic] because the grandfather of one spoke French and of another German.” At the Soulard Branch adult patrons were more interested in books on crochet, cookery, poultry, and automobiles than materials about the war. The librarian found it to be “surprising in a neighborhood where representatives of the various nations at war rub elbows and express their feelings freely. As one small boy reported: A fellow, he says, ‘Delmer, do you root for the Germans?’ and I says, ‘No, I don’t. I’m a Serbian, and I root for the Russians. Now what are you goin’ to do about it? Then we had a fight.’” Supervisor of work with children, Alice Hazeltine, saw the war as an opportunity to “rightly [direct] the reading and thinking of the younger readers. . . . new complex problems presented by these new conditions should make the children’s librarian pause and take heed. Can we do our part toward using the boy’s loyalty to his gang or his nine, his love of our country, his respect for our flag, his devotion to our heroes, in developing a sense of human brotherhood which alone can prevent or delay in the next generation another such catastrophe as the one we face today?”

For children’s librarians on the “front lines,” daily life before the United States entered the war revolved more around the routine work of reference, shelflisting, storytelling, and lecturing to mother’s clubs and teacher’s groups on children’s literature. The work diaries for the Central Branch rarely mention the war as it is simply not part of their daily round. The few exceptions usually involve specific children such as Esther Morris, an English girl who moved to St. Louis in early 1914 and had a difficult time adjusting to life in an urban center instead of the English countryside. She explained her understanding of the causes of the war to a sympathetic librarian:

You know England did not want to go to war. But Germany said to little Belgium “I must go through your country.” Little Belgium said “No, you cannot for you might hurt me.” And Germany went right on. Now you know Belgium is just like a child to England. So old mother England could not stand by and see her child hurt and England had to fight for her child. Any mother would do that you know. That’s what my mother says.

Though children may have been “officially ignorant” about the war, they tended to reflect and express the attitudes of adults. For some, such as Delmer, this was a matter of pride in one’s heritage. Other children may have been influenced by adults like Alice Hazeltine, who found in the war another opportunity to influence children in “right thinking,” which meant in reading materials deemed worthy by librarians. Still others, such as Esther Morris, repeated what they were told about the war by their parents.

Between 1914 and 1917, children’s librarians in St. Louis went about their work largely undisturbed by the war in Europe. At Divoll Branch, a new initiative began as librarians partnered with schools to give systematic bibliographic instruction (they called it library instruction) to students.
Children’s librarian Anna Mason was in charge of the initiative, and as the program expanded and became more and more successful, she wrote articles for library journals on the partnership between the library and the school and presented papers to state and local professional organizations on the topic. At Carondelet Branch, which opened in June 1908, a new story hour in which stories were told in German was so successful that it was expanded to Barr and Divoll Branches in 1915 and 1916. The German story hour was established not because there were great numbers of new German immigrants but because children of German descent still spoke the language at home and were taught to speak it in the German parochial schools, of which there were many in St. Louis. To accommodate this desire for German-language material, the library began purchasing some children’s books in German as well as French (DeLaughter, 1916, p. 225).

**America in the War, 1917–1918**

Once the U.S. became engaged in the conflict in April 1917, things changed. Although the *Annual Report* for 1917 implies that patrons lost interest in reading pro-German literature, several newspaper accounts reveal that in fact the library fell in with the practice, advocated by the American Library Association beginning in May 1918, of removing pro-German materials from the shelves (Wiegand, 1989, p. 157). In St. Louis the offending books were stored in Arthur Bostwick’s office. In the 1917–18 *Annual Report*, librarians noted in the adult open shelf room: “in the issue of non-fiction a casualty list might read as follows: Dead—Pro-German literature; Missing Since April, 1917—Books on neutrality; Seriously Wounded in Action—Books on socialism; Disabled Through Shell Shock—Books on pacifism.” The library itself was transformed by war work. Fifteen members of the library staff went into service with the military. Children’s librarian Frances Eunice Bowman went on a leave of absence in August 1918 to be hospital librarian at Camp Meade and eventually left her position at St. Louis to continue at the hospital library. This was a blow to the storytelling program at the St. Louis Public Library as Bowman was one of the primary storytellers in the library system and was in demand both for library story hours and for private engagements (Kimball, 2003). There were drives to collect books to send to soldiers, with the Central Branch serving as the holding place for the books. The Draft Board of the Fourth Ward was located in the Crunden Branch building, the Red Cross used library facilities to hold meetings, and other “social” groups met as well. Barr Branch became a center of “social and educational work . . . these phenomena result apparently from the increasing amount of war work. Even the children spend their leisure time after school collecting papers and magazines for the soldiers, and knitting.” And Crunden Branch librarian Sarah Bailey quoted a teacher from a neighborhood school who noted: “With Red Cross work, Thrift Stamps and Liberty Bonds, there is very little time left for
the three R’s in the schoolroom nowadays.” Bailey said they felt that way about library work as well “for knitting, begun in the school, is continued in the library, and there are sometimes as many children knitting in the Children’s Room as are reading. Apparently ‘Young America’ is carrying the war work in this district.”

Meanwhile, in the children’s rooms, much greater interest in the war ensued. Before the United States entrance to the war, bulletin boards advertised “books for girls” and had beautiful illustrations of folk and fairy tales to encourage reading. But once the United States became part of the war, the bulletin board in the Central Branch children’s room changed to reflect the new status: “We have posted on the bulletin board Kipling’s poem from ‘Puck of Pook’s Hill’ surrounded by the flags of the United States, England, France, Belgium, Russia and Italy. Both the flags and the poem have attracted much attention. Children have read the poem and some of them have copied it.” Although the specific name of the poem is not mentioned in the day book entry, it is probably “The Children’s Song,” in which children pledge their “love and toil in the years to be” and ends:

Land of our Birth, our faith, our pride,
For whose dear sake our fathers died;
O Motherland, we pledge to thee,
Head, heart, and hand through the years to be! (Kipling, 1906)

Another bulletin board displayed sixty-five “thrift stamp letters”—letters telling the children how money was being earned or saved to buy thrift stamps, which were sold in the library. There was also a demand for “patriotic plays” as the schools presented benefits for the Junior Red Cross. “The plays written for the American School Peace League are very satisfactory. ‘Where War Comes’ by Buelah Marie Dix was received immediately with much enthusiasm. ‘A Pageant of Peace’ also seems very good.” And children also began to ask for material about the causes of the war for school compositions.

Librarians noted that children increasingly wanted books about “war heroes and books about the flag.” Children also raised money for soldiers’ camp libraries both in the library and in school. In some schools the children contributed more than the teachers did. Story hours were disrupted by war activities, but librarians had new initiatives. The boys and girls of Eliot School organized debate clubs with the help of a librarian and two teachers. The first meeting of the boys club “held a debate on the following question: ‘Resolved that France has a right to claim Alsace Lorraine at end of the present war.’ The negatives put up the best argument and won the debate.”

“Spanish Influenza”

On October 7, 1918, a new children’s librarian, Edith Williams, arrived at the Central Branch children’s room to replace Frances Bowman. She
spent the day getting acquainted with the room and its collection, then worked with the children who came in after school and noted “The room was crowded all afternoon as the school work is in full sway. It still being wonderful out of doors, the room was well filled all evening.” The next day, public schools in St. Louis were closed due to what was then called the “Spanish Influenza” epidemic.

Although the war affected the library both because of its participation in the war effort and through the loss of many staff members who engaged in war work, the influenza epidemic at the end of 1918 had a more immediate and lasting impact on the library. Schools were closed indefinitely on October 8, and librarians were overwhelmed by large numbers of children constantly demanding attention, their routine of quiet mornings and busy afternoons shattered. A few days after the schools closed, the reading and assembly rooms of the library and branches were also closed to the public with the exception of working meetings of Red Cross units. Children were allowed to check out books, but not to remain in the rooms. No more than ten people were allowed in the room at one time. In the Central Branch children’s room, librarians removed the chairs so as not to encourage children to stay. By the last two weeks of October, librarians found that more and more children were coming to the library. They could not keep up with reshelving and had trouble keeping out the “surplus public” of “small brothers and sisters and hangers on.”

The fact that there were no chairs in the room in no way disturbed the children. They perched upon the tables or sat on the floor. There is one sunny spot in the little children’s corner where the colored children were often found basking. One day I found a little colored boy lying full length in the sunshine lazily turning the leaves of a picture book. The room was almost empty and I didn’t disturb him.

Schools reopened on November 14 and for two weeks things went back to normal. Then, on December 4, schools closed again and for a few days librarians were snowed under when the Board of Health came to our rescue by closing the Children’s Room to all persons under 16 . . . We receive books or renew them, asking the children to wait outside for their cards. The first day was very busy—now only an occasional child comes. Some of them stand outside asking the adults who come in to get them a book. Some of them get furious at being kept out—even to the point of tears and all are disappointed. The older boys are enjoying the full shelves. “A fellow can find a book these days now that the kids can’t get in.” Many distracted mothers and fathers are coming for their children. So many of the men seem helpless and embarrassed when they come in.

On December 21 the ban was lifted and children allowed to return to the library. The Central Room work diary entry says simply: “It is good to have them back again.”
Conclusion
During World War I, the public library in St. Louis moved from being a refuge for children to being a public health risk. Librarians were required to adapt to changing situations and to cope with the sometimes negative results of those changes. Once the influenza pandemic ended, the library once more warmly welcomed children and provided much desired reading material. But the difficulties for librarians had a longer lasting impact. The overall drop in circulation because of the absence of children was significant in most branches. The routine of story hours, once broken, was not completely reinstated at all branches until 1925, largely as a result of a shortage of staff, including trained librarians. Postwar St. Louis librarians found themselves barely able to keep up with necessary daily activities, let alone establishing new initiatives. One librarian summed it up: “A year ago all indications pointed toward a culmination of the results of ten years of effort. The enforced closing of the children’s room and the consequent loss of circulation . . . made us feel a little like Alice in Wonderland when she had been running very fast with the Red Queen and found herself still at her starting point. ‘Here, you see,’ said the Red Queen, ‘it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place.’”

Notes
1. For an in-depth look at how public libraries went from a largely neutral stance to actively promoting the agenda of the national government during the war, see Wiegand (1989). For a treatment of the activities of the American Library Association see Young (1981).
3. She goes on to suggest that this was also an attempt to separate the library from the lower classes because the central library building was not usually near public transportation. This was not true of the Central Library in St. Louis, which, though not close to the Mississippi River and the commercial district, was located near several economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, especially areas in which a concentration of African Americans lived.
5. For a fuller treatment of the growth of youth service in the St. Louis Public Library, see Kimball (2003).
6. Effie Louise Power, supervisor of work with children, wrote an essay detailing the various activities of children’s librarians at the St. Louis Public Library. She described the children largely in terms of their ethnic background, a common convention of children’s librarians, who tended to generalize by race or ethnicity. Thus, Jewish children had “active minds.” Slavs, due to their economic difficulties, “seem stupefied and have no desire to better their condition.” African Americans “like fairy tales, simple poetry and history,” and Italians “want easy reading books, bright picture books, fairytales, poetry and imaginative stories” (Power, 1914).
7. Annual Report of the St. Louis Public Library, 1914–15. St. Louis: St. Louis Public Library, p. 63. Generally, non-English language books in the St. Louis Public Library were purchased for adult readers. Librarians assumed that children of immigrant parents might speak English in the home but needed to learn to speak and read English as part of their “Americanization” process.
8. Ibid., quotations from p. 66.
16. Divoll Day Book 3, 1915, p. 71. The girls of Eliot School also had a debating club. They debated: “Resolved that the white settlers had a right to supplant the Indians.” The affirmatives won in the discussion (quotations from pp. 60, 64, 71).
18. The influenza pandemic of 1918 has recently resurfaced in the news because of fears of a bird flu pandemic similar to the flu of 1918. However, from a socio-historical view, it is still a relatively understudied event. There are still questions about how it started, why it spread so quickly and seemingly began simultaneously throughout the world, and why so little is known about it. Estimates of the death toll worldwide are anywhere from 20 million to 100 million dead. More U.S. servicemen died in the flu epidemic than lost their lives fighting in World War I. Two good sources of information are Kolata (1999) and Barry (2004).
19. Central Branch Day Book 2, 1918, quotations from pp. 63, 68.

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Central Branch Children’s Room Day Book 2 (1916–1943), St. Louis Public Library, Special Collections. Cited as Central Day Book 2.
Divoll Branch Children’s Room Day Book 2 (August 1914–October 1915), St. Louis Public Library, Special Collections. Cited as Divoll Day Book 2.
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L’Heure Joyeuse: Educational and Social Reform in Post–World War I Brussels

DEBRA MITTS-SMITH

ABSTRACT
The day after the Armistice of 1918 was signed ending World War I, the Book Committee on Children’s Libraries was established by a group of American women. The committee’s relief efforts focused on the establishment of children’s libraries in order to help with the “educational reconstruction” of Belgium and France. This article focuses on the first of these children’s libraries, L’Heure Joyeuse Brand Whitlock, and the ways in which it became a site of educational and social reform.

On the day after the Armistice of 1918 was signed, the American Art War Relief Committee, headed by Mrs. Caroline Griffiths, established a new foundation, the American Book Committee on Children’s Libraries. Its aim was to help the children in the areas of Belgium and France devastated by the war. For Belgium the close of the Great War brought to an end four years of German occupation marked by famine; deportation; destruction of housing, land, and industries; unemployment; and civilian, political, and military casualties. One of the worst battles of the war, Ypres in Flanders, had been fought on Belgium territory. As a newspaper article suggested, the postwar rebuilding presented Brussels with the opportunity “to inaugurate a new era of efforts aimed at school age children; encouraging the development of a literary culture which they so deeply lacked” (Mixame, 1920, p. 7). On September 24, 1920, the first children’s library, known as L’Heure Joyeuse Brand Whitlock, opened in Brussels. This article focuses on its founding and the ways in which it became a site of educational and social reform.
In the spring of 1919 Lilly-Elizabeth Carter, the director of Ecole Moyenne, and Dr. René Sands, secretary of the Fondation Universitaire, attended the Child Welfare Conference in Washington, D.C. Before returning to Belgium, Carter and Sands visited New York. There they toured the New York Public Library and met with Miss Annie Carroll Moore, the supervisor of the Children’s Room. As described in a report by Agnes Cowing, a librarian and member of the American Book Committee on Children’s Libraries, Carter and Sands “caught a glimpse of what children’s libraries had meant to the children of America, and were filled with the desire for similar libraries for the children of Belgium.” Moore put Carter and Sands in contact with Griffiths and the American Book Committee on Children’s Libraries, “which was then considering the idea of offering to equip a children’s room as part of the contemplated restoration of the Library of Louvain.” According to Cowing, Carter convinced Mrs. Griffith and the committee that if the children’s library were to be established in Brussels, the capital of Belgium, and not in Louvain, the library and reading room would be more visible and “much more quickly known to those interested in the education and social welfare of Belgium.”

Public libraries, and specifically library service to children, were not, however, entirely new to Belgium. Prior to World War I there had been several attempts to establish public libraries with reading rooms for children in Ghent, Mont-Saint Arnaud, Herstal, Forest, and Brussels (Mixame, 1920, p. 7). In Brussels a reading room open only to schoolchildren had been established in one of the schools. Here teacher-librarians guided students in their reading by introducing them to the works of the “best” writers (Mixame, 1920, p. 7). The outbreak of war in 1914 forced an end to these libraries and reading rooms, and while there had been some attempts to revive them after the war had ended, there was “no attempt to conduct a reading room or to create the so-called ‘library atmosphere.’”

The offer made by Mrs. Griffiths and her committee to the city of Brussels included furniture, an initial collection of books, and the training of the librarians according to the American model of public librarianship. In exchange for this gift, the city of Brussels agreed to provide a location for the library, to appoint a committee to oversee the running of the library, to hire and pay a trained librarian, and to fund and maintain the library. The city of Brussels designated three rooms on the ground floor of a building located at 16 rue de la Paille near the Grand Place as the site for the first children’s library and reading room and paid to have the rooms painted and updated with electricity and heating. In order to re-create the “library atmosphere” of American libraries, the Book Committee in America had occupied itself in planning the furniture, the book shelves, low tables, chairs and benches, all designed for the comfort of children along the lines already practically tested in the children’s rooms of the New York Public Library, and made by the...
Library Bureau of the best oak, finished in a charming gray tone. All this was sent from America, together with pictures for the walls, and some of the books best loved by American children, that their little cousins in Belgium might see the illustrations and attractive covers, even if they could not read the strange words.\(^5\)

The library and reading room for children were part of the Department of Public Instruction and were overseen by a patronage committee, which consisted of specialists in education, wealthy patrons, and government officials. At Mrs. Griffiths’s suggestion, the library and reading room was named L’Heure Joyeuse, or “The Happy Hour.”\(^6\) A patronage committee was created and included such prominent citizens as Adolphe Max, mayor of Brussels; Emile Jacqmain, superintendent of Public Instruction; Lilly-Elizabeth Carter, the director of Ecole Moyenne C; Dr. Sands from the Fondation Universitaire; and, of course, the American ambassador to Belgium, Brand Whitlock, for whom the library was named.

Griffiths’s offer contained more than books and furniture. As Mary Niles Maack (1993) shows in her study on the L’Heure Joyeuse that opened in Paris in 1924, these children’s libraries were based on the American public library model. As such these libraries introduced a new paradigm of librarianship and library service to Belgium and France, including open stacks and direct access to books as well as a service-oriented perspective. Bruno Liesen (2003, p. 17) also suggests that the Heures Joyeuses in Brussels were the site of a new type of relationship between the reader and the library, a relationship defined by library service oriented toward the user.

In his speech for the inauguration of the first L’Heure Joyeuse in Brussels, Belgian Minister of Sciences and the Arts, Jules Destrée, described the difference between the libraries in Belgium and those in America: “We have, it is true, remarkable collections in several large centers, but it suffices to say that the heads of these libraries call themselves ‘Conservators’ to see that the prevailing conception of these establishments is exactly opposite of the one that guides the American libraries. . . . It is not important to conserve or save these books, what is important is to have them read.” Destrée preferred “volumes that are used, worn out by numerous consultations to volumes in a state of perfect preservation. The ones are living and fertile; the others are dead and sterile.”\(^7\)

Since the American model of user-centered librarianship was unknown on the Continent, the American Book Committee in cooperation with the Pratt Institute of Library Science in New York established a scholarship fund to enable a Belgian student to study the methods of American public librarianship in the United States during the 1921–22 school year.\(^8\) Under this joint effort, the Pratt Institute waved tuition and the Book Committee underwrote all other expenses. L’Heure Joyeuse Brand Whitlock, however, had opened in September 1920, and the need to train its first librarians, Adrienne Huvelle-Lève and Marguerite Pierard, was urgent. Griffiths re-
sponded by sending Agnes Cowing to Brussels, “a trained librarian of many years experience and renowned in her profession.” Cowing, in addition to training Huvelle-Lève and Pierard, helped to run the library and reading room and to create its catalog.  

Even before the library opened L’Heure Joyeuse was promoted as breaking with the past. In July 1920 a newspaper article described L’Heure Joyeuse as “tout un programme contenu dans un mot,” or an entire program summed up in a word. For the founders, the library’s purpose was “happily to lead the child to books and to offer him, in a space especially created and furnished for him, the means of intellectual and moral development.” The article continues, “The child henceforth abandons the street; he makes his way across the threshold of our friendly building and finds a peaceful, and to eyes accustomed only to poverty and misery, an almost luxurious place, [here he finds] the book appropriate to his age, the child’s magazine, the picture book, the works which speak to his heart and soul.”

Within this context the librarian’s role was to guide and foster a love a books. The first annual report of L’Heure Joyeuse Brand Whitlock likened its librarians’ mission to that of the American public librarian who “attract[s] children by her sweetness and serenity, by the interest which she shows them; to slowly guide their choice, to make them love the space created especially for them, always attractive, cheerful and serious at the same time, above all to make them love the books which will be their best friends throughout their lives.” Guiding a young person’s reading took several forms, including the introduction through story hours of books of “quality” and from 1925 on, book discussions of literary and scientific texts. These discussion were often augmented by slideshows and books lists. Further, when children finished their books, the librarian, in order to determine how well they understood what they had read, quizzed them about the books, specific passages, or even particular words. And if the librarian felt that a child had not adequately understood it, she would have him or her reread certain chapters or pages. The librarian was also expected to intervene in cases where the child abandoned a book too quickly, favored a single work, or chose books beyond his or her age (Liesen, 2003, p. 18). Underlying this process was the belief that, if one was to read as an adult, then it was necessary to instill a taste for reading during childhood (Mixame, 1920, p. 7).

While today this type of guidance may seem intrusive and controlling, as both Maack (1993, pp. 272–77) and Liesen (2003, p. 17) suggest, in contrast with the prevailing authoritarian pedagogical methods of the time, these libraries imposed very few restrictions on the children. Further, even though the librarians advised, questioned, and even tested the children on their reading, the children nevertheless had direct access to the books and could choose the books they wanted to read (Liesen, 2003, p. 17). Older children also chose the topics for and led some of the book discussions. This reflects not only a certain amount of freedom on the part of the children but also a
validation of their interests. And while reports by Huvelle-Lèeve and Carter show that the librarians were concerned with teaching young people the proper handling of books and how to behave in the library, it was not until 1939 that signs were posted in the vestibule to remind young readers “not to turn the pages brusquely,” “to have clean hands,” and “not to disturb fellow readers by talking, playing games, or walking too loudly.”

According to Cowing, the initial collection of books included “approximately 1000 French books, 250 English books, and 100 Flemish [books].” While the number of books in Flemish was small, the inclusion of Flemish books was nevertheless significant. Since its creation as an independent state in 1830 and the constitution’s recognition of French as its sole official language, language had been a politically divisive issue in Belgium. At the beginning of World War I linguistic differences were put aside as the French and Flemish united in their opposition to the Germans. This changed in 1916, when the Germans permitted the opening of a Flemish university in Ghent. On March 21, 1917, the German Governor General von Bissing, using the linguistic borders as the political lines of demarcation, decreed the administrative separation of Belgium into Flanders and Wallonie. At the end of the war, Albert, King of the Belgians, guaranteed the creation of a Flemish university and spoke in favor of equal status for the two languages. This was not well received by the French speaking Walloons. So at a time when linguistic and cultural differences were once again threatening to divide the country, the inclusion of Flemish books in a predominately French-speaking city was significant. Not surprisingly, however, Huvelle-Lèeve commented in her report from April 21, 1921, that works in French were the most popular.

“The books had been chosen by Mlle. Carter who was familiar with French and English children’s literature, and who knew from her long experience as a teacher, those which were desirable and interesting to boys and girls.” Huvelle-Lèeve listed some of the most popular books as including fairy tales by Hans Christian Anderson, Perrault, and Grimms; Don Quichotte; Mille et Une Nuits; Robinson Crusoe; Les Misérables; and the works of the Countess of Segur, Jules Vernes, and Alphonse Daudet. Favorite nonfiction titles included histories of the war such as Toute La Guerre en Images and L’agression allemande et la Belgique héroïque.

Given the small number of volumes as well as the inexperience of the staff and readers, L’Heure Joyeuse initially functioned as a reading room and not as a circulating library. As Cowing reported to the Book Committee in May 1921:

The books are not lent for home use, partly because the collection is still too small, and partly because the administrative problems involved in a circulating library seem too complex to impose upon an inexperienced librarian and an untrained public. At the end of another year, it is hoped that the book collection may have reached the required
proportions for circulation, that the children may have become more accustomed to the free use of books, and that the librarian may have solved the more immediate problems of administration of a children’s reading-room, and may be ready to establish the circulation of books upon a firm professional basis.18

Despite dire predictions that the library would have books and furniture but no readers [le Belge ne lit pas, “the Belgian doesn’t read”], young people came. Even though the L’Heure Joyeuse opened while many students were still on vacation from school, young people from surrounding and distant quarters as well as the suburbs visited. Carter reported that young people from distant quarters often expressed the desire for a similar library in their neighborhood.19 She also reported that while the older students from the school that shared the building at 16 rue de la Paille were at first indignant at the thought that they should frequent a library and reading room advertised as being for “children,” they quickly “submitted to its charm and returned with their friends.”20

Intended for school age children, L’Heure Joyeuse’s hours of operation were scheduled around the school day, from 10 to 12:30 and then in the afternoon from 2:30 to 6:00. During the first year, the average number of children who visited the library daily was thirty-six, rising to as many as seventy-three in the winter months.21 As Carter noted, “Rapidly the reading room was filled and by the beginning of October, there were not enough seats and the children had to sit on the floor.”22

L’Heure Joyeuse represented not only a new paradigm of librarianship and libraries but also the site of social reform and innovation. The readers registered at L’Heure Joyeuse Brand Whitlock represented twenty-two boys’ schools and twenty girls’ schools. During the first year there were more boys than girls registered.23 Within the context of segregated educational institutions, L’Heure Joyeuse broke with the traditional educational model by providing a space in which boys and girls could interact freely. The only restriction aside from age (boys from age six to fifteen and to girls from age six to eighteen) was the requirement that the young person knew how to read. As Carter stated, “we were obliged, to our great regret, but in the interest of the readers, and so as to create the true atmosphere of a reading room to deny admittance to children who did not yet know how to read.”24

With neither subscription fees nor scholastic or religious affiliations, L’Heure Joyeuse Brand Whitlock also had the potential to be a place where young people from different socioeconomic classes could mix. While the annual report describes the young people who frequented L’Heure Joyeuse as coming from the surrounding neighborhood and schools,25 Carter’s notes, on which the annual report was clearly based, provide more information on who these children were: “Many of these children belong to the poorest part of the population of Brussels; we have a contingent of the most unfortunate . . . [who] in the most dangerously cold weather arrive
scarce clothed.” She emphasized further that “We have very few middle class children; we do not regret this; we believe that it is essential to serve above all the poorest children. We receive them indiscriminately; those who come from free schools or from official schools.” The marked increase in attendance during that first winter seems to confirm Carter’s impressions that part of L’Heure Joyeuse’s appeal could be found in the shelter it offered from the cold, dark days of winter: “During winter days, the place, well-heated and lit, was crowded.”

The annual report as well as Carter’s and Huvelle-Lève’s reports on the library stressed that the young people who came to L’Heure Joyeuse were enchanted by both the space and the books. Carter noted that as the news spread “that at L’Heure Joyeuse, one could look at beautiful books and images . . . [children] caressed the books. Often with dirty tiny hands they would choose one; an instant later they would put it back where it belonged and chose another one, then another, putting each back in the place they found it; they played at keeping house.”

Each of these young ones went through the same stage and experienced, at the beginning, enchantment. Then, each one felt solicited by all the books all at once; by the bright colorful pictures, by the importance and the weight of the book. He takes a book, replaces it to take another; after a few moments he makes his choice and is absorbed in his reading. Since then readers who wish to find the same book the next day ask the librarian to put it in her drawer so that it will not be taken by another child.

These rather poetic descriptions, while lacking objectivity, reflect the goals of the library’s founders and librarians. L’Heure Joyeuse provided not only an opportunity for a new relationship between library and user: it was a place where a specific type of reading was promoted in the hopes of developing readers who were engaged with their texts. Underlying this desire to develop engaged readers was the belief that one would only read as an adult if the taste for reading was instilled and cultivated during childhood (Mixame, 1920, p. 7). As early as April 1921 Huvelle-Lève reported the library’s success in developing serious readers but also pointed out that not all the children who came to the library developed this habit: “Many of the readers diligently frequent the library and continue reading a book until they finish it; the capricious readers are becoming less numerous, and many have improved since the opening of the reading room.”

Notes and reports from the librarian also reflect a concern for fostering and improving the young people’s reading tastes. There is an emphasis on children not only becoming readers absorbed in their books but also on becoming more discerning in their taste. Adrienne Huvelle-Lève reported in April 1921 that even though the favorite books remained the same as in the beginning, there was a general, if slow, improvement in taste. The method used by the librarians to interest young people in books and to
expand and improve their taste in literature was the *L’heure du conte*, or story hour. Thursday afternoons was the typical time reserved for this American import. The first annual report mentions that the first book presented during the first story time, *La Vie d’Abraham Lincoln* by the American ambassador Brand Whitlock, was a great success. Other titles from the first year’s story hours included *La Vie et l’œuvre de Rubens*, *Les beaux voyages*, *Les Animaux vivants de la Terre*, *La Bibliothèque des merveilles*, and *La Collection des grands hommes, des grands artistes*. Fairy tales, especially *Hamelin, le joueur de flûte* (The Pied Piper of Hamelin) and the adventures of Nils Holgersson (the travels of a mischievous boy turned into a dwarf), proved to be popular with the younger children.31

The public library that promoted and supported reading, literature, books, and the creation of a literary culture was perceived to have an important role in the development of a nation. Three days before the inauguration of the first L’Heure Joyeuse, Mrs. Griffith and the patronage committee received a letter from W. N. L Carlton, the American Library Association European delegate. In it he suggests that the experience with public libraries in America shows that these institutions have a valuable social and cultural role:

> The invisible, but certain influences, which emanate from these pleasing gardens of literature and art, engender in the still malleable spirit of youth an understanding and enduring love for Truth and Beauty; they stimulate generous actions, encourage elevated intentions, and they ennoble the character of those who, children today, are destined to become the citizens and patriots of tomorrow.32

As such, L’Heure Joyeuse represented an avenue for the education and development of Belgian citizens through literature and the arts.

At the same time, buried amid the praise are indications that not everything was quite so idyllic and that the young people were not always devoted to reading. In a letter to Jacqmain, the director of Public Instruction, Carter’s report that the children were not too absorbed in their reading to run to the window to watch a group of street musicians suggests that perhaps the young readers were easily distracted and not always quite so engaged with their books. Further, although rules regarding behavior were not posted until 1939, it is clear that part of the librarian’s duties involved teaching children how to handle books and behave. As early as October 1920 there is a request for a sink to be installed in the vestibule so that the children could wash their hands for hygienic reasons and to protect the books. It was not only the behavior of the children in the library, however, that caused problems. Those kept out due to the lack of space often retaliated by banging on the door, throwing rocks against the shutters, and making noise in the street.33 Another problem faced by the staff included the disappearance of items. Certain books disappeared regularly, including picture books and the first volume of Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, which
was taken three times. Some of these books were eventually returned by teachers who “found them in the hands of their students.”

Despite these problems, L’Heure Joyeuse Brand Whitlock served as a model for other Belgian public library initiatives. Its open stacks and emphasis on the user were extremely influential. Dignitaries and those interested in setting up public libraries and reading rooms in other regions such as Messines, Framerries, Mons, and Anvers often visited the library or contacted the staff for advice. In addition, the L’Heure Joyeuse became a means by which to promote awareness of and knowledge about children’s books to parents, authors, editors, and artists. By providing young people with books appropriate to their age and interests along with story hours and discussion groups, L’Heure Joyeuse aimed to foster a love of reading and books in young people. It was also a site for other educational and social innovations. Although it was administratively part of the Department of Public Education, it was not affiliated with a particular school. Further, with no subscription fees, it was open to young people from all religious, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds, giving them access not only to books and ideas but to each other. By attempting to bring social classes, genders, and linguistically and culturally diverse groups together, these libraries can also perhaps be seen as a force for social change. And for some, L’Heure Joyeuse was a respite from the realities of poverty. Over the next thirty years, the success of this children’s library and reading room would be reflected by the opening of seven more L’Heure Joyeuse libraries in Brussels.

Notes
1. Previous three quotations from Agnes Cowing, Report to the American Book Committee, May 27, 1921, HJP, carton 519.
2. Ibid.
3. Œuvre des Salles de Lecture pour enfants à Bruxelles, Minutes, July 7, 1920, HJP, carton 517. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author’s.)
4. Note relative à la 1ère Bibliothèque, salle de lectures pour enfants, Annual Report, 1920, HJP, carton 517.
5. Agnes Cowing, Report to the American Book Committee, May 27, 1921, HJP, carton 519.
6. Œuvre des Salles de Lecture pour enfants à Bruxelles, Minutes, July 7, 1920, HJP, carton 517.
7. Previous two quotations from Jules Destrée, Speech, September 24, 1920, HJP, carton 517.
8. Agnes Cowing, Report to the American Book Committee, May 27, 1921, HJP, carton 519.
9. Caroline Griffiths to Emile Jacqmain, February 8, 1921, HJP, carton 517.
12. Note relative à la 1ère Bibliothèque, salle de lectures pour enfants, Annual Report, 1920, HJP, carton 517.
13. Liesen (2003, p. 17); and Adrienne Huvelle-Leve, Notes, April 21, 1921, HJP, carton 519.
My preliminary research on the first L’Heure Joyeuse has raised questions and helped to focus my interests in these libraries. Further research will focus on the young readers, the books they read, and the acts of reading that were promoted and encouraged in these libraries.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES
L’Heure Joyeuse Papers, Archives de la Ville, Brussels, Belgium. L’Instruction Publique (IP) de la Ville de Bruxelles, Series II, cartons 517 and 519. Cited as HJP.

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“Arsenals of scientific and technical information”: Public Technical Libraries in Britain during and Immediately after World War I

Alistair Black

Abstract
Although from its inception in 1850 the public library in Britain displayed an economic dimension, attempting to respond in relatively general ways to technical, scientific, industrial, and commercial needs, it was not until the First World War that the institution’s “materialist” role achieved anything like the standing of its traditional sociocultural function. The war generated a series of economic, social, political, and technological problems and proposed solutions. There was considerable anxiety concerning the anticipated escalation in postwar international competition arising from the loss of foreign markets. The war brought into sharp relief Britain’s relatively poor scientific and technological infrastructure. Total conflict engendered extensive social and political disaffection and an accompanying fear of impending radical change. In addressing these problems and tensions, the government initiated a policy of reconstruction in the second half of the war. One element of this policy was a planned extension of public library services, including an upgrading of technical and commercial information provision through the establishment of new “dedicated” departments. In the closing years of the war and in its immediate aftermath, public technical and commercial libraries (generically termed “technical libraries” in this article) emerged in some of Britain’s large cities. An analysis of plans and statements from librarians, the business world, and political elites in support of these new “workshop” libraries throws light on contemporary discourses concerning the future of the economy and sociopolitical ideas. However, outside the grand issues of economic policy and social and political stability, discussion surrounding the intended
purpose and practices of technical and commercial libraries reflected debates and tensions in the library and information world concerning the nature, status, and identity of librarianship, its relevance to information work and documentation, and the future of the public library in the postwar world.

Introduction

What makes the public library such a fascinating subject of sociological study, both historically and now, is the multiplicity of dichotomies, or contradictions, that one can observe in its professed purpose and in its everyday functioning. This is true of the public library in Britain, and it is no doubt also true of public library development elsewhere. In Britain, certainly, the public library has throughout its history been both liberating and controlling in its outlook and practices. It has provided access to knowledge for both economic gain and cultural enrichment. It has catered to both high and popular culture. It might be suggested, therefore, that the public library has been a very clever institution, with a capacity to accommodate and negotiate various and sometimes divergent values and beliefs.

One manifestation of this cleverness has been the public library’s ability to reconfigure itself in the light of social change and social crisis. It has proved itself to be a highly adaptable institution, or, in modern information management speak, a successful “learning organisation” (Marquardt & Reynolds, 1994; Senge, 1990). The term learning organization is used here not in the sense of the public library’s role as a disseminator of knowledge to society (although the public library has of course been at the forefront of this) but specifically in terms of the ways in which the institution’s professional staff and political managers have displayed competence in observing social change and reacting to it, through adjustments made to policy and to services. The public library has often demonstrated that it can be a “reactive” force, responsive to external stimuli and sensitive to society’s shifting demands. At the same time, intriguingly, it has frequently displayed a distinct political and social conservatism, a capacity to be reactionary in the face of “liberal” ideology and culture.

The Wartime Public Library as a “Reactive” and “Reactionary” Force

The public library’s capacity to react, yet also be socially and politically reactionary, was clearly evident in both world wars. In World War II public libraries heroically satisfied a sudden increase in demand for reading and developed a radical agenda—through the blueprint that was the McColvin Report—for postwar progress based on larger library authorities and greater state control (Black, 2004). However, some librarians clung to a conservative, parochial conception of a national library structure based
on the retention of small and inefficient local government authorities free from state control. Similarly, the Library Association revealed its conserva-
tive credentials when it advised that books provided for military personnel,
in their camps, dug-outs, tanks, and troop ships, should be high-brow rather
than popular, whereas the generals advised that the troops were better off
reading *Punch* rather than Plato (Hung, 1999).

Earlier, in World War I, in an equally conservative fashion, public li-
braries were sometimes mobilized as propaganda machines, peddling a
jingoistic message. For example, the library committee in Leamington Spa
congratulated itself for providing “suitable works exposing and denouncing
German aims and methods, and stimulating British ideals and patriotism.”

Articles appeared in local newspapers proudly advertising the acquisition
of new titles like *The Germans in Africa*, which was said to trace the efforts
of Germany to secure an African empire through intrigue and trickery.
Newspapers critical of the war’s prosecution were occasionally withdrawn,
as in Bermondsey in south London in 1915. Attacks on Lord Kitchener,
the head of the army, in the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* led the Bradford
Public Library Committee to consider withdrawing the papers. Overtly
propagandist material was purveyed at the government’s behest. Bolton
Public Library, for example, distributed government pamphlets entitled *The
Great War and How It Began* (300 copies) and *If the Kaiser Governed England*
(4,000 copies) (Ellis, 1975, p. 127). In some places literary propaganda and
censorship was backed by lectures of an anti-German nature. For example,
in an Oldham Public Library lecture in October 1914, entitled “The Great
War,” it was argued that the war was being fought in honor of the British
Empire, an institution that was said to be both synonymous with civilization
and opposed to the enslavement of smaller nations by militarism, the latter
being described as a feature of German imperialism.

On the other hand, in contrast to these examples of negative, propagan-
dist activity, the public library became part of the spirit of reconstruction
that arose in the second half of the war, contributing in its small way to
the vision and planning of a better postwar world. The Ministry of Recon-
struction, established in 1916, brought public libraries, along with other
educational and social institutions, into its remit. The need at the time for
libraries to be progressive and reactive was detected by the librarian W. E.
Doubleday, who in 1917 predicted change, as a result of the war, in the re-
lationship between social classes, in political conditions, and in educational
systems. Public libraries, he advised, ought first to be “awake to this re-adjust-
ment,” and second, “should occupy a much more prominent position in the
future than they have done in the past.” On both counts the public library
achieved a certain success during the war. The war served as a watershed
in terms of the formulation of new legislation demanded by librarians and
accepted by government. An act of 1919, the groundwork for which was laid
during the war, removed the restriction on the amount that could be spent
on a library service. It also allowed counties to become library authorities, thereby enfranchising in library terms millions of people in rural areas. Thus, as Doubleday and the library community wanted, the public library re-adjusted its financial and organizational base and, as a result, became a more prominent aspect of British social and cultural life.

**The Public Library’s Economic Heritage and the Emergence of Technical Libraries**

Due to the war, the public library also became more prominent economically. One aspect of this was the appearance of “dedicated” commercial and technical departments or libraries. The appearance of these libraries in some of Britain’s industrial towns was in one respect a radical departure from previous provision of services; in other ways it built on a long utilitarian tradition—a heritage of public library service in the name of material progress.

The Report of the Select Committee on Public Libraries (1849), which paved the way for the inaugural legislation the following year, recommended the establishment, in large provincial towns, of collections of books on local industries and agriculture and on political economy (Kelly, 1977, p. 77). Some towns did exactly this. Collections in some large provincial public libraries contained materials relevant to local economic activity, for example, literature on mining in Wigan, on textile manufacturing in Manchester, on woollen manufacturing in Rochdale, and on watch-making in Clerkenwell, London. Also in London, the Guildhall Library provided a rich collection of materials relevant to commercial activities in the City from the 1870s, (Lamb, 1955, p. 21).

One of the backdrops to the escalation in public library foundations in the late nineteenth century was the slowing of British innovation and economic performance relative to emergent giant economies like Germany and the Unites States. For example, when a public library was being considered for Lewisham in 1896, those promoting the idea pointed out that “In our ceaseless competition with foreign nations, it is our duty, if we do not wish to fall behind in the race, to provide the very best opportunities for all classes in the matter of self education, and for the acquisition of useful information.” In Manchester in 1907 local business leaders, under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce, formed a deputation to the Manchester Public Library to secure improved provision of scientific and technical literature. This occurred against the specifically identified threat of German trade competition. Comparisons were made between the excellent provision in science and technology made by the New York Public Library and the rather limited provision made by the public library in Manchester. Some pre-1914 public libraries became agencies for the Board of Trade’s Commercial Intelligence Department, which ran an economic information service for inquirers outside of the civil service; and some
became agencies for government information on emigration, which, at a time of anxieties over international competition and the degeneration of the race, had a very real economic dimension.  

Thus, despite the fact that in 1917 Walter Powell, librarian of Birmingham, was correct in stating that the provision of technical literature in libraries had always been “to some extent haphazard and limited by want of means,” from its inception in 1850 the public library had displayed a visible economic face, attempting to respond in a general way to technical, scientific, industrial, and commercial needs. Arguably, however, it was not until 1914 that the institution’s economic function attained anything approaching its obvious sociocultural function. In response to the war, the public library’s economic role was extended, not just by being charged to help build a more educated and, hence, productive workforce, but also because it took on a responsibility to improve scientific, technical, and commercial knowledge. The most vivid manifestation of an extended economic role was the establishment of “dedicated” technical and commercial libraries.

Several technical and commercial libraries appeared during the war; in Birmingham in 1915; in Glasgow, Northampton, and Richmond-on-Thames in 1916; in Lincoln, Coventry, and Liverpool in 1917; and in Bradford, Leeds, and Darlington in 1918. Another group of such libraries was founded shortly after the war, many having been planned during it: in Dundee, Wolverhampton, Manchester, Sheffield, Bristol, and Wigan (Lamb, 1955, pp. 51–52). The quest for improved efficiency in production gave rise to concentrated collections of technical material. These needed to be matched by improved efficiency in marketing, giving rise to collections of commercial material. The technical library, remarked Stanley Jast (1917a, p. 119), was for the “man who makes”; whereas the commercial library was for the “distributor,” “the man who places.” Whether in practice these type of libraries were variously termed “technical libraries,” “commercial libraries,” or “technical and commercial libraries,” for the sake of brevity they will mostly be referred to here simply as “technical libraries.”

Even before 1914 interest was shown by leading librarians in the idea of public business libraries (Jast, 1903; Savage, 1909). The war merely propelled the idea forward with much greater force. Plans for technical libraries were enthusiastically promoted by the Library Association. In 1916 the association appointed a special committee to oversee the strengthening of scientific and technical departments in public libraries. It reported the following year. Librarians began to detect a strengthening of demand for information from business (Pitt, 1917; Savage, 1918; Shaw, 1917). This contrasted starkly with demand before the war, when James Duff Brown offered the opinion that “the average business man” was “singularly short-sighted in regard to the aid which literature can, and does, lend to business.” “In most factories,” he also noted, “very little in the way of technical books will
be found, save a few volumes of patterns or trade catalogues; and it must be confessed that from libraries in hotels and shops to those in lighthouses and battleships, fully-stocked and up-to-date technical collections of books, capable of being used in aid of the special trades or professions, are very seldom in evidence” (Brown, 1907, p. 47). Librarians hoped that technical libraries would grow into extensive collections and become the first port of call for businesses of all sizes, including large corporations (Jast, 1917b, p. 8). They also believed technical libraries would improve the status and appeal of public libraries and act as a lever in obtaining legislation to remove the rate restriction on public library expenditure.13 Government too lent its support. However, fearful of continuing for too long after the war with the high taxes that had necessarily been levied during it, the government placed greater faith in the idea of networks of libraries attached to proposed industrial research associations organized on an industry-by-industry basis, as well as in the development of in-house collections of technical and commercial information by business itself (Addison, 1917, p. 433).

Businesses, often through local chambers of commerce and at the behest of leading scientific societies and professional and industrial associations, also supported technical library initiatives.14 During and immediately after the war the business community in towns like Leeds, Bradford, and Manchester were active, often in association with the local chamber of commerce, in promoting the creation of business information bureaus in public libraries. But these efforts seemed to be aimed largely at helping to satisfy the informational needs of small- and medium-sized companies, as opposed to those of the large corporations, which had the means, and increasingly the will, to set up their own services tailored to their specific needs.

Proposals for technical libraries were reinforced by the knowledge that such institutions were flourishing in the United States where, from around the turn of the twentieth century, in addition to self-organized libraries, business was served by a fairly strong public provision of technical and commercial information (Kruzas, 1965). When George T. Shaw proposed a commercial library in Liverpool in 1917, he acknowledged that the idea of placing libraries at the special service of those engaged in commerce was not new: “It had been carried out with much success . . . in the United States.”15 A public “Industrial Library” was established in Providence in 1900, and this was followed by the emergence of “Useful Arts” departments in public libraries in Cincinnati, Detroit, and Cleveland. A business branch library was founded in Newark in 1904 (Mutchler, 1969, p. 5).16 American librarians promoted public business libraries with gusto, to fellow librarians and to industry and commerce alike (Hasse, 1917).

To summarize the argument thus far, suggestions made during the war for improved technical library provision had solid foundations on which to build. For over half a century the public library movement in Britain had displayed an identifiable economic role. Potential support was available
from government, business, and librarians. There was also the example of
the setting up of technical libraries in the United States. But what precisely
were the factors that explain the emergence of technical libraries during
the war? Three are proposed here: the need for organized science and
economic planning to fight the war and prepare for the postwar world; the
perception of a revolutionary threat and the need to contain it; and the
emergence of an information role for libraries.

Science, Technical Information, and Economic Regeneration

The war represented a rigorous audit of British technological capabilities,
one that highlighted the country’s poor record in the field of organized
science (Barnett, 1999). In 1915 E. B. Poulton (pp. 44–45), a prominent
scientist, informed an audience at Oxford University of the “national ne-
glect of science” and the “want of a scientific spirit” in government, in
Parliament, and in the army. The labored progress of British forces in the
war led to accusations that science had been neglected (Sherrington, 1981,
p. 53). The requirements of technological, “total” war placed a premium
on a systematic and scientific approach to the development of technology.
Yet, despite the momentous industrial advances of the previous century, it
would be fair to say that before 1914 the planned application of science in
British industry was the exception rather than the rule. The importance of
research was recognized relatively late (certainly compared to Germany) by
British companies. The employment of scientists in industry in a research
capacity was rare. Industrial innovation had rarely resulted from the formal
application of science; most innovations had been the product of the work
of brilliant artisans or inspired amateurs. The value of book knowledge was
widely questioned in industry; practical experience was often valued more
highly than theoretical knowledge; and skilled workers often looked with
suspicion on those who studied the “manufacturing arts” (Crouzet, 1982,
p. 420; Mathias, 1983, pp. 124–25). Given this antiscience tradition, the
growing awareness that the war was, as the Library Association Record cor-
correctly observed, an “engineer’s war,” increased anxieties concerning the
country’s ability to fight the war effectively.17

A crisis materialized early in the war when it was found that Britain
was almost entirely dependent on imports from Germany of such goods
as dynamos for motor vehicle engines and dyestuffs for fabrics, including
military uniforms. “Machine-tools, ball-bearings, magnetos, internal com-
bustion engines, drugs—it is hard to name a basic necessity of advanced
technology in which Britain was self-sufficient in 1915” (Barnett, 1999,
p. 108). The technology-industrial crisis deepened in the spring of 1915
when there occurred a serious shortage of high-explosive artillery shells.
The ensuing “shell scandal” fatally damaged the Liberal government (in
power since 1906), which was replaced by a coalition government in May.
The political shake-up also led to a root and branch reform of industrial organization. A Ministry of Munitions, under the future prime minister, Lloyd George, was created in May 1915, which resulted in the establishment of hundreds of modern state-run factories. And, reflecting an increased emphasis on technology and on research and development, a Department of Scientific and Industrial Research was set up in 1916.

The war brought about a recognition of the importance of investment in new industries. The creation of technical libraries was closely linked to the development of new sectors in the economy. In the nineteenth century the British economy had become dependent on the “old staple” industries of coal, shipbuilding, textiles, mechanical engineering, iron and steel, and the railways. In the early twentieth century, as these traditional sectors of production began to decay, a range of new, science-based industries began to emerge: chemicals, synthetic dyestuffs, artificial silk (or rayon), precision instruments, oil, aluminium, rubber, plastics, aircraft, motor vehicles, canned foodstuffs, electrical engineering, generation and supply, electrical and radio equipment, and a wide variety of household, confectionery, and consumer goods (Glynn & Oxborrow, 1976, pp. 86–115). It was these new industries, where scientific knowledge and research and development were at a premium, that gave an impetus to technical library provision, although the importance of such provision to traditional industries was also recognized. Interest in technical libraries also reflected the growing complexity and sophistication of commerce generally.

The loss of foreign markets in World War I led to anxieties concerning the future ability of British commerce and industry to compete on a world stage. Faced with stiff postwar international competition, both business and government increasingly came to appreciate the contribution that scientific knowledge and commercial and technical intelligence could make to economic activity. It was the opinion of Christopher Addison, minister of reconstruction, that the war had been “handicapped to a tragical degree by the absence of the necessary scientific and industrial information of a serviceable kind” (1917, p. 43). Librarians also adopted a worldview of Britain’s position. A recurrent theme in the discussions on technical and commercial libraries at the annual meeting of the Library Association in 1917 was the recognition that Britain could no longer rely on its traditional reputation for supremacy in world markets.18

In 1955 J. P. Lamb, who as Sheffield’s librarian constructed a business information service that was second to none, remarked that World War I had jolted the “complacency of British commercial and industrial life” (1955, p. 29). If this was true, it was also the case that the war invigorated those librarians who had an aptitude for the provision of useful knowledge and business services. During the war many librarians adopted enthusiastically the language of the proposed scientific renaissance and economic reconstruction, promoting libraries as laboratories and workshops of tech-
nological and material advance. The *Library Association Record* declared that “Arsenals of scientific and technical information will become, nay have become, as necessary as arsenals of war-like materials, and if steps are not taken promptly we shall be as little prepared for peace as we were for war.”¹⁹

W. E. Doubleday wrote that Currently with this commercial expansion, one may look for progress in home manufactures; new ideas, new inventions will be brought forward and it will require an alert and mentally well-fed people to take advantage of these fleeting opportunities. What better than a public library can facilitate this work, and feed commercial and general institutes?²⁰

Ernest Savage wrote that “The needs of the war have brought home to technical men the desirability of obtaining information rapidly” (1918, p. 219). This was not least the case in regard to information on new sources of raw materials and industrial components to replace sources cut off by the war. Echoing this message, Stanley Jast explained that the war had “caused us to institute a general and critical survey of the whole field of our industry and commerce” (1932, pp. 35–36) and added, as a spur to action, that the Americans and the Germans were far ahead in the organization of printed technical information. Germany may not have developed a system of public technical and commercial libraries of the kind seen in the United States, but they did boast an impressive array of technical libraries in scientific societies, technical associations, and larger industrial concerns.²¹

Soon after the war the technical librarian Vincent Garrett declared that “the rule-of-thumb era has run its course . . . The effective operation of business undertakings is becoming increasingly dependent upon organised science” (Garrett, 1924, p. 40).²² Also after the war the Library Association’s president, Henry Guppy, reminded his fellow librarians that “The war [had] revealed to us many problems with which it was our duty to deal, and it became evident that it was necessary to mobilize our industrial and intellectual forces in the same way and with the same energy that we mobilized our forces to fight, for science has proved herself to be the dominating mistress” (1926, p. 205). During the war, science moved to “center stage,” and public technical libraries became one of the main beneficiaries of its new role.

At a lower level, enthusiasm for technical libraries fed off a planned growth in adult and technical education. Interest in technical education was given fresh impetus by the war. Plans were laid for improved non-vocational education for young adults (between the ages of fourteen and eighteen) and for better provision for vocational training in technical schools.²³ Technical libraries were seen as a complement to this expansion.²⁴ They were promoted as places where the artisan and the clerk would rub shoulders with the businessman and the manager and where people could obtain the literature and information essential to their jobs.²⁵
Containment of the Revolutionary Threat

Serious disaffection confronted the state in the second half of the war and in its immediate aftermath (Cronin, 1982). Its causes were varied: rising prices (the inflation rate jumped from 2 percent to 25 percent in the first two years of the war); poor housing; restrictions on trade union practices and on labor mobility; narrowing of differentials between the skilled and unskilled; strict licensing laws; industrial fatigue; monotonous work processes; inequality of sacrifice in the war; lack of faith in government to keep pledges and in the parliamentary process; uncertainty as to the industrial future; and anger at the handling of the military effort, summed up in the belief that “lions were being led by donkeys.” These grievances, combined with strikes, trade union militancy, growing support for the Labour Party and its socialistic program, and the “red scare” generated by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the German Revolution of November 1918, produced a fear of social and political upheaval among the governing classes, anxieties encapsulated in J. A. Hobson’s remark at the time that “Property is seriously afraid” (White, 1975, p. 3).

In response to the perceived threat, and to improve the morale of soldiers and citizens alike, the government embarked on a policy of reconstruction, whereby promises and plans for social renewal—for example, better housing—were laid before the people to undercut the revolutionary alternative. A Ministry of Reconstruction was set up in July 1917 to satisfy “the increasingly felt need to attend to working-class morale and compete with the radical Left” (Orde, 1990, pp. 5–6). As Lloyd George pleaded: “We want neither reaction nor revolution, but a sane, well-advised steadiness of bold reconstruction.”

One aspect of that bold, but politically steady, reconstruction was improved educational provision. Apart from promising to improve people’s lives, better education offered a political dimension. Education was viewed by H. A. L. Fisher, president of the Board of Education, as crucial to a reinforcement of the civic consciousness that helped safeguard existing social arrangements. It would make individuals more “reasoned,” and therefore more “reasonable,” in their attitudes toward the state and employers, thereby enabling otherwise alienated individuals to become true citizens of a participatory, pluralistic, capitalist society. Education, said Fisher, had the power to affect, for better or worse, whether a child would be “imprudent or profligate, cultured or ignorant, brutal or refined, social or anti-social, a citizen or an anarchist” (1918, p. ix).

Librarians quickly realized that they could exploit opportunities created by the spirit of reconstruction. “Re-construction is the magic word of the moment,” remarked the librarian W. B. Thorne, “and the basic principles of the public library service need to be reconstructed.” The rationale of the public technical library, especially through the years 1918 and 1919, emphasized trade and harmony over disunity and industrial conflict. It also
served as a weapon for indoctrination in conventional political economy and was seen as an effective agency for countering the “false” politics and economics of socialists. In 1918 Ernest Savage stated that in support of manufacturing, any decent technical library should have material on what he called “collateral subjects”—such as industrial organization, advertising, wage systems, the labor question, and scientific management. He suggested that the resources of libraries be used for studying the ideas and aspirations of the labor movement so that companies would not be taken by surprise by workers’ demands. At the opening of Manchester’s commercial library, Admiral Frederick Sturdee was reported to have said that “The British people did not know enough about economics which, after all, were fairly simple. He thought if the people were told in a simple form the principles of finance they would back the country up in every possible way.” A similar line was taken by Arthur Steel-Maitland, parliamentary secretary at the Department of Overseas Trade, at the opening of Wolverhampton’s commercial library, when he called for a greater understanding of trade and commercial matters, both national and international:

Here we had friction of one kind and another in the industrial world—friction which, during the enthusiasm for war, we did not think would occur. This occurred . . . through the two parties in industry not understanding the other man’s point of view. In the next place there was no real understanding of the real economic conditions which ruled the situation. Owing to the war we had practically to give up our foreign trade, and now we had not only to recover it but to get more of it.

The Growth of an Information Role for Libraries

The public library’s investment in technical libraries demanded a reorientation of professional practice. As much as it was a new opportunity for librarianship, the technical library was also a vehicle for documentation and information work (Pearce, 1918). One of the most outspoken “librarian” advocates of a heightened information role for librarians was Stanley Jast who, before the war, had opened an information bureau in Croydon to complement the traditional reference service (Krauss, 1910). Regarding technical libraries, Jast recommended that librarians “think not in terms of books, but rather in terms of printed matter, whether the form be that of the bound volume, the newspaper, or magazine, the pamphlet, the circular, the leaflet, or the clipping”; and he emphasised the importance of “properly constructed catalogues, indexes, and other keys” to the technical collection (1932, p. 30).

Some types of printed matter, such as trade catalogs, required extremely careful classification and organisational techniques. After the war W. E. Doubleday spelled out the content and functions of the technical library. “Apart from treatise on science and technology, directories and other ref-
ference works, manufacturers’ catalogues, periodicals and so on,” wrote Doubleday, technical libraries needed to

construct and maintain files of information, comprising articles excised from journals, mounted newspaper cuttings, perhaps some trade lists and other small items . . . sorted into folders according to kind . . . and deposited in vertical files which are duly labelled and always available to the public . . . the file itself is always under revision, for it is as important to remove old articles as to insert new ones, and this involves educated discrimination and perpetual care such as method only can secure. Subject to obviously special considerations, the routine is largely as in ordinary reference libraries. (1933, p. 180)

However, the “special considerations” to which Doubleday was referring were in reality not as familiar or, to use his description, as “routine” as he thought. A new culture of “information” was emerging, as Louise B. Krause noted in regard to business libraries in the United States:

The business library is not limited to a collection of books, but contains information in any form, namely, periodicals, pamphlets, trade catalogs, photographs, lantern slides, and also manuscript notes which are accumulated in connection with the specific work of an organization. The business library even goes so far in its service as to supply information which is obtained by “word of mouth” in advance of its appearance in the printed page. (1919, p. 307)

The desire to offer a speedy information service was encouraged by an awareness of the opportunities afforded by the telephone, which was seen as particularly useful in the technical library.36

Thus, early technical libraries were conceived as much as information, or intelligence, departments as book departments, many inquiries being for the speedy delivery of fragments of information rather than for specialist books.37 Technical libraries were less libraries than information bureaus, dealing with information in a variety of formats and with material extracted from whole items. Moreover, unlike traditional libraries they were imbued with a philosophy of close anticipation of user demand, requiring ultimately detailed abstracting and depth indexing and the preparation of bulletins advertising new material. Some librarians appeared comfortable with such functions. Others wished to hold true to librarianship’s traditional images and practices. Either way, the horse had bolted and there was no way of getting it back in its box.

Conclusion

Arthur Marwick has observed about the effects of war on society that at one extreme it has a tendency to promote authoritarianism. This is the liberal perspective on the social impact of war. At the other extreme, war can act as a reforming influence, or, as he put it, “the great auditor of in-
stitutions” (1974, p. 6); a perspective that encapsulates conservative fears concerning the corrosive, liberalizing effects of war. This dichotomy can help us to make sense of the story of public technical libraries in Britain in World War I.

The debate on technical libraries between 1916 and 1918 (and even into 1919 and 1920) lends itself to both interpretations. On the one hand, technical libraries were proposed as a progressive force, contributing to a more efficient, scientific prosecution of the war and to the economic reconstruction required for survival in a highly competitive postwar world. They was a small but not insignificant element in the “remarkable technological revolution [which] began in Britain in 1915 and [which] was consummated by 1918” (Barnett, 1999, p. 108). Also, reflecting the contemporary demand—arising from the recognition of the severe sacrifices made during the war—to distribute power and opportunity more widely, as seen in the extension of the suffrage in 1918 to women aged thirty and over, technical libraries were envisaged as popular institutions, not just for business people but also for workers in pursuit of technical education.

On the other hand, the discourse surrounding technical libraries reflected the political anxieties and ideological tensions of the day. Technical libraries were viewed as agencies that could confront the irrational economics of Bolshevism by endorsing market economics—not only by providing books on political economy but also by means of their fundamental rationale, as motors of capitalism. As such, technical libraries complemented other government initiatives aimed, at one level, at nullifying the revolutionary threat and, at another level, simply at preventing the materialization of a much less radical threat in the form of government by socialists (the Labour Party), albeit within the existing framework of a parliamentary democracy. These two ways of viewing the purpose of technical libraries in the war were summarized by E. W. Hulme, librarian of the Patents Office, when he told the 1917 annual conference of the Library Association that its program of technical library provision “forms part and parcel of a series of measures which are essential to the security of the state in time of war, and to its prosperity as an industrial nation in those of peace.”

But beyond the wider, global issues that dominated the theatres of ideological struggle and international relations, the wartime technical library can be seen as a signifier of a conflict being played out on a much smaller stage: that of librarianship and its functions and identity. Technical librarianship demanded a new style of librarianship, one that embraced information and documentation work. The conflict that this was to create was not as grand or important as the ideological struggle between Left and Right, or the struggle for future economic prosperity; but like these struggles it has not gone away and can be seen today in the continuing tension between the worlds of information science and information management, on the one hand, and library science and library management, on the other.
Notes
5. Oldham Chronicle, October 19, 1914.
7. Symposium on Public Libraries after the War, Library Association Record (1917), p. 113
9. Manchester Chamber of Commerce Monthly Record 18 (1907), pp. 138, 288, 342. See also the Library Association Record (1918), p. 107, which highlights the report made by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce in 1907.
10. For a fuller account of these activities, see Black (1996, pp. 134–35, 107).
20. Symposium on Public Libraries after the War, p. 115.
22. Similarly, in 1920, also in relation to the promotion of business information, the Manchester Guardian (November 18, 1920) asserted that “Gone are the old rule-of-thumb systems with their risky characteristics.”
23. Sanderson (1994, pp. 33–35) explains that H. A. L. Fisher, president of the Board of Education, found considerable support for this, but strangely not from many working-class leaders who, first, feared technical education would increase the number of skilled workers and hence reduce wages, and, second, believed that workers should avoid as much as possible the stigma attached to technical education and should emulate the middle-class liking for a liberal education that was not directly vocational in its outcome.
24. However, J. H. Reynolds was eager to distinguish between the technical library for education and the technical library for information; see his contribution to a debate on technical libraries, Library Association Record (1917), p. 495.
27. The “Homes Fit for Heroes” housing initiative envisaged the construction of millions of affordable, high-standard council dwellings after the war, and to this end a new Housing Act, incorporating generous subsidies for local authorities, was passed in 1919; see Swenarton (1981).
32. Wolverhampton Express and Star, June 28, 1919.
34. It was significant that as a public librarian, Jast also attended the first meeting of ASLIB (Association of Library and Information Bureaux) in 1924.
37. The concept of fragments of information had been addressed, amongst others, by Stanley Jast before the war; see Jast (1910).
38. Barnett (1999) discusses a number of advances of a technological and organizational nature: in aeronautics; electrical engineering and generation; the appearance of research and development programs in companies; the growth of applied research in universities; the building and operation of state-of-the-art armaments factories; and the establishment of a government ministry to encourage technological progress in manufacturing, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

References


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“I Cannot Get Along without the Books I Find Here”: The American Library in Paris during the War, Occupation, and Liberation, 1939–1945

MARY NILES MAACK

ABSTRACT
The American Library in Paris remained open to readers throughout World War II, and its history during the darkest period of the occupation is a tribute to the leadership and courage of an American-born countess, Clara Longworth de Chambrun, and her small but dedicated staff. This article presents the drama as it unfolded—through the phony war, the fall of Paris, and the bleak years following the American declaration of war on Germany. The concluding section offers a brief analysis of the American Library’s unlikely survival and explores its complicated wartime history by using concepts borrowed from institutional sociology.

INTRODUCTION
During the war scare that preceded the Munich Agreement of 1938, Dorothy Reeder, the dynamic director of the American Library in Paris, declared: “We did not close, we had no idea of closing. Each member of the staff was notified to go and was told that whatever they decided was right. They all stayed. . . . Our public took it for granted we would continue war or no war and many offered volunteer help. After all the Library was founded in the last war.”1 The following September, just days after the French and British declaration of war on Germany, the American Library in Paris launched an ambitious volunteer service to send books and magazines to soldiers. Dorothy Reeder later wrote that the American Library’s mission was to “help to serve in the field of morale to the best of its ability.”2 Because the library was founded as a memorial to those who died in the First World

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War, she fervently believed in its special mandate to reach out to another generation who would need the comfort and solace of books.

The American Library in Paris, 1919–39

Since the American Library’s World War I heritage held great symbolic value for the young institution, it is important to briefly recount its history, which began with the Library War Service of the American Library Association (ALA). By the time of the armistice the ALA had shipped more than 1.5 million books for the use of the American Expeditionary Forces in France (Young, 1981, p. 63). This massive operation was directed by Ohio librarian Burton Stevenson, who also oversaw the dismantling of the camp libraries after the war. Many books were shipped to a warehouse, but in Paris a central reference library was created. As soon as it opened to the public, this library attracted a clientele of American residents as well as demobilized soldiers, French students, and other English speakers. Aware that there was strong interest in keeping the library in Paris, Stevenson called a public meeting in November 1919 to test the level of local financial support. Among the first donors was Charles Seeger, father of the poet Alan Seeger, who was killed in action and is best remembered for his poem “I Have a Rendezvous with Death.” After Seeger donated 50,000 francs from the royalties of his son’s poetry, many others came forward with large and small donations. Supporters were French and British as well as American, and they included highly placed political figures, diplomats, writers, teachers, journalists, and business people.

Impressed by the enthusiastic support in France, the ALA established the American Library in Paris as a private, nonprofit organization incorporated on May 20, 1920, under the laws of the state of Delaware. Led by Seeger and Stevenson, the Paris organizing committee decided that the library would have three goals: “(1) to memorialize the American Expeditionary Force, (2) to promote understanding and knowledge of America, and (3) to provide an example of American library methods to the librarians of Europe” (Thompson, 1964, p. 180). Eager to promote American librarianship abroad, ALA leaders also hoped that the library would become “an ALA outpost in Europe,” as well as serve as “a first class public library” that provided “a free, expert information service for statesmen, publicists, journalists and general readers seeking knowledge on public affairs and conditions in America.” Throughout its turbulent history, the American Library in Paris was infused by the idealism embodied in these goals. Despite danger, hardship and woefully inadequate funding, a small cadre of staff and library board members remained deeply committed to its work. And it was this belief in the library’s role in cultural diplomacy that justified the ALA’s close ties with the American Library in Paris and its support for fundraising efforts in the United States.

ALA continued to pay for the operation of the library until November 2,
1920, when the collection of 25,000 books and other property were deeded to the new corporation. However, despite ALA’s goal that the library represent the best in American public library service, as a private institution with no government support, it was forced to charge subscription fees. Thus, although the American Library in Paris may have resembled the local public library that its expatriate users knew back home, as a nonprofit U.S. corporation located in France, it was actually an innovative experiment in adapting an American institution to a different national context. By 1938 about one-third of the library’s subscribers were French, but it was not until after the outbreak of World War II that the majority of its readers were French nationals.

During the nine months following the outbreak of the war, the library remained an American nonprofit corporation. In addition to serving local subscribers, it administered a volunteer program that provided books to enlisted personnel. Thus the initial phase of the American Library’s complicated wartime history dated from the French and British declaration of war in September 1939 and ended with the fall of Paris in June 1940. The second phase began with the reopening of the library under regulations imposed by Nazi authorities and ended with the United States’ declaration of war in December 1941. During the first eighteen months under German rule the library held the status of a “neutral” American institution in an occupied country, and as such it experienced relatively little interference. However, once the United States entered the war, Americans in France became enemy aliens and their property was subject to confiscation. To forestall this, Countess Clara Longworth de Chambrun, who was serving on the library board, arranged for the library to be placed under the administration of a French cultural organization. Thus the third phase of wartime service was largely due to the efforts of the countess, who was designated library director—a role she had filled since May 1941 when Dorothy Reeder reluctantly returned to the United States. Although the countess managed to keep the library open against all odds, after August 1944 the transition to peacetime brought its own dangers, partly because of the countess’s close connection with the Vichy regime.

**The Key Players**

If one is to understand how the American Library in Paris survived as a foreign institution in an occupied country, the role of several key people must be acknowledged. The president of the library board at the beginning of the war was Dr. Edmond Gros, who headed the American Hospital in Neuilly. He provided guidance and direction to the library until he was forced to leave France because of ill health. Another influential board member was Edward A. Sumner, who launched a fundraising campaign for the library in the United States in 1939 and spearheaded the formation of friends groups in major American cities. An executive of the American
Radiator Company, Sumner had lived for many years in France and was passionately dedicated to the library. During the first two phases of the war, library director Dorothy Reeder showed enormous courage and resourcefulness in maintaining and expanding the library’s services. Her contact at international library conferences with Dr. Hermann Fuchs, director of the Berlin Library, also proved to be an important asset. Appointed to head the Bibliotheksschutz (the German agency responsible for overseeing libraries in occupied territories), Dr. Fuchs became a key player in this drama, and it is quite likely that the American Library could not have survived without his protection.

While the four individuals mentioned above all played key roles, it was the Countess de Chambrun who proved a constant source of strength throughout the war years. Born into a wealthy, prominent Cincinnati family, Clara Eleanor Longworth grew up surrounded by relatives who were active in civic and cultural affairs. Her father was a judge on the Ohio Supreme Court and her brother Nicolas Longworth served three decades in the House of Representatives, where he was Speaker from 1925 to 1931. By 1906 when he married Alice Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt’s daughter, Nicolas Longworth had become a part of Washington’s inner circle. Although Clara Longworth often returned to visit her family in Ohio, she spent much of her adult life in France following her marriage in 1901 to Count Aldebert de Chambrun. Born in Washington, D.C., where his father was a legal advisor to the French Embassy, the count was equally comfortable in the two countries—and because he was a direct descendant of Lafayette, he held both American and French citizenship. Although the Chambrun family was prominent in civic affairs in France, the count chose a military career, attaining the rank of general. Despite her social obligations as the wife of a rising army officer, the countess pursued serious scholarly research on Shakespeare. In 1921, at the age of forty-eight, she earned a doctorate from the Sorbonne, and five years later she received the Bordin Prize of the French Academy for a book on Shakespeare, which she wrote in French. This was followed in 1928 by her election as a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor.

One of the founding members of the American Library in Paris, the countess served as a trustee from 1921 through 1924. Although she dropped off the board while she and the count were posted to Morocco, she again became active during the 1930s when the library faced a financial crisis that nearly forced it to close. The countess not only sought out donors among her extensive circle of French and American contacts, but she also persuaded her husband and son to act as guarantors. While all the trustees worked hard to make the library financially viable, the Chambruns were most instrumental in the board’s successful appeal that the library be excused from paying French property taxes. Access to those in the highest echelons of government was assured for the countess in 1935 when her
son René married Marie José Laval, daughter of Pierre Laval, who was then serving as premier of France. Whether or not Laval himself intervened, the French government recognized the public utility of the American Library by granting it a subsidy of 210,000 francs over a period of four years—and this was in addition to excusing a portion of its back taxes.\textsuperscript{5}

The Countess was also instrumental in procuring new quarters for the library when it abruptly lost its lease on the elegant mansion at 10, rue de l’Élysée. The board considered several buildings before settling on a spacious house situated just ten minutes walk from the Arc de Triomphe. This property was recommended by the countess, who recalled that the board had “finally succeeded in obtaining from some diplomatic friends a long lease on their charming home situated between a spacious court and a pretty garden at 9 rue de Téhéran. The building was conveniently placed between three main thoroughfares, and possessed an atmosphere of homelike tranquility thoroughly appropriate to readers and students” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 89).

While the countess played an important role behind the scenes, Dorothy Reeder oversaw the library’s day-to-day operations. After working at the Library of Congress (LC) for six years, Reeder was sent to Spain with a set of LC cards in Spanish to install at the Seville Exposition. As she told friends, she loved Europe and decided to stay (Sumner, 1941, p. 372). Reeder soon obtained a position at the American Library in Paris in the circulation department. By 1930 she was promoted to head the periodicals department, where she remained through the difficult years of the Depression, when salaries were meager and working conditions difficult. After being named director in 1936, Reeder worked closely with the board on fundraising as well as supervising the move to 9 rue de Téhéran.

Held on Thanksgiving Day in 1936, the gala reception to celebrate the opening of the new building was attended by several French dignitaries as well as U.S. Ambassador Bullitt, who had become an honorary member of the library board. The patronage by the diplomatic and business community aided the board in attracting funds from wealthy French, American, and British patrons. These individuals, including General de Chambrun, acted as guarantors who would agree to cover the library’s budget deficits for three years. Despite occasional setbacks, the library’s finances gradually improved, and prospects began to look much brighter in November 1937 when the Carnegie Foundation granted the library $25,000 to be used for book purchases over five years (Reeder, 1938, p. 614). Throughout the financial uncertainties of the 1930s, Reeder demonstrated unshakeable optimism—a trait that would serve her well in the years ahead.

To gain additional support for the library, Reeder sought out press coverage whenever possible, and there are several publicity photographs that present her as a slender, well-dressed woman, sometimes wearing a stylish hat, but always in a pose that showed her intent on her work.\textsuperscript{6} Reeder
also used broadcasting opportunities to promote new services, and in one instance a radio interviewer described her as “the charming director of the library.” He went on to say that “Miss Reeder is young, attractive and full of pep—with, at the same time, that quality of friendly but efficient leadership that has made [the library] . . . a smoothly running machine. She has got a grand sense of humor, as well as good sense, and the fact that all the members of the staff are completely devoted to her speaks for itself.”

Dorothy Reeder’s accomplishments at the American Library in Paris also came to the attention of colleagues visiting from the United States. Following a trip to Europe in late August 1939, J. Periam Danton reported to the ALA:

I am impressed with the magnitude and the quality of the job that the Library is doing on a pitifully small income. Exclusive of special Carnegie Corporation funds . . . the total expenditure for the last fiscal year was a little over $8,000. On that budget, the library which is open from 1:30 to 7:00, employed the equivalent of seven full time persons; kept records for and served 1,300 subscribers, approximately one third of whom are French; lent some 44,000 volumes; sent out over 1,000 volumes on out-of-town extension service to eight European countries and twenty-two university and municipal libraries in France; besides serving during the busier seasons an average of 300 daily users in the library.

Danton also attended a board meeting and “was once more impressed by the genuine interest which all members appeared to have in the Library and the unconditional manner in which they support Miss Reeder.” Danton’s report provides a vivid snapshot of the last months when the American Library functioned normally. Just days after his visit, Hitler invaded Poland, and on September 3 France and Britain declared war on Germany.

**From the French Declaration of War to the Fall of Paris**

The events of that first week of September 1939 brought an immediate opportunity to reaffirm the mission of the American Library in Paris. Dorothy Reeder asserted: “There was never a thought that we should close. We knew our place even before war was declared, so the day the news was told to the world at large, the entire staff gathered at the building to decide the first step. It was to paste brown strips of paper on all our windows as protection against falling glass in the case of bombing. It took two full days to accomplish this.” Although the staff had gas masks handy, they continued to go about their work in as normal a fashion as possible.

On her return to Paris, the countess found the city little changed during the day, except for “the addition of tons of sandbags heaped-up” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 87). However, she described the city at night as dangerous and depressing because of black-out precautions enforced after dark. In fact, having to knock furtively at a darkened door of a Paris restaurant in...
the evening and then being quickly “whisked inside” reminded her of visiting New York speakeasies during prohibition (Chambrun, 1949, p. 88). Because of black-out regulations, the American Library ended its evening hours. However, the countess recalled that her friends were very surprised to learn that the library had remained open at all. As a board member, she wholeheartedly supported that decision, believing that the war had brought “an opportunity of showing a bold face against adverse circumstances and attempting what is humanly possible to maintain our neighbors’ courage by showing what we can do of our own” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 88).

Library use remained steady, and Reeder reported that paying subscriptions “held up well all during the war.” This was quite remarkable since so many American subscribers had fled Paris. Some took library books with them and later sent messages saying that they were caring for the books and would return them as soon as possible. Shortly after war was declared, free cards with a red, white, and blue stripe at the top were given to those enlisted in the French and British forces, and many came to the library while they were stationed in Paris. Acutely aware of the needs of readers, Reeder recalled that initially there was heavy demand for “light and amusing books,” but gradually this changed, as people asked for more historical and political works. Reeder commented: “We noticed that as Hitler attacked each country, the circulation of books we had on that country would increase. Maps, books giving the historical backgrounds, and authors who delved into the political situation were asked for.” Reference work with students was much the same as usual and journalists continued to verify facts and dates, making heavy use of the nonfiction collection and vertical files on World War I.

While managing a busy library, Reeder also launched an ambitious Soldiers’ Service staffed by volunteers eager to provide books for British troops and for French soldiers who wanted to use their spare time to study English. Reeder noted that such requests not only came from professors and students but also from waiters, hotel clerks, and small shop keepers. Files for individual soldiers were divided into three categories: English only, French only, or both French and English. Since everything was donated, when a soldier was done with his books, he passed them on to another man or gave them to the canteen. Many thank you letters came from soldiers grateful to have reading material during the long, inactive weeks of the phony war. One French officer who had previously worked in advertising appreciated being able to maintain his English language skills. Others sent back small gifts or souvenirs from the front as tokens of their gratitude.

In February 1940, just five months after the Soldiers’ Service was launched, the Paris-based Herald Tribune reported that 12,000 books had been distributed. All were donated by individuals, organizations, and publishers who responded to the library’s public appeals. Volunteers shipped most books by parcel post, but many volumes were carried by staff working
for the Quaker International Center, the YMCA, and the Salvation Army as well as the Royal Air Force and the French Air Force. Over half of the books went to individual French and British soldiers, but collections of 150 books and 50 magazines were also deposited in various canteens and foyers. The countess credited the success of this program to Dorothy Reeder, “who moved heaven and earth to get together an immense quantity of books” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 90).

The special Soldiers’ Service was almost entirely supported by donations in kind and by outside funds. Even the space for the huge shipping operation was donated in a building next door to the library, and heat, light, and water were provided free of charge. Equipment was furnished partly by the library and partly by the volunteers. Reeder declared: “I can truthfully say that I had the best group of volunteer workers that I have ever had the pleasure of working with, and I really believe that they enjoyed every minute of the many hours of the hard labor that they put in.” In the space of barely nine months, these volunteers had distributed 100,000 books and magazines. Throughout the phony war, the library as well as the Soldiers’ Service became an important hub of activity. Reeder wrote: “Nine rue de Teheran [sic] was not only a library in those days, it was a rendezvous—for all doing charitable work, for friends to meet and discuss the prevailing situation, and for others to tell you of their loved ones far from home. It was a meeting place for good will, good humor and understanding.”

Life was busy in Paris, and during the beautiful, balmy spring of 1940 the invasion of France seemed inconceivable to most residents. However, the French army was not prepared for the German Blitzkrieg, which combined tanks with close air support. Nor were they able to stop the advance once Hitler’s troops had bypassed the Maginot Line and rapidly moved through the Ardennes. Then, the unthinkable happened: the Germans entered Paris. Since French authorities quickly declared the capital an “open city,” the conquering troops faced little resistance (Pryce-Jones, 1981, p. 3). Instead they found the streets almost deserted following the chaotic exodus of hundreds of thousands of residents. Recalling the events of June 1940, the countess wrote: “The panic which was rife in Paris is utterly indescribable” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 98).

Although Reeder and the library board clung to the hope that Paris would be spared, they had nonetheless prepared a plan for evacuation. As Reeder noted, all staff were instructed to meet at the library and to bring “one suitcase only, one blanket, one pair of heavy walking shoes (on the feet), pack only warm clothing and gas masks, medicine, food for three days.” After much reflection and discussion with the board, Reeder decided to stay in Paris “to look after the building and through whatever channels possible, keep in contact with America and the Trustees there.” However, the staff were given the choice of staying in Paris or going to what was “then thought to be free France and holding strong.” All decided to leave, and
Dr. Gros, president of the American Library Board, gave them letters and instructed them to go to Angoulême where they would offer their services to a unit of the American Hospital. Reeder gave each of them a two-month salary advance and provided the secretary with additional money to cover expenses for lodging, food, and transport. The librarian, Evangeline Turnbull, and her daughter were sent ahead by private car, since they were Canadian and therefore British subjects who could be interned as enemy aliens. The remaining staff piled into cars supplied by the American Radiator Company, a firm directed by board member Edward Sumner.¹¹

When she arrived at the library on the morning of June 10 the countess found that Reeder “was left quite alone” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 101). The two women discussed plans for the future and agreed that Reeder should remain and “wave the flag of neutrality.” After vowing that “come what might” she would be back in Paris by September, the countess observed that the young librarian “appeared to be getting what she termed ‘quite a kick’ out of the position in which she was left as the sole guardian of the premises . . . certain that the American Embassy would back up her decisions” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 101). Reeder expressed no regret about her decision to stay, but she vividly described the sense of abandonment experienced by those who remained. She portrayed Paris on June 11–13, 1940, as “a dead city”:

Everything was closed, locked and deserted. Even the fall of a pin could be heard. A few last cars were making their way out of town with families looking for refuge. The stations were packed with those who had sat up all night waiting for a train, which never left. Seven thousand women, children, soldiers and aged I saw waiting in the rain in front of closed gates of the Gare Montparnasse, the afternoon of June 13.

In an Occupied City: June 1940 to December 1941

After the countess left, Dorothy Reeder went to the American Embassy where she offered her services. On June 14, when the embassy took over the Hotel Bristol “to house all Americans as an emergency step,” Reeder was placed in charge of checking passports to verify that only Americans were living on the premises. Residents at that time included heiress Anne Morgan as well as representatives from the Rockefeller Foundation, U.S. ambulance units, and the American Red Cross. For nearly six months Reeder lived at the Hotel Bristol and continued to act as the delegated representative of the American Embassy. However, she noted that these responsibilities in no way interfered with her work at the library.

Throughout the remainder of June 1940 Reeder and the concierge were at the library every day, although it was not open to the public. Nevertheless, when any subscribers rang the bell Reeder welcomed them and allowed them to check out books. She also took books to the Hotel Bristol, where there were many elderly residents who could not walk to the library.
Throughout the occupation private cars were banned, forcing Parisians to walk or use bicycles—especially on weekends when the buses and metros were closed to civilians. By July people had begun to return to Paris, and Reeder declared that she would never forget how glad she was when four of her staff came back to work. Soon they were busy preparing packets of books for prisoners in internment camps in France. Despite invitations from the Germans to visit these camps, Reeder was cautious and preferred to rely on volunteers and staff from organizations such as the American Red Cross to deliver books. Although French prisoners in Germany sent cards asking for books, the Nazi authorities did not allow the library to fill these requests. The Soldiers’ Service was forced to close, and the remaining book donations were sent to prisons, hospitals, and British internment camps in France.\(^\text{12}\)

In September the library officially reopened in the afternoons. When the countess returned to Paris, she found Reeder reassured that the Germans were “doing their level best to curry favor with all neutral nations, while at the same time impressing them with Germany’s strength” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 145). The countess also believed that

Hitler’s avowed object during the initial phase of the occupation was to make Paris look pleasant to neutrals who came there. The citizen went his way undisturbed. . . . The German regulations fixed the percentage of meat, bread, sugar, flour and coal allowed to each inhabitant, but the consumer remained as before, in touch with his Parisian butcher, baker, grocer, etc. . . . This system of “collaboration” was a happy invention, and certainly obviated many a skirmish and much bloodshed. (Chambrun, 1949, p. 143)

The countess disapproved of early protests by university students that brought harsh reprisals, and instead advocated The Hague tribunal rules for an occupied country, which she interpreted to mean that “any provocation against the foe is, in fact, leveled at fellow citizens” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 144). A staunch supporter of Laval, she believed that his strategies were “a masterpiece of constructive resistance he had put up against German claims and extortions” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 264). Because of her loyalty to Laval, the countess was later accused of pro-German sympathies—a completely unfounded claim. In fact, the first volume of her autobiography, published in 1936, revealed deep-rooted anti-German sentiments, and in her 1949 memoir she declared that for her the sight of huge Nazi banners hung on official buildings was like “receiving a blow between the eyes and a stab which reached the heart” (Chambrun, 1936; Chambrun, 1949, p. 142).

German officials were another visible symbol of Nazi authority over French and foreign institutions. When a German officer arrived at the library wearing a Prussian uniform, Dorothy Reeder did not recognize him as Dr. Hermann Fuchs, director of the Berlin Library. However, her anxiety changed to relief when he greeted her warmly and recalled their previous meeting at an
international conference. The countess remarked that Reeder and Fuchs “held each other in high esteem, so everything went smoothly from that moment” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 144). Fuchs not only praised the American Library but declared “that nothing in Europe compared to it, and promised that it should remain open during the German occupation and continue to function normally.” However, he added: “You will necessarily be bound by certain rules imposed on the Bibliothèque Nationale where certain persons may not enter and certain books may not circulate” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 144). When Reeder asked whether the library was required to destroy such books, Dr. Fuchs responded indignantly: “No my dear young lady. What a question between professional librarians! People like us do not destroy books! I said they must not circulate” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 144).

Fuchs then asked Reeder about the members of the board. According to the countess’s version of the story, he apparently assumed that the countess had retained American citizenship, and he was not disturbed to learn that her husband was a French general. She observed:

On learning that I had been appointed president . . . the information that I was a Shakespearean scholar of respectable standing and had earned my Sorbonne degree after . . . sustaining my thesis, removed any doubts from his mind regarding my right to the position. So, during the ten months that the Library remained under American control I was never called upon to meet Hitler’s representative. Negotiations for the maintenance of our institution devolved upon the American directress, aided and advised by the United States Embassy, the French element being prudently kept in the background. (Chambrun, 1949, p. 144)

Although Dr. Fuchs remained a trusted ally, Reeder did have occasional visits from other Nazi officials who asked numerous questions about the library, its board, and its finances. She writes that most of these inspectors were librarians or teachers, but they always came in uniform and had their offices at the Hotel Majestic, the General German Headquarters. According to historian Pryce-Jones, the offices for civilian affairs at the Majestic were staffed by professionals who were often recruited from the ministries in Berlin and “were almost all selected for their technical competence.” Although conservative and nationalist in outlook, since “their ethics as well as their skills had been in pre-Hitler Germany,” these officials did not use their military authority as “a pretext for party methods” (1981, p. 31). However, Reeder recounted an incident that left the German library inspectors nonplussed. One day they arrived with their first list of banned books, all of which were in French. She reported that when they learned “our books were all in English they did not know what to do. We had about ten of the books and, in the end, were allowed to keep them as long as they remained in my private office and not on the open shelf.” According to later accounts, the banned books were later crated and stored in the basement. Eventually American authors such as Steinbeck, Hemingway,
Sinclair Lewis, and CBS Berlin correspondent William Shirer were added to the list (Grattan, 1993, p. 228).

While German censorship was a fairly minor problem for the library, Reeder was greatly troubled by another issue. She complained: “No Jews are allowed in the library by Nazi police regulations. Some of them are our best subscribers, and I don’t see how we can permit them now to take out their books.” The countess responded: “I possess a pair of feet, so do Boris and Peter. I am ready and willing to carry books to those subscribers who are cut off from them by any such ruling, and feel sure that every member of the staff will be happy to do the same” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 145). There is no indication as to how many books the countess and staff delivered to Jewish subscribers or whether this service continued through 1944. Had they known about it, the occupation authorities would not have approved of this quietly subversive service, although visiting Jewish homes was not explicitly forbidden. At beginning of the war 150,000 Jews lived in Paris. However, those who did not leave the city became subject to increasingly repressive treatment. Ten weeks after Paris fell all Jews were required to register with the police. Three months later Jewish businesses had to post a yellow sign, and by the end of 1940 wholesale confiscation of Jewish property began. The first deportation of foreign Jews occurred in May 1941. One year later French Jews were forced to wear the yellow star and by July 1942 they were also being deported (Cole, 1999, p. 221–222).

Aside from the “underground” service for Jewish subscribers, the library continued to function as usual, supported by steady income from subscription fees. Although the number of users remained much the same as before, French readers made up a majority of subscribers since so many American and British residents had left the city. The American Embassy ordered wives and families of its personnel out of Paris, but for those who stayed in the unoccupied zone, the library supplied books that were sent on embassy trucks. While the library offered an outward appearance of tranquility, anxiety and uncertainty were part of life under the Nazis. One of the most compelling stories recounted by Reeder concerned her secretary’s sister, who was accused of being a spy for the British Intelligence Service and was sentenced to death. In her final report Reeder stated: “Through a great friend of the Library, the sentence was commuted to life in prison in Germany. This is confidential and should not be discussed as it may cause more trouble.” After the war, the countess elaborated on this incident, remembering the bright November day when she heard the awful news and walked as quickly as possible to the Hotel Matignon, where she appealed to Pierre Laval to intercede in the case. She recalled that the prime minister knew immediately that some grave affair must have brought her. On hearing the countess’s story, Laval summoned a representative of the German ambassador whom he convinced to have the sentence commuted. After the German defeat, the woman was released and returned to Paris (Chambrun, 1949, p. 147).
There were no further threats to the library staff or their families during the next year, but living conditions under the occupation were extremely difficult. In February 1941, Reeder insisted that her remaining American staff return home because she believed it was “the just and wise thing to do.” She declared: “It is not easy to live . . . when you have no news of the outside world—not even from your own family; . . . and when most of your friends are gone and some of those left in jail.” Reeder herself stayed another three months, but in April 1941, as the prospect of United States entry into the war became more imminent, the board urged her to leave. Although reluctant to go, in her last letter from Europe Reeder wrote: “Food gets harder & harder in Paris. The lines waiting make your heart sad. No soap—no tea—no nothing. . . . The iron clamp is working—granted in a most polite way—but hard—oh very very hard.”

Despite Reeder’s unswerving belief in the mission of the library and her gratitude for the support of the Chambrun family, she was no longer optimistic about its survival. The countess recalled their last meeting: “When our popular directrice Miss Reeder departed, after a whirl of cocktail parties and as much cheer as bunches of souvenirs could give, she left on a desk, which was to become mine, a card solemnly delegating me to fill her place, together with the verbal encouragement: ‘Of course you will never be able to keep open.’” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 167).

The countess was nearly sixty-eight when she took over the directorship of the American Library. Not daunted by the task ahead, she considered her age an advantage. She later wrote:

Accordingly, here I was, obliged to add to my duties of President pro tem the more arduous task of directing the Library, a position for which no previous training fitted me. What I did possess . . . was long human experience, a sense of justice . . . and a sense of humor capable of carrying me over very rough ground. Above all, the so-called weight of years which popular opinion views as a detriment, I found an asset which served me in the place of technical knowledge. My small staff—in which absent Americans were replaced by graduates from the Ecole des Chartes—seemed to take for granted that any one so old must necessarily be wiser than they and accepted my dictates cheerfully.
(Chambrun, 1949, p. 167)

Recruited from the oldest library and archival training program in France, this new staff showed a great deal of zeal, as well as “remarkable technical knowledge” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 167). In addition to their public service work, they helped to catalog 600 books that had been received in the final shipment from the United States. By 1942 the total library staff reported to the Germans was only five.

Finding skilled staff proved easier than resolving what status the library would hold if the United States declared war on Germany. Even before the departure of Reeder, the board began to discuss this dilemma. The countess
recalled: “To close down would mean seizure. To keep open we would have been obliged to be financed by other than American resources” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 133). At first the board considered giving the collection to the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN), then headed by Bernard Faÿ, who had used the American Library for his own research and for his course on American civilization. The board proposed to transfer the collections to the BN only if Reeder should leave or in case of American entry into war; all books were to be returned to the American Library at the end of the war. Although quite willing to take the collection on these terms, Faÿ felt it necessary to consult the German library authorities. According to Reeder, they insisted that the transfer take place “within twenty-four hours and include all our material and resources. Naturally, my answer was no.”

The countess had also been uneasy about transferring the books to the BN because she was afraid that the Germans might eventually decide to confiscate all the holdings of the national library. Another strategy was needed—one which would “camouflage the library by a fictitious incorporation” as a French organization, since German authorities maintained a policy of noninterference with “any French institution recognized of public utility and financially sound” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 149). Similar tactics were used by other American-based organizations, such as the American Hospital at Neuilly, which was temporarily taken over by the French Red Cross. The countess credited her son, Count René de Chambrun, with the solution she presented to the library board. The young count, who practiced international law, had in 1934 created the French Information Center (Office Français de Renseignements) whose purpose, ironically enough, had been to combat German propaganda in the United States as well as to provide French firms with information on American commerce. Although based in New York, this organization still had cash at its disposal in France; furthermore, its board was headed by General de Chambrun, who was already a strong supporter of his wife’s efforts on behalf of the library. The countess believed that placing the library under the auspices of the French Information Center was the only possible method that would allow it “to continue functioning when our reserve funds were exhausted” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 149). The confidential reports from Reeder to the ALA indicate that she had reservations about this plan. However, when she left, she instructed her secretary to follow the wishes of Countess de Chambrun, “who has been such a devoted friend to us over a period of many years.”

**From the U.S. Declaration of War through the Liberation**

While the Countess of Chambrun was dealing with the library’s precarious position in Paris, Edward Sumner continued his fundraising campaign in the United States. However, by summer 1941, several months before
the U.S. declaration of war completely cut off American aid to France, the Rockefeller Foundation notified Sumner that no further payments would be made to the library. At about the same time the ALA also withheld $7,500 from the Carnegie grant it administered for the library. ALA executive secretary Carl Milam later explained that he had withheld the Carnegie funds because it was feared that the library “might become a tool of the German Occupation Forces or of the collaboration” (quoted in Kraske, 1985, p. 128). Furious that the funds were withheld at this crucial time, Sumner and the other board members in the United States cabled the countess delegating her to make whatever decisions she thought best for the library. Despite the Paris trustee’s reluctance to authorize her plan, a report to the Germans indicated that the transfer had occurred in July 1941. The board of the French Information Center voted a total of 600,000 francs over the next three years when the library operated without help from America. The countess later commented: “This scheme, which looked uncertain, worked perfectly” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 149).

Once this new administrative structure was put into place, two signs were made for the library: one with the words “Office Français de Renseignements,” and another that read “The American Library in Paris directed by C. Longworth de Chambrun, Doctor of the University of Paris” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 150). While the countess seldom used academic titles, she believed that her scholarly credentials would help establish her legitimacy with the German authorities. However, she met none of the German library inspectors until June 1942, when Dr. Hermann Fuchs called at the library dressed in his full military regalia. Although she described him as “an officer with the stiffest back and the most piercing spectacles I ever remember to have encountered,” she was less put off by his appearance than he was by finding her in place of Dorothy Reeder (Chambrun, 1949, p. 169). Although disappointed that Reeder had left despite his guarantees as to her safety, he repeated his assurances that the library should remain open. He then cautioned the countess that there could be no sales of books or furniture and no change in salaries. And before leaving he gave her his telephone numbers in Paris and Berlin and told her to call him if the German military interfered with the library in any way (Chambrun, 1949, pp. 169–70).

Despite his supportive manner, when Dr. Fuchs summoned the countess to report to his office in June 1943 she was extremely anxious. When she arrived he questioned her about two charges: that the library was kept open by fraudulent arrangements made through a German official now no longer in favor, and that it had circulated American magazines with anti-Hitler propaganda. Rather impulsively the countess responded: “I assure you, Dr. Fuchs, I am neither knave nor fool enough to betray the institution that I have promised to safeguard” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 187). She then answered both charges. In regard to the first accusation, she reminded Dr. Fuchs that the library’s statute had been arranged with him and the U.S.
Embassy and was fully approved by Otto Abetz, the German ambassador to France. In regard to the second charge she pointed out that none of the periodicals circulated, and therefore the ones in question must have been taken from the library by German readers who did not check them out. Fuchs believed the countess and told her never to let any Germans read the magazines unless they brought a card from him. Observing that Dr. Fuchs was very relieved at the end of the interview, the countess suspected that his own fate was somehow tied to that of the American Library. He told her in French that it would have been most disagreeable to him if he had to make an “unsatisfactory” report. “Then he added, in slow precise English, 'I will not conceal that I am also very happy for myself’” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 187).

The countess believed that, having failed to implicate her in any crime, the Gestapo then concocted a plot against Boris Netchaeff, the senior librarian at the American Library. A white Russian émigré married to a Russian princess, Netchaeff had worked at the American Library for over fifteen years and was one of the most trusted staff members. He was accosted at home, shot in the lung, and taken into custody by the Nazis. Soon after hearing the terrible news, the countess went directly to Dr. Fuchs remembering that he had “declared himself responsible for the employees of all libraries in the occupied territory, over whom he claimed sole jurisdiction” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 188). Persuaded by the countess’s vigorous defense of Netchaeff, Fuchs intervened to have him released and sent to the American Hospital at Neuilly. When Netchaeff recovered he returned to the library where he worked for many more years. Although no other staff members were arrested by the Germans, the countess considered one of her most important tasks “to save the masculine portion of my staff from the dreaded deportation for labor in Germany” where some two million French men were already working (Chambrun, 1949, p. 168). The countess recalled having to write letters declaring that the work of these employees was essential to the library. Her intervention always succeeded—even in the case of another Russian employee who was accused of being communist.

Readers continued to flock to the library during the last months of the occupation, even as the power of the Gestapo grew more repressive and ominous. Although the library was only open afternoons, 30,000 books circulated from January to June 1944. This was a total of about 8,000 more than were circulated in a six-month period in 1938, the last normal year before the war.\textsuperscript{18} The countess wrote: “The public, hungry for reading and deprived by Nazi decree from access to English books (except here) came to the library in numbers never before seen” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 168). However, in this tense environment there were sometimes disagreements among subscribers or between the readers and staff. Although her sense of humor enabled her to get through most of these encounters, the countess described one particularly trying instance when a woman threatened
Netchaeff with denunciation after he had insisted that she must wait her turn in line. The countess recalled: “I confess that at this I lost my temper, took the lady by the arm and firmly led her to the door with the remark: ‘Take back your subscription and never darken our doors again.’ At this she began to weep and proffered what I consider to be the greatest tribute ever given us in war-time. ‘I cannot get along without the books I find here’” (Chambrun, 1949, pp. 168–69). The countess then relented and told the woman that she could come back and take out her book if she apologized to Netchaeff.

Although the countess assumed full administrative responsibility for the institution, she did not presume to take over the other professional duties of the librarian. She wrote: “instead of exhibiting my technical incompetence in the cataloging department or at the distributing desk, I remained in my office, made regular rounds of the building, and kept myself in readiness to give help in case it was requested” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 170). She often helped university students studying for their English examinations, but while at the library she also found time to work on an ambitious book on Shakespeare’s life—a project that continued to consume her after the Liberation.

In her memoir the countess offers a vivid account of her experience in August 1944 when ragtag, poorly controlled resistance brigades from the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) mounted barricades in the streets as the last German troops retreated from the city. She also describes how she and General de Chambrun were brutally arrested on September 9 by an irregular militia of the FFI. She and her husband were then turned over to the neighborhood police station and imprisoned in a small cell. After being questioned and detained for several hours, they were released with apologies once it was established that during the occupation the general was in charge of the American Hospital in Neuilly and the countess was director of the American Library in Paris, which “had brought encouragement, comfort and moral support to many Parisians who care for English literature” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 237).

The countess offers no information on how the American Library fared during the chaos of the August fighting; nor does she say when she returned to her duties. One of the few post-Liberation reports on the library was sent to the ALA on September 29, 1944, by a former vice-president of the Paris library board, Major George C. Sharp, who was assigned to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces. Sharp was impressed to find that the library was fully staffed and had numerous French users, despite the tattered state of its collection and the total lack of books published during the years when no shipments had been received from America (Kraske, 1985, pp. 131–32).

One of the warmest tributes to the library’s wartime effort was by Robert T. Pell, assistant political officer of the American Mission in Paris, who
wrote to Edward A. Sumner on October 3, 1944, describing his visit to the American Library. Pell recalled:

I talked to a distinguished visitor who was wearing the rosette of the Legion d’Honneur and turned out to be a Professor at the University of Paris. He said that without the library he would not have been able to continue his courses during the occupation: English books were available nowhere else. Another customer, a younger man, assured me that the library had been a cultural oasis in a time of intellectual dearth and added that it would be remembered for a long time to come in University circles that it had braved the Germans and never closed.¹⁹

Despite these positive reports, a cloud still hung over the Countess de Chambrun. Although she and her husband had been completely exonerated of any wrongdoing, in the atmosphere of fear and distrust during the last months of 1944 rumors were rife and accusations against them continued—in part because René de Chambrun was the son-in-law of Pierre Laval, who had been charged with treason and was later executed. Shortly after the Liberation there were some accusations from Americans that the countess had used the library for pro-German activities, but no evidence was ever produced and the rumor was discounted.²⁰

Even though Pell and Sharp, who were seasoned observers of the French situation, both believed that the countess had performed a commendable service to the library, there was concern among the trustees and ALA leaders that her close association with Laval might put the library in jeopardy. ALA executive secretary Carl Milam and Milton Lord, chairman of the ALA Committee on Library Cooperation in Europe and Africa, agreed that the survival of the library might still be at risk, caught in the midst of purges and backlash against the former regime. In addition to “the very real fear that the provisional French government might close the institution or confiscate its books,” there was also concern “that the U.S. Army might take over the library—either to serve its own needs or to pre-empt confiscation on the part of the French” (Kraske, 1985, p. 133). Given these fears, the trustees were eager to establish good relations with the American military and did not wish to risk the prospect of guilt by association with Vichy. Although Edward A. Sumner, president of the American Library Trustees in New York, had been a strong supporter of the countess, on November 9, 1944, he sent a lengthy report to the annual meeting of members in Paris to caution them against retaining her services. In this document Sumner also quoted from a report dated October 12 by Robert T. Pell that he had received through the Department of State. After paying tribute to the countess, Pell emphasized the urgency of having her step down. He wrote:

The Countess de Chambrun (Clara Longworth) continues to direct the library activities and credit is due her for keeping the library going during the critical period. However, her connections have given rise to some hesitation on the part of the American military authorities to
deal with her or the library and as a consequence it is not playing the role it should be playing in Army morale work under the Division of Special Services headed by Colonel Solbert. . . . He and others are of the opinion that the situation would be materially relieved if the Countess could be retired to an honorary post in the immediate future and an American who has no associations with the occupation period be appointed director.21

A few days after Pell’s report arrived in New York, Sumner learned that the U.S. Army Special Services was considering requisitioning the library and having it transferred to their headquarters at the Cité Universitaire on the outskirts of Paris. On behalf of the board Sumner offered the army use of the collection at 9 rue de Téhéran and suggested that the American Library could also set up a reading room for soldiers at the Cité Universitaire. He then hurried to get government approval for Milton Lord, head of the Boston Public Library, to go to Paris as interim director. Because of his European experience and his fluency in French, Lord appealed to the trustees. In addition, he had already demonstrated his broad vision by drafting a preliminary postwar plan for the ALA that called for an expanded role for the American Library in Paris. When he finally arrived in Paris in January 1945, Lord was both pleased and saddened by the state of the library. He expressed considerable pride in the library’s work and the international clientele it attracted, but he was well aware of the need for new books and improved working conditions for the staff, who valiantly carried out their duties despite lack of heat during one of the coldest winters on record in Europe. However, because he had only a three-month leave from Boston, Lord left Paris at the end of April. He was followed as director by Frederick Stewart, who had formerly been with the American Council of Learned Societies.

By 1945 the Countess de Chambrun was no longer listed among the trustees of the American Library in Paris. Over seventy years of age, she returned to her research on Shakespeare22 and began writing Shadows Lengthen, the memoir recounting her experiences from 1935 to 1949. Here she described the Liberation as the most difficult and bitter time of her life. She believed that those who endured the occupation would agree “that Paris was materially better off during the winters of 1941–42–43 than she was under the DeGaulle regime, with illegal arrests operated not by Germans but by French” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 143). While the countess’s anti-Gaullist stance undoubtedly colored her remarks, many other writers do confirm her assessment of the privation and suffering experienced by Parisians during the first four years following the Liberation.

I have found no mention of Countess de Chambrun in the materials published by or about the American Library in Paris during the late 1940s. However, this changed when Dr. Ian Forbes Fraser became director. A former Columbia University professor who knew the situation well, having
served as Commandant of the U. S. Army University Center in France, he warmly acknowledged the countess in articles and in publicity materials for the library. In 1952, for example, he wrote: “thanks to the courage and determination of the Countess de Chambrun, the collection was intact at the liberation of Paris in August 1944. Many of the hosts of French readers who began to use the library during the occupation are still on its membership roll” (Fraser, 1952, p. 44).

Concluding Thoughts
What inspired the Countess de Chambrun, Dorothy Reeder, and other staff to endure hardship and danger to keep the American Library in Paris open during the occupation? Why did a few devoted supporters like Sumner continue fundraising efforts when future prospects looked bleak? And why did Dr. Hermann Fuchs risk protecting this particular institution from confiscation? Each individual had his or her personal reasons, but the motives of all were inevitably intertwined with a belief that the American Library in Paris represented far more than a collection of books and a place to read.

The original ALA goal that the library should play a normative role by transmitting the best aspects of contemporary American librarianship had impressed Dr. Fuchs, who considered it a model of modern librarianship in Europe. A strong sense of professionalism and collegiality influenced his policy of not allowing German military interference with the library or its staff—even after the United States entered the war. In contrast, the countess never wrote of the library as promoting new professional standards but instead conceived of its role as transmitting a “spiritual heritage: art, literature, religion, music accumulated by the ages for the needs of mankind.” She continued: “I firmly believe that the fact that universities, libraries, theaters and concert halls were kept open in France during occupation, bombardments, and blackouts notwithstanding, was an immense asset for the population” (Chambrun, 1949, p. 171).

Other key players were committed to the library as an instrument of cultural diplomacy. Just months before the start of the war, Edward Sumner declared: “I believe firmly that the American Library in Paris is the ablest organization for distribution of books throughout Europe for the development of cultural relations and for spreading a knowledge of American History and ideals.”23 A few months later he reaffirmed his commitment: “I am not interested in the library as a small local circulating library but I am greatly interested in its possibilities . . . and believe it is desirable to keep the Library functioning . . . for eventual service to promote the cause of democracy.”24 Dorothy Reeder agreed and saw her work as having both social and symbolic value. In May 1940, just weeks before the fall of France, Reeder reflected: “More and more I realize my responsibility to guard our Library. It stands as a symbol of freedom and understanding, of service to all, a fine piece of democracy.”25 After the war French ambassador Hugh
Bonnet expressed a similar idea when he referred to the American Library during the occupation “as an open window on the free world” (quoted in Madden, 1946, p. 1659).

While the history of the American Library in Paris is a tribute to the courage and perseverance of individuals, it is also a story of institutional adaptation and survival. In his book *Institutions and Organizations*, W. Richard Scott writes: “Organizations are affected, even penetrated by their environments, but they are also capable of responding to these influence attempts creatively and strategically. By acting in concert with other organizations facing similar pressures, organizations can sometimes counter, curb, circumvent, or redefine these demands” (1995, p. 134). The survival of the American Library in Paris provides a dramatic case study of the way that one institution creatively overcame the odds against it by gaining the support of other organizations (such as the American Embassy, the French government, the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, and the French Office for Information). Equally important during the period from June 1940 to August 1944 was the protection of the Bibliotheksschutz—the German agency responsible for libraries in occupied territories. Collective action may be essential to organizations, but Scott observes that this “does not preclude individual attempts to reinterpret, challenge, or defy authoritative claims made on them. Organizations are creatures of their institutional environment, but most modern organizations are constituted as active players, not passive pawns” (1995, p. 132). During World War II the American Library became an active player, and one that proved capable of reinterpreting, manipulating, and challenging—in a subversive way—constraints put upon it during the Nazi occupation.

**Notes**

2. Dorothy Reeder, “The American Library in Paris, September 1939–June 1941,” Archives of the American Library Association, Record Series 2/4/70 Box 3. This fifteen-page report contains a moving firsthand account of the library during the phony war and occupation. Although undated, Reeder begins: “As I write this resume [sic] of activities of our library in Paris, it is hard for me to believe that I am not there.” The report is labeled “CONFIDENTIAL” and on the last page Reeder states that the date of her arrival in America was July 19, 1941. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Dorothy Reeder are from this source.
5. Edward A. Sumner to Ambassador Bullitt, May 6, 1939, Archives of the American Library Association, Record Series 2/4/70 Box 3. Sumner noted: “The French Government gave the American Library 60,000 francs in 1935; 100,000 francs in 1936; and 25,000 each in 1937 and 1938. In spite of these facts, the United States Government has never made a grant to the American Library in Paris.”
6. American Library in Paris, Photograph Collection, Box 23, File 6, War Years: Dorothy Reeder.
10. According to international convention, an “open city” would not be defended but would be transferred to the occupying power with due process (see Pryce-Jones, 1981, p. 3).
11. Reeder notes that Turnball and her daughter arrived safely in England.
13. Reeder never mentions Dr. Fuchs in her confidential report; she may have feared that his support for the library could have endangered him if known. Therefore we have only the countess’s version of the story, which she must have heard from Reeder.
16. Ibíd.
17. The countess observed these rules but managed to provide extra money to her underpaid staff through holiday bonuses.
20. Included with Sumner’s “Report for the Board of Trustees” is a very negative letter from Francis Henry Taylor, curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who was in France on a government mission to investigate Nazi-confiscated art. Although he accused the Chambruns of betraying France, he offers no evidence against them, aside from their relationship to Laval; he also states: “I realize that any opinion on my part is gratuitous.”
22. The countess published Shakespeare retrouvé: sa vie, son oeuvre in France in 1947. She then translated it into English and revised it before her death in 1954; three years later it was issued by London publisher Hollis and Carter and appeared under the title Shakespeare: A Portrait Restored.
23. Edward A. Sumner to Dr. Stevens, May 6, 1939, Archives of the American Library Association, Record Series 2/4/70 Box 3.
24. Edward A. Sumner to Frederick Keppel, October 5, 1940, Archives of the American Library Association, Record Series 2/4/70 Box 3.
25. Dorothy Reeder, quote dated May 18, 1940, reproduced by Edward A. Sumner in a circular letter: “To Our Sponsors and Those Whose Interest We Have Solicited,” June 11, 1940, Archives of the American Library Association, Record Series 2/4/70 Box 3.

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American Library in Paris, Photograph Collection, Box 23, File 6, War Years: Dorothy Reeder. Archives of the American Library Association, University of Illinois, Urbana. Record Group: Executive Board and Executive Director, Sub-group: Executive Director, American Library in Paris Correspondence, 1922–1945. Record Series Number: 2/4/70, Box 3 and Box 4.
Archives of the American Library in Paris. Documents cited are drawn from the following series:
B1: Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes 1926, 1930–1959, Box 2; E1: Annual Meeting of Membership 1944–1974, Box 9; F1: Publications: ALP Yearbooks and Annual Reports (1921–1974), Box 10.
References

Mary Niles Maack holds an M.L.S. from Columbia University. After working at New York Public Library she returned to Columbia where she earned her doctorate in 1978. Since then she has conducted research on the history of libraries and librarianship in Africa, Europe, and the United States. She has published one book and several articles based on her research in Africa. Her publications on gender issues in librarianship include a book as well as numerous articles and book chapters. In 1982–83 she was awarded a Fulbright lectureship at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Bibliothèques in France. She serves on the editorial board of *Libraries and the Cultural Record* and for five years she was a member of the editorial board of *Library Quarterly*. Dr. Maack won the Justin Winsor Award of the ALA Library History Round Table and she and Joanne Passet received the Jesse Shera Award of the Library Research Round Table for their study on mentoring. Dr. Maack has been doing research at the American Library in Paris since 2001 and is now working on a monograph dealing with American books in France. She has served as chair of the ALA Library History Roundtable in 1991–92 and in 2006–07.
“People were literally starving for any kind of reading”: The Theresienstadt Ghetto Central Library, 1942–1945

Miriam Intrator

Abstract

Jews crowded into the ghettos and concentration camps of World War II were desperate for any avenue of resistance or escape, not only physically but also mentally. In the ghetto concentration camp Theresienstadt, the prisoner-run Ghetto Central Library, complete with bookmobile system, reading room, and branch libraries, served as a reminder that minds and imaginations remained active and free, even amidst devastating persecution. With the inclusion of Jewish book collections confiscated by the Nazis, it grew to 100,000 volumes. Brought to the Jewish Museum of Prague Library after liberation, the books are still being returned, whenever possible, to original owners.

Ghettos and concentration camps were integral components in the systematic genocide of Jews during World War II. This article will examine one of these camps, Theresienstadt, which, as will be explained shortly, was distinctive in numerous ways. Of particular interest here is that it had a large and active library, the Ghetto Central Library (Ghettozentralbücherei). The library grew, in part, thanks to the frequency with which individuals entering Theresienstadt packed a treasured book instead of a little more food or clothing, an extra pair of shoes, or a blanket in their severely restricted luggage allotment. Most of these thoughtfully selected books ended up in the library. Through its very normalcy as an institution of leisure and learning, the library provided a means for prisoners to resist Nazi attempts to completely humiliate, dehumanize, and annihilate them. The library represented an organized system of life, all the more inspirational and strengthening as it thrived, providing links to the past as well as room to hope for a future within the much larger system of death.
One man, Rudolf Geissmar, did not survive Theresienstadt, but part of an epic poem that he wrote in the camp did. In a stanza entitled “Dedicated to the library,” he wrote:

I am lying abed and would like to read something
And have already submitted several requests
And each time you were accommodating,
But what I got I had already studied before.
Be once more nice and send me something
Because here a body has time . . . .
But please no thin and lightweight books.
No, rather something to chew on, heavy and hard.
. . . at least something serious and good.
I place my wish confidently in your hands.
And obediently and in good mood look forward
To a well meaning gift. 1

Geissmar’s words vividly convey the intense need that existed for the library’s books and services. Reading functioned as a crucial tool of comfort, learning, and escape that some believed contributed to their ultimate survival.

To provide some general context before delving deeper into the story of the library, Theresienstadt is the German name for the Czech fortress town of Terezín, located about forty kilometers from Prague. In early 1941 the Nazis decided that Terezín, surrounded by walls and a moat and with a prison and barracks, was ideal for a Jewish ghetto. The first transport of Jews from Prague arrived in late November of 1941, and by June of 1942 the Czech inhabitants had been forced out and the entire town used to imprison Jews.

Theresienstadt can be seen as different from other ghettos and concentration camps in two key ways. First, much of its population, particularly early on, was made up of specially selected individuals including Jews from the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia; wealthy and prominent Jews; many famous artists, writers, musicians, and scholars; Jewish World War I veterans, and spouses in or children of mixed marriages. In other words, people whose sudden murder or unexplained disappearance might be noticed, questioned, or investigated by the international community. Second, this predominately privileged population facilitated the purposeful creation of a “model camp” fabricated by the Nazis as a response to questioning outsiders. Theresienstadt was presented as a normal, functioning town where Jews were being kept by choice and for their own benefit.

This deception was achieved through an active propaganda system using commerce and culture. Respected men from the Jewish community were appointed to a Council of Elders to run the day-to-day activities of the camp, ranging from work and housing assignments to food and payment allotments, and even preparing transport lists to the east. Of course, this was all done under Nazi orders, although the Council of Elders did attempt
to soften the harsh blows whenever possible. The system of “commerce” in the camp consisted of a bank that controlled a worthless ghetto currency, a café that served only watery-brown coffee substitute, and shops that sold nothing of any use or were always closed. Even the library and other cultural and intellectual activities were intended to keep the Jews occupied, distracted from the Nazis’ darker intentions, and thus easier to control. In short, behind this flimsy façade, Theresienstadt was a transit camp for Jews on their way to death camps, mainly Auschwitz and Treblinka, and its appalling conditions were such that death from disease and deprivation were constant and substantial.

What the Nazis did not foresee was that enclosing so many outstanding people in such a small space, and condoning and even encouraging participation in cultural activities, allowed for intellectual and spiritual resistance to bloom and grow in the camp. In Theresienstadt the Nazis walked a thin line between empowering the Jews by allowing them certain privileges, such as the library, while depriving them of their belongings and adequate basic necessities, like food, fresh water, and hygienic living conditions, so that in the end they would be too weak and ill to revolt.

In November of 1942, almost one year exactly after the first transports arrived in Theresienstadt, the Jewish Council of Elders issued an order which read as follows:

The Ghetto Library will be opened in L304 on Wednesday, November 25th, 1942. It is equipped as a mobile library. According to the number of books on hand, boxes of books will be loaned to buildings, or for stewards of the buildings or houses. . . . Individual borrowers will be given special permission by Dr. Emil Utitz, who has been appointed head of the library by the Central Secretariat. (Utitz, 1965, p. 264)

Prior to the start of the war, Emil Utitz had been a professor of philosophy and psychology at Charles University in Prague. A few days after the library’s opening, he wrote: “In spite of great difficulties we succeeded to create a center of serious cultural work and even save many interdicted works. We hope this library set up with much effort and dedication won’t be torn to pieces.”

Surviving writings and reports from the library and librarians, as well as countless diaries, memoirs, and histories, provide evidence of the enormous demand for a library, for books to read, to learn from, and to escape into. Emil Utitz wrote of the library’s opening, “It had been awaited with great excitement, for people were literally starving for any kind of reading” (Utitz, 1965, p. 264). Hana Muller Bruml, who worked as a nurse in Theresienstadt, wrote, “We needed to read. Not being able to read was a deprivation” (Bruml, 1998, p. 47). A young boy lamented in a poem to his father, “Truly, I have nothing to read” (Shavit, 1997, p. 130). And in another section of his epic poem, Rudolf Geissmar quoted, “Well, don’t you have anything for me to read?” He continued: “This question you can hear from
early to late here / The urge for culture has never been this great // Each book becomes a rarity."3

These examples illustrate that Theresienstadt prisoners were literally desperate to escape through reading. Books made it possible to withdraw from an unendurable reality and to take temporary mental refuge in other worlds, past or present, real or fantasy. In Theresienstadt those who succeeded in this recognized their small, but not insignificant, triumph over Nazi efforts at total control. In her memoir of Theresienstadt, Lucy Mandelstam wrote: “As time passed I learned my way around the ghetto . . . and took advantage of the few good things that were available, like . . . a very well stocked library. I had always been an avid reader, and being able to get all the books I wanted was great and it helped me to forget my surroundings for hours on end.”4 Her words express the experiences of many. Of course not all had access to or even knew about the library, but for those who did, being able to read, share, and discuss books was a reminder that minds and imaginations were alive and free, in spite of the conditions and restrictions that threatened to destroy everyone in the camp.

Upon opening, the one-room library held about 4,000 volumes and had a staff of six, three men and three women, at least one of whom, Else Menken, had been a professional librarian in Hamburg before the war. It was far too small both in terms of space and books to satisfy Theresienstadt’s large, diverse, book-hungry population, which at the time was at its severely over-crowded peak of over 58,000. Most inhabitants were Czech or German, but they were also Austrian, Dutch, Danish and Polish; the inhabitants were all ages, backgrounds, religious upbringings, and education levels, and all in constant flux as transports regularly came and went. Within a year, the collection had grown close to 60,000 volumes, and there were fifteen librarians and assistants on the staff. Both of these numbers continued to increase.

The majority of books in the collection were scholarly. Table 1 shows a November 1943 breakdown of the book collection, where Hebraica and Judaica far outnumber the belles-lettres and classics.

Consequently, many books were in German or Hebrew, an imbalance bemoaned by the camp’s majority who wanted to read for pleasure and escape and in their native language, often Czech. Librarian Hugo Friedmann wrote, “Alas, the stock of Czech books is totally insufficient and unable to meet the minimal demands of the public.”5 And Frederike Papanek wrote in her memoir, “There is a lot of intellectual nurture . . . [including] good books though a bit one-sided [in] Jewish literature.”6 The scholarly slant to the collection was due to confiscated Jewish institutional, community, and personal libraries being shipped to Theresienstadt. Books from the collections of the Rabbinical Seminaries of Berlin and Breslau and of the Jewish communities of Berlin and Vienna were also transferred to the Theresienstadt library.
Other books came from camp prisoners themselves. Leaving their entire lives and worldly possessions behind, each incoming prisoner could only bring fifty kilograms of personal belongings with them. Nevertheless, prisoner Dr. Norbert Frýd believed that “practically no one . . . had not brought at least one book in the fifty kilograms allowed him” (Frýd, 1965, p. 207). Another prisoner, Jana Friesová, wrote, “Everyone chose [the book] that . . . was closest to his or her heart” (Friesová, 2002, p. 87). Ultimately it did not matter as all arriving and departing transports had to pass through a terribly invasive and traumatic process known as the “sluice” (Schleuse in German; šlojs in Czech), when guards searched and often virtually emptied all the carefully packed suitcases, bags, and parcels. In the library’s founding deed, the Council of Elders suggested that “The stock of books could be much expanded if books left by evacuated Jews were given to the disposal of the ghetto . . . after being checked and sorted out.” Thanks to their foresight and efforts, confiscated books were sent to the library and thus saved.

In June of 1943 a reading room opened; librarian Hugo Friedmann described its reference collection as follows: “There is the most important lexicographic and encyclopedia material, atlases, basic works of art history and all the professional [subjects], as well as magazines, art publications, poetry and plays, [and] history of literature.” Because the library’s physical space was too limited to allow open access, the Council of Elders created two stipulations for potential patrons. First, payment of a deposit of 50 ghetto Kronen, the worthless ghetto currency, and second, a successful interview with Emil Utitz or his assistant librarians to provide proof of having completed higher education. Neither of these requirements was difficult.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Number of Volumes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hebraica</td>
<td>10,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew periodicals</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaica (Zionist)</td>
<td>10,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish periodicals</td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiddish literature</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History (art and music)</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient languages</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern languages</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>2,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports of activities</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belles lettres</td>
<td>5,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile literature</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48,710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Starke (1975, p. 196).
to fulfill as most prisoners had more ghetto Kronen than they knew what to do with and, as previously mentioned, the camp population was overall very highly educated, intellectual, and academic, and thus many easily passed the interview. Library cards with the patron’s name, transport and ghetto home numbers, notation of payment, date, signature, and the ghetto library stamp were awarded to those who met both conditions.

The mobile library envisioned by the Council of Elders was basically an improvised bookmobile system (Wanderbibliotheken) consisting of boxes containing thirty books each of what was described as “a cross section of the works of which most copies were available” (Starke-Goldschmidt, 1965, p. 172). These traveled around the camp according to a specific plan, resulting in many more individuals gaining access to books than would have otherwise been possible. Since there was a terrible dearth of the fiction that was in greatest demand, library staff attempted to fill the traveling boxes with as many fiction books as possible to enable broader access. Of course, even under the best circumstances, library books are damaged, lost, or simply never returned. In Theresienstadt, the severe lack of paper, whether for fuel, hygienic purposes, or personal diversion, meant that books occasionally became irresistible sources of this crucial material. Inge Auerbacher recalled: “Usually there was one stove in a large room and fuel of course was very meager so we threw in books.” Many other books disappeared from the traveling
boxes to be read repeatedly and shared outside the planned system, or to be taken east in transports. Given the situation in the camp, Emil Utitz understood and accepted this reality, frustrating and painful for any librarian. He maintained that “a book was serving its purpose as long as it was read, whatever the circumstances” (Starke-Goldschmidt, 1965, p. 172).

Hebrew, technical, medical, and children’s branches were another means used to disperse books as widely as possible throughout the camp. The Hebrew library (hebräischer Raum or hebräischer zimmer) was one of the largest. On June 26, 1943, Gonda Redlich, a Zionist youth leader, noted in his ghetto diary that “People who know Hebrew were ordered to translate and catalog books. It seems they want to send Hebrew books here for cataloging” (Friedman, 1992, p. 123). Indeed the Nazis did want the Hebrew books cataloged for eventual inclusion in their planned “Museum of the Extinct Race” for which Jewish religious and cultural artifacts were being confiscated, then sorted and identified by Jews, and finally stored in large warehouses in Prague and elsewhere. In Theresienstadt individual catalog cards were created for close to 30,000 Hebrew and Judaica volumes, and the many cases of multiple copies of single works were carefully identified (Braunová, 2001, p. 165).
Smaller collections were placed in various group homes throughout the camp, including a collection of 1,500 books for a private reading group, and a separate very popular and well-utilized children’s library containing around 35,000 volumes. Books in poor condition were generally brought to hospitals and sick rooms and were intended not to circulate outside of those areas due to the risk of spreading disease. One camp inhabitant, Gerty Spies, surmised that the library staff had such a high rate of illness as a result of handling books in a camp devastated by disease and illness, with no possible method of decontamination available (Spies, 1997, p. 17).

In early 1944 a “beautification” process began in Theresienstadt in preparation for a visit by a delegation from the International Red Cross. This occurred on June 23. As part of the beautification, the library was moved to larger rooms and modern metal shelving was installed, which came as an enormous relief after the dusty, insect-ridden, wood crate-like shelving used in the original library space. The metal provided the books and those who worked in and visited the library with desperately needed protection from the insects that infested and endangered the entire camp. In addition, a brightly painted welcoming sign reading “Zur Bücherei” was posted in the street. Using the human-drawn wooden carts that were used to move everything in the camp, from bread to corpses, it took three days to move the 65,000 volumes about one kilometer, from one end of Theresienstadt to the other. Though this task was difficult and exhausting for the weak ghetto inhabitants, librarian Käthe Starke recorded the way in which it was also inspiring. She wrote, “During the removal the weather was fine, the young men’s enthusiasm over being so near the books, even though only to help moving them, was gratifying” (Starke-Goldschmidt, 1965, p. 175). The observation that simply being in the presence of so many books had a positive impact on these suffering young men is quite extraordinary.

Shortly thereafter, the “beautified” camp was cruelly featured in a propaganda film. It is noteworthy that the library appears in the film, confirming its necessary contribution to making the Nazi’s model camp a successful reality. After the beautification and the filming, transports began taking Theresienstadt prisoners to death camps further east in unprecedented numbers, intensifying the terror and uncertainty that had always weighed heavily on the camp. The result of these constant transports is reflected in the library staff numbers, which fell to fifteen in the summer of 1944 and then to just five later that year (Starke, 1975, p. 234). Upon liberation in May of 1945, the only surviving library staff were director Emil Utitz and his assistant Käthe Starke. Their extreme dedication to the library kept them in Theresienstadt for three months after liberation, cataloging and organizing the collection of approximately 100,000 books. The books were then transferred to the Jewish Museum of Prague and its library, which were reinstated after the war. In the words of Emil Utitz: “Finally came the hour to disband, thanks to the victorious Soviet Army. Now began the liquidation
of the camp. We took charge of the proper packing of our stocks of books in many hundreds of boxes. So 100,000 volumes were returned to Prague, whence the majority had come” (Utitz, 1965, p. 266).

The Jewish Museum of Prague Library integrated the books with other incoming collections, and whenever possible returned books to original owners, a process that continued inconsistently over the years. Only in 2001 did this become a concentrated provenance research project into the many books of unknown origin as a result of World War II. Most books from the Theresienstadt library can be recognized by the Ghettozentralbücherei stamp found on their title pages (Utitz, 1965, p. 266). The project, time-consuming and extremely detail-oriented, entails looking for any symbol of previous ownership including stamps, signatures, notes, card inserts, imprints on the binding or ex-libris stickers. Whenever possible, these volumes continue to be returned to very grateful and emotional Jewish communities, families, or their descendants.10

As Emil Utitz so poignantly said: “Here ends the short, and yet so long, history of this unusual library. The books with the stamp ‘Ghettobücherei’ will, however, recall this library again and again throughout the decades or, perhaps, centuries” (Utitz, 1965, p. 266). It is to be hoped that he will be proven correct and the extraordinary example offered by the Theresienstadt library and its librarians, unfailingly dedicated even amidst the worst of human suffering, will serve as a reminder and as an inspiring lesson long into the future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The title of this article is taken from the writings of Dr. Emil Utitz, the ghetto library’s director: The Central Ghetto Library in the Concentration Camp Terezín, ed. Frantisek Ehrmann (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech Lands, 1965), 264. In the Library History Seminar XI Conference program the title of this paper is given as “The Theresienstadt Ghetto Central Library, 1941–1945: Reading and Books as Means of Defiance and Escape.”

NOTES

2. Emil Utitz, “Activity Report for the Founding Year,” Beit-Theresienstadt Institute, 1942, p. 3.
10. Description of provenance research project taken from interview with then Hebraist of the Jewish Museum of Prague Library Andrea Braunová, July 2002.

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Miriam Intrator is photo archivist, collections registrar, and reference librarian at the Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History, New York. Her independent research focuses on the nature and role of libraries, books, reading, and storytelling under extreme circumstances of war, terror, and deprivation, particularly during the Holocaust. She has published several articles and presented conference papers and public lectures on her research. She has reviewed books for *Kirkus Reviews* and the *American Jewish Library Association Newsletter*. She received her M.L.S. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2003 with the Dean’s Award for Outstanding Master’s Paper. This fall she will begin her doctoral studies in modern European and Jewish history at the CUNY Graduate Center.
Books Cannot Be Killed by Fire: The German Freedom Library and the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books as Agents of Cultural Memory

NIKOLA VON MERVELDT

ABSTRACT
This article looks at two libraries founded in 1934 as counter-symbols to the Nazi book burning: the German Freedom Library in Paris and the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books at the Brooklyn Jewish Center in New York. It describes these two libraries as agents of cultural memory, as privileged sites for redefining German, German-Jewish, and Jewish-American cultural identity in times of radical change. Created on different continents and in different social, cultural, and political contexts, they reflect the dynamics of cultural memory from 1933 through World War II and the Cold War era to the present day.

Books cannot be killed by fire. People die, but books never die. No man and no force can put thought in a concentration camp forever. No man and no force can take from the world the books that embody man’s eternal fight against tyranny. In this war, we know, books are weapons.1

INTRODUCTION
The above was President Roosevelt’s message to the American people printed on an Office of War Information poster (Broder, 1942; see Figure 1). It was a few months into the war and nine years after the Nazis had set fire to thousands of books and banned the works of hundreds of authors from German libraries. This compelling poster suggests that, in times of war, revolution, and social change, books transcend their state of physical objects to become powerful symbols in a war of ideas and ideologies. A closer inspection of the poster reveals that the book towering over the bonfires looks much more like a fortress built of solid stone blocks than an object made of...
paper and ink. The image depicts the double nature of the book in times of change and crisis: it is both a fragile object threatened by destruction and a powerful symbol preserving cultural memory for future generations.

The Nazis had staged the book burning as a symbolic act. The bonfires were to “cleanse” the German spirit of the “un-German” influence of communist, pacifist, and, above all, Jewish thought. And as ever more books were banished from the shelves of bookshops and public and private libraries, the Nazis appropriated German cultural memory and denied that Jews had ever had a place in it. The international media also commented on the symbolic nature of the act. They interpreted the bonfires very differently, however, anticipating radical social change, war, and even genocide, evoking the prophetic quote by nineteenth-century German poet Heinrich Heine: “Where one burns books, one will soon burn people.”

Intellectuals across the world were horrified by the event, but they also recognized its great symbolic potential. This is why, in the following year, two public libraries were founded as deliberate counter-symbols to this act of barbarism: the German Freedom Library (Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek) in Paris, and the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books in Brooklyn, New York. These two libraries housed the books burned and banned in Germany, ranging from Heine and Lenin to Thomas Mann and Sinclair Lewis,
thus becoming powerful agents of counter-memories to the fascist attempt to rewrite history. They guarded the cultural heritage of a country that had once embodied the principles of humanism and was now threatening the civilized world.

United by a common cause, the two libraries of “burned books” are, however, strikingly different. Whereas the Paris library was founded largely by left-wing German émigré writers who wanted to represent the “other” and better Germany, the Brooklyn library was an initiative of liberal upper-middle-class Jewish-Americans who felt called upon both as the People of the Book and citizens of the New World. While the Freedom Library was confiscated when the German troops invaded Paris in 1940, the Library of Nazi-Banned Books in New York slowly receded into oblivion once it no longer symbolized a counter-memory. In this article I propose to look at these two libraries as agents of cultural memory, as privileged sites for redefining German, German-Jewish, and Jewish-American cultural identity. Created on different continents and in different social, cultural, and political contexts, they reflect the dynamics of cultural memory from 1933 through World War II and the Cold War Era to the present day.

The German Freedom Library

Paris, the city of Freedom, Brotherhood, and Equality, which had become the refuge for many German intellectuals, seemed the perfect place to erect a counter-monument to Nazi barbarism. May 10, 1934, the day of the inauguration of the Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek, was equally symbolic. It was the anniversary of the May 10, 1932, book-burning frenzy that had swept across Germany. But the library itself was very real: “more than 20,000 books and pamphlets have been gathered in a few small rooms tucked away in a corner of the Montparnasse at 65 Boulevard Arago,” the New York Times reported the following day. “The burdened shelves bear silent witness to the high distinction of the works which good Hitlerites must not read.” The “German library of the burned books,” as the British and American press called it, did more than preserve the works of banned authors, however. It also kept works indispensable to the study and analysis of Hitlerism, including copies of Mein Kampf and every issue of the Nazi “hate” newspaper, Der Völkische Beobachter. A collection of 200,000 newspaper clippings completed the archive, which was consulted by writers, students, historians, and journalists and used to produce informative studies about Hitler’s Germany as well as antifascist propaganda.

The German-Jewish writer Alfred Kantorowicz, founder and secretary general of the library, gained the support of distinguished French and British public figures such as the publisher Gaston Gallimard and the philosopher Bertrand Russell, who both joined the library committee. André Gide, Romain Rolland, H. G. Wells, and Lion Feuchtwanger acted as honorary presidents, and Heinrich Mann, brother of Thomas Mann, was appointed
the library’s president. Together with the Society of Friends of the Library of Burned Books, established in London by the Countess of Oxford and Asquith, they helped to ensure both the public resonance of the project and the necessary funds. The inauguration was a great public event that made international headlines. Newspapers around the world proclaimed that the Library of Burned Books “stands for the fact that, although the Nazis can burn books, they cannot destroy freedom of thought or the great teaching of the past.”

Even the Nazi press was compelled to react to this demonstration of international solidarity. The Völkische Beobachter saw the Library of Burned Books as a hideous Jewish scheme, part of the Jewish-Marxist conspiracy. “The Goebbels apparatus,” Kantorowicz later explained, “was busy exploiting this thesis. Labelling the exiled writers ‘Jews’ or ‘bolshevists,’ Nazi propaganda implied they were not representative either of German literature or of German thought” (1944, p. 687). An enraged journalist at the official Nazi paper described the peaceful inauguration of the library as a hate rally exuding the stench of “Ghetto air.” But the Freedom Library was anything but a ghetto. Its members, most of them German émigré writers, both Jews and non-Jews, came from a wide range of social and political backgrounds; race and religion played no role in these intellectual circles. And even though the library had close ties to the Communist Party, it was not a party institution but open to all liberal minds opposing fascism. The library symbolized the unity of the German émigré community to the world, and intellectuals from around the world recognized its members as the true defenders of German culture. In his preface to a collection of essays by Kantorowicz titled Germany Is in Our Camp, Romain Rolland assured his German colleagues in exile, “Yes, I am with you—the representatives of the suppressed, exiled but invincible, better Germany which suffers but fights. The Germany we respect and love is in your camp.”

At least during the first years of the library’s existence, members put all divisive forces aside to join in the fight against Nazism. They organized readings and lectures, staged exhibitions, and published books and pamphlets to inform the world of the atrocities committed in Nazi Germany and of the existence of another, better Germany represented by the cultural heritage preserved in their library.

The Library of Burned Books thus became a site for redefining and negotiating German identity and culture. This symbolic battle fought with books came to a head in November 1936, when both the official Nazi government and the Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek staged book exhibitions in Paris. The Freedom Library displayed The Free German Book, a retrospective of German literature in exile, at the Société de Géographie on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Indeed, the “geography” and timing of this exhibit were in no way arbitrary. On the same street just doors away, the Nazi government
was celebrating German Book Week with an exhibit of what they considered to be true German literature. The *Free German Book* was a counter-event representing the “other” Germany and denouncing the hate propaganda of Hitler’s Germany. For a week in November 1936, a single block of a Paris boulevard was thus transformed into an ideological battleground of German cultural identity as Nazi officials and writers in exile put their books on display to show the people of Paris, France, and the world the true repository of German culture.

Since it became increasingly clear, however, that the world would remain deaf to all warnings and that Hitler’s regime was not going to be overthrown from within, the social and political differences ended up eroding this united cultural front. In 1937 the Communist Party apparatus took over the library (Bores, 2000, pp. 165–75). On May 10, 1940, precisely seven years after the fateful burning of the books, the Nazis attacked the Western front, forcing the exiles to seek refuge elsewhere (Kantorowicz, 1944, p. 686). The Freedom Library could not be saved. “When the Nazis occupied Paris, the Library and its archives were politely handed over to the Gestapo. This is the brief, honorable and very significant history of the Library of the Burned Books” Kantorowicz (1944, p. 687) observed on May 10, 1944, prophesying that this eleventh anniversary of the book burning would be “the last which will see the barbarians in power.”

For decades, the library’s collections were believed to have been lost or destroyed. It was only in 1990 that Hélène Roussel mentioned “a little known source” in the Reading Room of the French National Library: a handwritten thirty-seven-page list identifying 1,400 mostly French titles confiscated by the French police department and “donated” to the Bibliothèque Nationale in February 1940. The heading reads: “Documents seized in 1939 and acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale in February 1940. Including books from the Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek founded by Willy Münzenberg around 1935, in Paris, Boulevard Arago.” Dorothée Bores (2000, p. 87–188), whose excellent unpublished master’s thesis documents the history of the Freedom Library, was able to match most of the titles on the list with holdings of the Bibliothèque Nationale. She also traced the provenance of a number of selected titles to the Library of Burned Books. Administrative obstacles, however, made a complete verification of the list and hence the preparation of a detailed catalog impossible. Whether a certain reluctance to face the Vichy past may have played a part in this cannot be known. In any case, this example illustrates that Nazi-era provenance research, which began immediately after the war, has still not been completed. Libraries physically preserve the cultural heritage in their stacks and storage spaces, but it is the collection management that gives us insight into the intricate working of cultural memory and the complex processes of remembering and forgetting.
American Library of Nazi-Banned Books

The American Library of Nazi-Banned Books was inaugurated in December 1934 and was modeled on the Paris Freedom Library. American newspapers and library journals had reported enthusiastically on the establishment of the Paris institution and on plans for a library of burned books in London, calling for a similar initiative in the United States (Stern, 1985). This call to spiritual arms was not answered by an American library or by German immigrants but by the Brooklyn Jewish Center, created in December 1918 by second-generation east European immigrants wishing to reconcile Judaism with Americanism (Dash Moore, 1987, pp. 297–326; Kaufman, 1999, pp. 249–57).

The American setting and its integration into a Jewish community center gave this library of burned books a very different mission from that of the Paris institution. The American Library of Nazi-Banned Books stood united with the German Freedom Library in the ideological fight against the barbarism of the Hitler regime. But given its specific Jewish-American context, it pursued its own distinctive cultural project, which is reflected in the collection itself, in the speeches given at the grand inaugural dinner held on December 22, 1934, and in the various public statements relating to the library.

In April 1934, a month before the opening of the Paris library, the Brooklyn Jewish Center Review launched the project of a Library of Nazi-Banned Books. It published a preliminary list of twenty banned authors, including Heinrich Heine, Ernest Hemingway, and Helen Keller, and called on all members and friends of the center to donate books or funds. The best way to commemorate the auto-da-fe of May 1933, the article argued, was “with the acquisition of a substantial number of the works of the twenty authors listed above.” The project soon gained wholehearted support from leading figures in American public life, both Jews and Christians, who joined the library’s advisory board, including Albert Einstein, Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, and Will Durant.

In January 1935 the Review reported that the works of fifty-three authors had been assembled for the library; all volumes were English translations if available, except for literary works, which were acquired both in the original language and in translation. By the outbreak of World War II, the Brooklyn Jewish Center had assembled about 500 titles of Nazi-banned books, which stood in a special section alongside the regular collection of Judaica (Goldberg, 1946, pp. 25–27). Whereas the Paris collection of banned books was complemented by an antifascist archive containing contemporary material about Hitler Germany, this collection was firmly rooted in the timeless wisdom of Jewish Scripture.

It was this decidedly Jewish nature of the enterprise that distinguished the American library from its European counterpart. Given that the books burned in Nazi Germany were primarily by Jewish authors, the rabbi of the
Brooklyn Jewish Center, Rabbi Dr. Israel Herbert Levinthal, saw it “fitting that a Jewish publication [the *Brooklyn Jewish Center Review*], sponsored by a Jewish institution of the standing of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, should initiate such an undertaking.”

Louis J. Gribetz argued that “[n]o people has felt so keenly the galling weight of the chains of oppression as has the Jewish people.” But the role of the scapegoat was emphatically transcended by that of the guardian of civilization: “The establishment of this library offers us an occasion to show our capacity for indignation at the attempted suppression of science and literature and the will to combat it. . . . Knowledge and intellectual achievement have at all times been the pride and glory of the Jewish people,” Gribetz continued, “and to their acquisition and diffusion they have always given their complete and consecrated support.”

The *Hartford Jewish Ledger* praised the Library of Nazi-Banned Books as a *Ner Tamid*, “a perpetual light,” and Lewis Lewisohn, the German-born writer and a member of the advisory board, greeted the establishment of the library as an “extraordinary, dignified and powerful weapon in that fight for the spiritual freedom of mankind which it seems to be the special duty of the Jewish people to lead in this age” (Gribetz, 1934).

While the phoenix rising from the ashes was evoked in Paris to symbolize the collection at the Brooklyn Jewish Center, Rabbi Dr. Levinthal called to mind the legend of Rabbi Chaninah ben Teradian, who was burned by the Romans wrapped in a Torah scroll but did not despair because he knew that the destruction of Holy Scripture would be avenged. The *Jewish Examiner* hailed the Library of Nazi-Banned Books as “another Academy of Jabneh,” a worthy successor to the rabbinic academy founded after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. Almost two millennia later, the Jewish people was living up to its historic mission:

By thus affording shelter to the banned books Jewry gives the world a welcome reassurance of the truth which Nazis have yet to learn that libraries may be burnt but books cannot be destroyed because they are the bearers of ideas which are deathless. . . . The creation of this new library which parallels similar movements in every civilized country in the world is more than a gesture of contempt for modern medievalism. It is in complete accord with the centuried spirit of Israel which transfuses evil into good. . . . The library of the Brooklyn Jewish Center will be another Academy of Jabneh offering unceasing defiance to Nazi brutishness and witnessing the indestructible life of the human spirit.

Finally, at the grand inaugural dinner of the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books, attended by 500 distinguished guests, including Albert Einstein and Heinz Liepmann, author of the autobiographical concentration camp novel *Murder Made in Germany*, Rabbi Dr. Levinthal quoted a simple legend from the Talmud that told “in clearest fashion the struggle of civi-
lization”: “When God gave the Torah at Sinai,—at the very moment, there came down from the heavens Sefer Vesayof—a book and a sword. . . . And a Heavenly Voice was heard to say: ‘Choose one or the other! If you choose the book, life will be yours; if you choose the sword, death must be yours!’” (Levinthal, 1935, p. 6).

The establishment of the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books at the Brooklyn Jewish Center, he claimed, re-enacted this universal struggle of civilization, which was born with the origin of Scripture itself: “This library is our answer to the challenge of Nazi Germany,” Levinthal declared. “They chose Sayof, the Sword; and their boast is a Hitler! We chose the Sefer, the Book, and our boast is an Einstein! They prefer fire, destruction, symbols of death! We take our stand on the side of thought, feelings, ideals,—symbols of Life!”

As the “People of the Book,” the Jewish people saw itself predestined to act as guardian of world culture. But even though the biblical, Talmudic, and historic references situated the Library of Nazi-Banned Books within a Jewish framework, they resonated with a wide range of listeners in the New World. An anecdote perhaps best illustrates the universal appeal of the New York enterprise, which extended beyond the strictly Jewish or German cause. The March 1935 issue of the Brooklyn Jewish Center Review printed an article titled “A Negro Hears Heinz Liepmann.”27 The author, signing himself H. B., reveals how touched he was by the appeal of this banned German-Jewish author who hardly mastered the English language, and how deeply he felt the injustice of innocent people suffering because of conviction and race. He followed Liepmann in his call to arms but gave it a specifically American slant: “if we all fight together, not with weapons but with the privilege of every citizen, then, and only then can we blot this awful blur [sic] on history’s records. Voting, keeping active in our political circles, being conscious of what’s happening around us, these are our weapons. Arm yourselves immediately—Make right the wrong done” (H. B., 1935, p. 9). Invoking the civic rights defended in the American Civil War, this man supported suffering Jews and persecuted Germans alike because their cause resonated with him.28 By transcending linguistic, religious, and racial boundaries, the Library of Nazi-Banned Books and the activities linked to it truly symbolized democratic American values. The fight for freedom of thought and expression was both a Jewish and an American one.

It is significant in this respect that the library was named not “Jewish” but “American” Library of Nazi-Banned Books. Whereas the Paris library of burned books was a library in exile founded by German émigrés alienated from their country, the Brooklyn library was an institution firmly embedded in a community center created by Jewish immigrants who identified with American values. The Brooklyn Jewish Center was deeply committed to reconciling Jewish traditions with the American way of life so as to forge an inclusive Jewish-American identity. It was a response to social changes experienced by second-generation immigrant Jews who wanted to embrace
American values while remaining true to their religious and cultural heritage. This two-fold desire was reflected in the center’s library: The permanent collection housed religious and secular literature in English, Yiddish, and Hebrew, and the special collection of Nazi-banned books united works of world literature in the name of freedom. Unlike the German Freedom Library, the library at the Brooklyn Jewish Center was never intended to represent the “other Germany.” Nor was it meant to function as a center for political activism—least of all of a communist nature. If the center had any political ambition, it was to raise international awareness of the Nazi atrocities committed against Jews and perhaps even draw attention to the urgent need for a Jewish homeland. The center was actively involved in Zionist affairs and used the Nazi bonfires as proof of their urgency (Kaufman, 1999, p. 256). In October 1933 the Brooklyn Jewish Center Review quoted Thomas Mann, whose books had been banned by the Nazis: “What happened in Germany convinced me more and more of the value of Zionism for the Jew.” Rabbi Stephen Wise, who, on the day of the book burning, had led massive crowds in a march from New York’s Madison Square Garden to protest Nazi persecution of the Jews, also spoke at the inauguration dinner of the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books and seized the opportunity to support the Zionist cause (Goldberg, 1935, p. 19). Rather than representing the other Germany, the burned books now called for a new Israel. The same “weapons” thus served in different wars of ideas.

Remembering and Forgetting

Today, the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books and the German Freedom Library—once guardians of German-Jewish and Jewish-American cultural memories—have been almost forgotten. In the case of the Paris Library, the division of Germany and the Cold War can help to explain this oblivion. Whereas West Germany did not consider the antifascist movement to be part of its cultural heritage because of the communist stigma attached to it (Kantorowicz, 1978, p. 49–68), East Germany refused to commemorate the Freedom Library because Alfred Kantorowicz and other collaborators of the library were no longer in line with party politics (Kantorowicz, 1978, pp. 31–49). Forgetting these libraries seemed part of the cultural politics of Cold War Germany.

The same may be true of the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books, whose holdings were donated to the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York when the Brooklyn Jewish Center closed in the late 1970s (Reif, 1980). During McCarthy’s anticommunist crusade, which brought the Cold War to the American homefront, the symbol of the book-burning was turned against the U.S. administration, accusing it of the same intolerance and barbarism American soldiers had fought to destroy in World War II. This once-powerful symbol of the American fight for freedom of speech and
expression had lost its innocence, and with it, the Brooklyn library, preserving the works of many communist writers, lost its function as a heroic counter-symbol. I suspect, however, that the Brooklyn Library of Nazi-Banned Books failed to become a part of collective memory because thoughts of the atrocities committed during World War II overshadowed the former “symbol of Life” Rabbi Levinthal had celebrated before the war. To come back to Roosevelt’s quote, books may not have died, but millions of innocent people certainly did. If the library initially symbolized a common German-Jewish heritage, the Holocaust made it more than clear that this hyphenated union was nothing but an illusion.

The fate of these two libraries of burned books can, I believe, tell us something about the dynamics of cultural memory. In times of war, revolution, and social change, books and libraries gain a symbolic dimension precisely because their physical existence is threatened. As symbols or counter-symbols, they can act as a powerful force to shape identity and create community even under adverse circumstances. They become agents (and not just repositories) of cultural memory not only because they physically preserve works of the past and transmit tradition but more importantly because they represent communities and symbolize values in need of defense. Yet, at the same time, the symbolic use of books and libraries as ideological weapons makes them vulnerable because ideologies change and communities evolve and reinterpret their past to redefine their identity. Once library collections lose their symbolic function, or, worse, once their symbolic meaning no longer seems compatible with current social and political concerns, they are doomed to be forgotten. It is then the task of librarians, catalogers, collection managers, and library historians to help preserve the physical evidence, to make it available, and to reconstruct the historic and symbolic significance of these “forgotten” collections so that they may once again become agents of cultural memory.

Notes
I wish to thank Dorothée Bores (Mainz University, Germany) for generously sending me a copy of her unpublished M.A. thesis, “Wir hüten Erbe und Zukunft.”
1. Roosevelt first pronounced these words on May 10, 1943, the Day of the Burned Books, which was commemorated by the New York Public Radio (Kantorowicz, 1970–71, p. 40). The quote served as the motto for a whole series of events commemorating the tenth anniversary of the German book burning (Kantorowicz, 1978, p. 298).
2. This famous quote is from his play Almansor (1821). The original German reads: “Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen.”
3. Alfred Kantorowicz, the founder of the German Freedom Library, stressed this symbolic dimension: “Only imaginative men, ‘dreamers,’ those who are not content merely to note the facts but who also consider them as symbols of social, political, spiritual and human currents, have understood in time the real meaning of the ‘symbolic action’ of the auto-da-fé’s. . . . They knew that those who burned the books one day would set fire to the whole world” (Kantorowicz, 1944, p. 686).


6. For example, see references listed in note 5.


8. A unity that was, in fact, cruelly missing (Holz & Schopf, 2001, pp. 46–47).

9. This quote, reprinted in Kantorowicz (1944, p. 688), is taken from Rolland’s introduction to a volume of essays (Kantorowicz, 1936).

10. This exhibition was documented by the Jewish-German photographer Josef Breitenbach. See the chapter “The Free German Book” in Holz & Schopf (2001, pp. 37–67) and Bores (2000, pp. 121–29).

11. Kantorowicz observes: “The coincidence of the dates is striking. May 10, 1940, was the direct consequence of May 10, 1933.”

12. Bores (2000, pp. 178–79) observes that Kantorowicz gave contradictory information concerning the confiscation of the library’s material. Since he had left Paris in February 1939 to settle in southern France, he had no firsthand knowledge of the last days of the library.

13. The list indicates the “Préfecture de la police” as the books’ origin. Bores (2000, pp. 181–82) notes that the Paris police archives reported to have no records of the library’s confiscation.

14. Bores points out that the list (call number 017 Impr. 6 Ouv.) can now be consulted in the “Salle de recherche bibliographique” (Salle X) at the Tolbiac branch of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Bores, 2000, p. 181 n. 13). There is a copy of this list at the Exilarchiv Frankfurt am Main EB 1000/250. All confiscated books were given the accession number DON 33 50 52, but they were not classified by provenance and are now stored in different locations of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Bores, 2000, p. 187).

15. Quoted in Bores (2000, p. 181). The French original reads “Ouvrages saisis en 1939 entrés à la Bibliothèque nationale en février 1940. Entre autres : livres de la Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek fondée par Willy Münzenberg vers 1935, à Paris, Boulevard Arago.” Willy Münzenberg, a Communist Party official, was not a founding member of the library but provided some of the funds, networks, and encouragements instrumental to its establishment. See Bores (2000, pp. 26–46).


17. To give but one example: Following the Stolen Artwork Restitution Act of 1998, the Austrian National Library completed its Nazi-era provenance research. It produced a detailed report in 2003 and showed an exhibition in 2004 entitled “Looted Books: The Austrian National Library Faces its Past.” In the exhibition catalog, Ernst Bacher (2004) explains this long delay with legal complications and sociological factors. He argues that the generational shift of the 1990s, which saw a new postwar generation move into leading position, was instrumental in allowing the confrontation with the past.

18. For example, the *New York Times* (March 27, 1934, p. 19) published an article entitled “German Library Planned in London” and reported on a meeting at the house of the Countess of Oxford and Asquith. Despite these announcements no evidence of such a library in London has been found. London did take part in the movement, however, by founding the “Society of the Friends of the Library of Burned Books” to support the Paris library. In England, the *John Rylands Library Bulletin* (“German Library of Burned Books Formally Opened in Paris,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 18 [1934]: 272–75), which also reported on the establishment of the Paris library, added that “England ha[d] shown keen interest in the work, and it is possible that in time the
bulk of the library may be transferred to London” because, it was argued, the interest in
German affairs was greater in England than in France.
(April 1934). The library’s name was explained in a later issue: “The words ‘Nazi-Banned
Books’ were chosen in preference to ‘Burned Books,’ used by the projected English library,
because it was intended that the American library should house not only the books that
were thrown into the literary auto-da-fe, but all those books which were banned by the
Nazi government” (“The Inauguration of the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books,”
Brooklyn Jewish Center Review, 3 [December 1934]).
(January 1935).
21. The minutes of a library committee meeting in October 1939 state: “The number of
books in the library is approximately 3200 and 3300. The books are classified as follows:
approximately 500 Nazi-banned, 300 Juvenile (English and Hebrew), 100 Fiction, 250
General Science & Literature, 600 Yiddish, 750 Hebrew, 700 Judaica [sic] and 40 Unclas-
sified.” Ratner Center Archives, Jewish Theological Seminary, Brooklyn Jewish Center
Records, 25/9. Courtesy of the Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism,
Jewish Theological Seminary.
22. “Center Review to Establish Library.”
23. Ibid.
24. “More Comments of Library Inauguration,” Brooklyn Jewish Center Review, 12 (January
1935).
25. Gribetz adds that in “this one paragraph Mr. Lewisohn gives a fitting answer to those who
profess that the erection of the library should be the concern of the non-Jewish world.”
This seems to suggest that the Brooklyn Jewish Center’s leading role in the establishment
of the library was not undisputed.
27. The author is not referring to Liepmann’s dramatic speech at the inaugural dinner for
the Library of Nazi-Banned Books but to his forum lecture about his autobiographical
novel Murder Made in Germany, given December 3, 1934.
28. The same affinity was operating—only in the other direction—when the second most
popular children’s book title in the Chatham branch of the New York Public Library
was Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin. To a journalist of the Evening Post, this
seemed most natural: “[as] the story of an oppressed race it strikes a responsive chord
in the Jewish child” (“Jew Babes at the Library,” quoted in Kirchhoff, 2002, pp. 35, and
29. The minutes of a library committee meeting in October 1939. Ratner Center Archives,
31. Kantorowicz himself, who had chosen to live in East Germany after the war, finally fled

Archival Sources
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Libraries and Reading in Finnish Military Hospitals during the Second World War

Ilkka Mäkinen

ABSTRACT

The ground for library work in Finnish military hospitals during World War II was prepared before the war by three different traditions of library activity. First, professional librarians and state library authorities tried to initiate hospital library work in Finnish hospitals as an extension of municipal library services. Impulses from abroad, mainly from Great Britain through the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), were important in this initiative. Second, nurses, especially in the Red Cross Hospital in Helsinki, started to give library services as a voluntary operation in late 1930s. The first full-time hospital librarian, a volunteer, was originally a nurse. Third, the Soldiers’ Homes Associations run by women volunteers organized libraries for conscript soldiers during peace time. This article describes how these traditions worked together during the Second World War. Professional librarians’ attitudes toward voluntary library work in military hospitals and the interaction between librarians and patients as readers are described. Library work in civilian hospitals grew out of wartime activities.

INTRODUCTION

The demand for recreational reading for soldiers during the Second World War was organized in many ways in different armies. In times of peace, regular libraries were often found in garrisons or training centers, but the war so increased the demand for recreational books that special measures were needed. There were different solutions. One example was the special editions of books created for U.S. soldiers (see, e.g., Cole, 1984). Another was the book boxes that were circulated in the trenches of the
Finnish army. A special case was the library activities in military hospitals situated outside the actual combat zones. Almost everywhere these activities were the result of an enthusiastic voluntary engagement of civilians, mostly women. The aim of this article is to describe these services, their historical and international background, the attitudes of the professional librarians toward voluntary work in hospitals, and what happened when men who had read little in civilian life came into contact with books in the military hospital environment. Library services in military hospitals reflect interesting mixes of peace and wartime practices, with professional librarians acting as volunteers and nonprofessional volunteers acting as librarians. Some of the questions that may arise in circumstances like this are: Who makes the selection of books? Who is entitled to choose freely what he or she reads? How do professional librarians react in a situation where they have to relax what they see as their high moral and aesthetic professional standards? It also is interesting to know how and by whom library services in military hospitals were organized, what was the historical and professional context of this activity, and what happened when the war was over.

By way of historical background, after having been part of the kingdom of Sweden for seven hundred years, Finland was, in a side-show of the Napoleonic wars, invaded by Tsar Alexander I and made a Grand-Duchy in the Russian Empire in 1809. After a century of cultural and economic progress, Finland gained independence after the Russian October Revolution in 1917. The beginning of independence, however, was clouded by a bloody civil war in 1918. Between the world wars there was again a period of peaceful progress until 1939, when under the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, Finland fell into the sphere of influence of the latter. After failed negotiations about land and other matters, the Soviet Union attacked Finland. The Winter War, as it was known, lasted from November 1939 until March 1940. The Finnish forces, with great sacrifices, halted the enemy, but it is assumed that Stalin aborted the attack mainly because he feared that the Western allied powers would send troops to help Finland. Although Finland maintained its freedom, it was forced to cede a large area of land and lease a naval base to the Soviet Union.

There followed an uneasy period of armistice from March 1940 until June 1941, during which the Soviet Union put pressure on Finland in many ways. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Finland became Germany’s ally, planning to take back what was lost in the Winter War. In addition to that the Finnish forces occupied large areas in Soviet Karelia. This second phase of the hostilities between Finland and the Soviet Union is called “the Continuation War” in Finland, and it lasted until September 1944, when Finland and Soviet Union again concluded an armistice. This time the area that had been ceded after the Winter War to the Soviet Union was permanently lost. In addition, Finland had to pay
large war reparations to the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Finland remained free, although its fate after the armistice was not at all certain; nor was the war completely over for Finland because there followed a campaign to drive its former German allies out of Lapland, the so-called Lapland War, that lasted until spring 1945.

**FINNISH HOSPITAL LIBRARIES: BACKGROUND**

Library services in Finnish military hospitals during the Second World War were based on various peace-time initiatives and traditions. There had been books and even organized book collections in civilian hospitals long before the war. These modest libraries, often consisting of books left by patients and increased by donations, were taken care of by nurses or by the patients themselves. During the 1930s more systematic library work started to appear in civilian hospitals in Finland, reflecting to an extent overseas influences, especially from Great Britain where the provision of library service to hospitals had become an accepted part of librarianship during the First World War (Sturt & Going, 1973, pp. 21–66). After the war British enthusiasts were active in spreading the gospel of hospital librarianship. In 1932, for example, the British hospital library activists persuaded the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) to arrange an inquiry on the status of hospital libraries around the world. In Finland the information was gathered by the Finnish Board of Medicine. The data revealed a poor and disorganized situation, and a civil servant, Ms. Kyllikki Nohrström, from the State Library Bureau started to look into how it might be improved (Nohrström, 1934).

British hospital librarianship at that time represented a model based on voluntary work, but the Finnish library authorities preferred a Swedish and Danish model, where hospital libraries were part of the municipal library system. The problem in Finland, however, was that municipalities were not eager to finance this kind of activity and the Library Law of 1928 organizing state support for municipal library services did not cover hospital libraries. Even though the development of professional hospital library work was slow as a result of the lack of financial resources, genuine interest and even some concrete projects in the field emerged just before the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1938 the Finnish Library Association assumed the role of coordinator of the different interests in hospital librarianship. It organized meetings, disseminated information, and addressed a circular to city and municipal councils stressing the importance of hospital libraries (Sairaalain kirjastokysymys, 1938). The circular also was published in the national library journal (Kansanvalistus ja Kirjastolehti) side by side with Kyllikki Nohrström’s article about the principles of hospital librarianship.

Nohrström argued for hospital libraries on the basis of the need for universality of library services: “The maintenance of libraries with public funds is based on the belief that it is the society’s task to secure for each
of its members the opportunity to get books, which can help one to grow spiritually and make progress in one’s life tasks. We must not neglect those who have to spend a shorter or a longer time apart from the rest of the world deprived of the possibility to get hold of books themselves. Hospitals’ patients are among them” (Nohrström, 1939, p. 181).

The principle of universality, later to become one of the cornerstones of the ideology of the welfare state, had long been among the basic principles of public librarianship in Finland. It continued to direct the struggle of professional librarians to include in the sphere of public library activities every group in society, including people in institutions such as hospitals and prisons. The wave of expansion of library services did not stop in Finland until the 1990s, when the limits of the welfare state were reached (Mäkinen, 2001).

Nurses as Librarians

Because professional library organizations were slow to introduce library work into hospitals, the voluntary, philanthropic model took hold in the form of the work of nurses. Even this had a British connection. In the early 1920s some Finnish nurses received part of their education in England, where they adopted a broad social view of human health. After education of nurses in Finland was formalized, the international influences continued, especially through the Red Cross. The chair of the Finnish Red Cross was Marshal Mannerheim, known for his anglophile interests. Many of the leading Red Cross Finnish nurses came from the Swedish-speaking upper class. They tended to know a number of languages, and the international exchange of ideas was natural for them. The Finnish Red Cross established a hospital in Helsinki in 1932. Its speciality was to serve patients who suffered from wounds and fractures, typical traumas of wartime. The planning of the hospital was guided by the fact that it some day could serve as a military hospital but also with the conviction that patients had to be taken care of in a broad social context, even involving the time after they left the hospital (Rosén, 1977, p. 316). Reading as recreation and as a way of acquiring information fit well into this concept.

The chief nurse of the Red Cross Hospital, Berrit Kihlman, personally organized the program of lending books to patients from a hospital library. In 1937 she asked Else Branders, a trained nurse, to become a full-time volunteer hospital librarian, the first in Finland. Branders (1901–97) came from a well-to-do family and could afford to engage in voluntary work. She even donated books to the library and had a specially designed book trolley constructed. She continued her work until she was nearly eighty years old. Both Kihlman and Branders belonged to the internationally minded, Swedish-speaking Finnish upper middle class (Mustelin, 2001, pp. 203–13).

Branders became internationally active in the hospital library movement. As a corresponding member of the International Guild of Hospital
Librarians, she was in touch with British specialists in the field, such as Marjorie Roberts. She also attended international hospital library conferences, sometimes with Berrit Kihlman. Branders introduced ideas and reported international activities in Finnish nursing journals. She acted as an informal representative of the Finnish library community in the international hospital library community. She participated in the first negotiations concerning the future of hospital libraries in Finland organized by the Finnish National Library Association (Suomen Kirjastoseura), the State Library Bureau, and other interested parties in the late 1930s. She was, however, not ready to let herself become part of any official library organization. During her later years she categorically refused to become part of the Helsinki municipal library system. She worked as a volunteer until her retirement. After she died in 1997 at the age of ninety-six, the family fortune was bequeathed to the Swedish-speaking university Åbo Akademi in Turku (Mustelin, 2001).

Soldiers’ Homes

Another line of development that anticipated library work in military hospitals came from voluntary organizations associated with the Finnish army. The “Soldiers’ Home Association” was a voluntary organization that, among other services, provided libraries for soldiers. Soldiers’ homes were facilities consisting of one or more rooms in the garrisons and offering recreational services, coffee and doughnuts, newspapers, music, films, and libraries for soldiers. Though there had been soldiers’ homes in Sweden and Denmark for decades, the Finnish idea of soldiers’ homes came from the Finnish soldiers, “the Rangers” (jääkärit), who had served in the German army during the First World War in order to learn warfare and to prepare for an armed uprising against the Russian hegemony in Finland (Lahtero, 1974, pp. 9–20). They returned to Finland in the winter of 1917–18 to take part in the Finnish Civil War on the side of the government and against leftist rebels. In the coming decades the Rangers formed the backbone of the Finnish army.

The “Soldatenheim” (in Swedish soldathem, in Finnish sotilaskodit) in the imperial German army were a widespread activity run predominantly by Christian organizations. During the First World War there were over 1,000 soldiers’ homes in the German army. The soldiers’ home activists in Finland were religiously minded women who cooperated closely with army chaplains, but the organizations maintaining the homes and the homes themselves did not bear a distinct religious character. The first soldiers’ home and the local voluntary association running it had been established in 1918 during the civil war. A national association for the soldiers’ homes movement was established in 1921. Besides libraries in the soldiers’ homes, there also were other kinds of libraries for the soldiers such as “garrison libraries” that were run by noncommissioned officers as part of their duties. Apparently, there was no cooperation between the soldiers’ homes libraries
and the garrison libraries. None of these libraries was part of the public library system supervised by the State Library Bureau, and they did not send information or statistics to the Library Bureau.

Thus, on the threshold of the war, there were three groups that were in position to cooperate in running library activities in military hospitals: professional librarians, Red Cross nurses, and the associations for soldiers’ homes.

The Winter War, 1939–40

A month after the outbreak of the Winter War, volunteers from the city library of the second largest Finnish city, Turku, started to visit the wounded men in the city’s military hospital. This was welcomed both by the doctors and the nurses. The professional librarians worked without pay and outside their regular working hours. The early start of this work was made easier because the library of Turku had planned to initiate general hospital library service in any case and had bought a book trolley for the purpose, though its first use turned out to be in the military hospital (Heiskanen, 1940). Another example of hospital-related library service occurred in Joensuu, a town in the eastern part of the country. Here the town library organized a small library attached to the ambulance run by the Danish volunteers (Järvelin, 1962, p. 135). There was, however, no time for a more general organization of formal library services in military hospitals.

During the Winter War an important national relief organization, Maan Turva, organized a campaign to collect material for the war effort. Among other things books were gathered in large quantities for the men on the front and in military hospitals. The Winter War was so short and intensive that not many of the articles had time to reach the hands of soldiers, but they were useful when the hostilities resumed in the following year. A major event at the time of the renewal of the war was the organization, by the Finnish National Library Association, of a book-collecting campaign both for the military and for the 400,000 people who had to leave their homes in the areas that had to be ceded to the Soviet Union according to the terms of the armistice. These people were resettled in other parts of the country, and the public libraries in municipalities where they were settled needed more library materials to provide services to the increased population.

The Continuation War, 1941–44

The Winter War was so short and the battles so intensive that not much time remained for reading in the trenches; only the men who had been wounded and taken behind the front had time to read. The Continuation War was different. After an intensive offensive period with many casualties, there followed a two-and-a-half-year period of trench warfare, in which there was nothing much to do other than wait in the trenches or behind the front. In these circumstances there was plenty of time for reading. Libraries and
book provision for the men on the front became important. The army unit for internal propaganda circulated book boxes in the trenches (Salminen, 1976, p. 142). By 1942 there were over 2,000 libraries of different types and sizes in the Finnish army (Raunio, 1994, p. 254).

As was the case during the Winter War, use of public libraries declined because of mobilization, evacuations, bombings, and other war events. This freed up professional librarians in some cities to work in the military hospitals during what had become irregular working hours (e.g., in Turku, Jyväskylä, and Vaasa). Others did this work on their own time, as in Tampere and Helsinki. In the town of Hanko the librarian had started to provide library service in the local civilian hospital even before the war. When Hanko was leased to the Soviet Union as a naval base after the Winter War and the Finns had to evacuate the town, she moved to Vaasa, where she immediately resumed her library work in the local military hospital during the Continuation War (Lehtikanto, 1964, p. 102).

Although some city libraries extended their services to military hospitals in the ways described above, the major part of library work and book provision for men in military hospitals was provided by volunteers, mostly women active in associations for soldiers’ homes. Some help in gathering the books also came from the *Lotta Svärd* organization, as well as from the Red Cross. Many of the volunteers were professional librarians. While *Lotta Svärd* was another women’s voluntary organization, it was more firmly integrated into the army organization than soldiers’ homes. Its members also undertook military functions, such as anti-aircraft surveillance and nursing in military hospitals near the front, but they generally did not carry weapons (*Lotta Svärd*, 2006).

Hospital library work was supervised by the hospital chaplains, but they did not take part in the actual work. This was women’s business. There were about seventy military hospitals located all over the country during the war, most having been converted from general hospitals, such as the Red Cross hospital in Helsinki. More formally organized library service was provided in the ten military hospitals in the capital, Helsinki, and in eleven other military hospitals and infirmaries elsewhere in the country. In the capital the local association for soldiers’ homes had records showing that during the war years almost 250,000 books had been lent in the military hospitals (Groundstroem, 1980, p. 57). According to another source the Helsinki association operated in eighteen military hospitals, lending 51,000 books in 1942 and 60,000 in 1943 (Tudeer, 1960, p. 581). The four military hospitals in Tampere received book collections from the city library, whose professional staff worked off-duty in these hospitals. The circulation numbers rose from year to year. In 1941 the number of books lent in the Tampere hospitals was 7,148, in 1942 it was 9,419, and in 1943 it was 8,502. During the last year of the war, 1944, a temporary librarian was hired by the city library to take care of the growing circulation in the hospitals, and almost
22,000 books were lent that year (Kanerva & Peltonen, 1961, pp. 148–49; see Table 1). There are no overall statistics from all parts of the country, but there must have been approximately the same amount of book loans elsewhere as in Helsinki.

Patients in military hospitals were placed in wards of ten beds. The books borrowed by one man would also circulate among the others, so the number of books read by different people was probably much higher than the loan records would indicate. We know that about 161,000 soldiers or other personnel were wounded during the Continuation War, a large proportion of whom spent some time in the military hospitals, which gives a rough picture of the potential audience for the hospital libraries (Raunio, 1994, p. 489).

Else Branders continued to serve as a voluntary library worker in the Red Cross hospital in Helsinki during the war years, and the circulation of her library grew by a third. We must remember, however, that her library was already being run in a professional manner during normal times, so the growth of lending was not spectacular during the war time; it merely followed the increasing number of patients caused by the war.

### Professional Librarians and Work in Hospital Libraries

How did professional librarians react to library work in military hospitals? In the official rhetoric of the authorities and professional opinion leaders, there was a tendency toward using an idealistic-patriotic jargon reflecting highly moralistic and patronizing attitudes toward the service. Some tendency toward this kind of rhetoric was apparent in the early days of war. In the national library journal, *Kansanvalistus ja Kirjastolehti*, an anonymous writer complained in January 1940 that the book-collecting campaigns brought many items such as light detective stories, worthless adventure books, and Tarzan books that were not worthy of being offered to wounded heroes. Instead of that kind of trash, according to the writer, there should be religious and highly patriotic books available for the soldiers (Eräs [pseud.], 1940, pp. 12–13).

This kind of opinion seems to have vanished totally as professional

#### Table 1. Loan Statistics of Else Branders’s Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Books Circulated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>8,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>12,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>11,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>8,844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: In 1944 there were 2,300 volumes in the library (Mustelin, 2001, pp. 209, 213).*
librarians carried out their voluntary work in hospitals and gained insight into the character of soldiers, their educational background, and their reading habits. The librarians soon developed a down-to-earth attitude to the material being made available to the men and started to appreciate their personal choices. Some professional librarians were later critical of the idealistic-patriotic language and patronizing attitudes reflected in some of the early discussions of book selection criteria for hospitals. For example, Kerttu Koskenheimo, in her 1946 thesis required for the diploma in librarianship, observes:

My aim has been only to show in some examples and observations that the literature read in military hospitals is in many respects similar to experiences gained from other libraries, and that no field of human knowledge must be strange for the libraries in military hospitals. In most cases patients keep a totally healthy touch with the real life and environment, and for that reason it is rather a pointless measure, which does not show understanding for the psychology of the patients, to exclude some genres as unsuitable or as not belonging to their field on interest. (p. 12)

Contrary to “recommendations from certain circles,” the need for religious books was, according to Koskenheimo, low, partly because those who needed them got them from hospital chaplains. On the other hand, she also refuted the assumption that patients in military hospitals were not interested in books about the war. Even here she believed that there was not much difference between the war- and peace-time reading preferences (Koskenheimo, 1946).

A librarian who had taken part in the hospital library work throughout the Winter War described her experiences in a manner that seems to have become customary for professional librarians who took part in the voluntary work among the wounded soldiers (Lappalainen, 1940). There is a distinctively emotional, subjective tone in such reports that does not exist in the ordinary library reports of peace time. The same professional standards and ideals that were strictly maintained during peace time could not be maintained during the war among the wounded soldiers, a majority of whom had never visited a library after their school days or had not even read a whole book since leaving school. The librarians were aware that it was impossible to be openly didactic with men who have just escaped the jaws of death. It was difficult for librarians “to follow rigorous principles of librarianship,” as one librarian wrote about her experiences (Heiskanen, 1940, p. 42). The goal could only be to inspire the men to read, never mind what kind of books, as long as the minimum standards of decency were maintained. There were many genres of literature that would not have been accepted in a public library during normal times, such as low-quality literature like detective stories, overtly romantic or daring love stories, or books of reckless humor. The librarians often maintained that
even providing this kind of wide-ranging freedom of choice did not lead to a total degradation of taste in the military hospitals. Nonfiction reading, for example, did not disappear.

The suffering and the dangers that the men in the military hospitals had experienced led to the acceptance of the belief that they had to be treated as freely acting individuals who should be allowed to make their own choices. They had earned that right. Reading before the war was to a great extent an activity of well-to-do, educated people who could buy the books they wanted. They had more time and better circumstances to read than the majority of the people who lived in the countryside, often in houses without electricity, with no book shops in the vicinity, and with libraries, if they were available, that were small and contained mostly books that ordinary working men did not wish to read. The extraordinary circumstances of the war took these men out of their normal surroundings. Their wounds gave them the opportunity of filling the spare time that they now had with the only entertainment, apart from playing cards, that was available—reading. Reading increased in general during the war because of lack of other forms of entertainment. Book production actually increased during the war while book prices remained reasonable (Virtanen, 1958, pp. 250–52; Häggman, 2003, pp. 4–10). There was no shortage of paper in Finland because the circumstances of the war prevented the export of paper from the numerous paper mills of the country. It is not an exaggeration to say that it was the war that taught Finnish people, especially men from ordinary surroundings, to read actively.

A great obstacle for library work in military hospitals was that there was no mutually shared way to talk about books and reading. Men who had only attended primary school had not learned to talk about their reading preferences. They just said “Give me something nice (or exciting).” The librarians’ way of talking about books was too literary and their way of recommending books was too prescriptive: the men did not initially trust them. It was a learning process for the librarians. If the librarian could get one of the men to become interested in a book and he read it (or had read it before), he could then recommend the book to the others. The men trusted each others’ recommendations more than the librarian’s. On the other hand, because of their virgin state as readers, the men could act in surprising ways as when, for example, a whole room could be found reading fairy tales and asking for more (Koskenheimo, 1946).

Planning for the Future

As it was said earlier, the long-range goal, both of the State Library Bureau and the Finnish National Library Association, was to make hospital library work part of the municipal library system. While professional librarians worked as volunteers in military hospitals during the war, neither the Library Bureau nor the Library Association had much to do with the work.
Nevertheless, they tried to use the goodwill generated by wartime hospital library work in the period after the war as a basis for shaping hospital library activity along the lines they saw as appropriate. At the conclusion of the Winter War, the board of the Finnish National Library Association noted that paradoxically the war had a positive effect on the goal of spreading hospital library service, which had appeared as if by itself. The association concluded, however, that further actions on its part must be postponed until a more propitious time.\(^3\)

In general, 1943 seems to have been the year when all eyes turned toward the coming of peace and serious library planning began. That year the Library Association commissioned a guide book for hospital library services, although it was not printed until the autumn of 1944, after the war with the Soviet Union had ended. The booklet was partially financed by the publishers whose books were recommended for hospital libraries in the list of books included in the booklet.\(^4\) Another source of financing came from the funds under the control of the chief chaplain of the military hospitals.\(^5\)

Two important meetings about hospital libraries were held in 1943. In November the directors of city libraries met with the staff of the Library Bureau. One of the writers of the hospital library guide book, Mauno Kanninen, who was the director of a Helsinki city branch library, lectured about the hospital library issue at this meeting. He was, at the time, trying to develop cooperation between the Helsinki city library and one of the military hospitals, which in peace time had been part of the Helsinki city hospital system. He advocated as a universal and bold goal the integration into the municipal library system of all hospital libraries, as well as libraries in old people’s homes, kindergartens, firebrigades, etc. The necessary funds could be included in the city libraries’ budgets (Kaupunkien kirjastojen, 1943).

The second meeting was a December seminar organized by the State Library Bureau, in which about eighty people interested in hospital library work participated. Most of the participants came from military hospitals throughout the country. There were lectures on various aspects of hospital library work, but the atmosphere of the meeting was curiously “peaceful.” The speech given by Helle Kannila, the director of the State Library Bureau, was explicitly directed at planning peace-time activities in hospital libraries. She stressed the obligation of society to satisfy the cultural needs of people who were shut within the walls of hospitals. The importance of reading among patients in military hospitals has been acknowledged, she said, and it should be recognized in civilian hospitals as well:

It may appear strange that a question like this is treated right in the middle of war. You could claim that there are so many more important issues that must be neglected in the interests of the preeminent goal. The fact is, however, that an issue like hospital librarianship during the
war becomes especially acute and it has been the war experiences that have helped to make things develop in a favorable direction. Before the [First] World War there was hardly anywhere organized library work in military hospitals, but during and after the war it was initiated in many European countries. Even in our country there is now many times more library activities in hospitals than during peace time. This expanded work is limited to war patients and invalids, and it is temporary by nature, but this does not diminish its value. The explanation for the takeoff of this work during the war is the fact that people feel a special sympathy towards our brothers who have ended up in hospitals as victims of the war and who have suffered suffer for us, . . . Civilian patients, on the other hand, are there always, though only a few people have been as keen to help them, even though it is suitable to do so. But, even if wartime library work is mainly temporary, it undoubtedly has a significance beyond the restrictions of wartime. When this work is being done in appropriate forms as is possible now, the results can be applied in normal times. At the same time, by showing their value and meaning, ground is prepared for regular, systematic library activities in hospitals. In the future it will be shown that this kind of work cannot in the long run be done with a voluntary workforce supported by occasional donations, but that an activity based on official, regular investment is needed. It seems that it is important now, when this form of library activity is being experimented with through more extensive forms than before, to come together to negotiate issues concerned with thinking about the future.6

Three librarians spoke about their work in military hospitals. It was noted that from the professional point of view “those patients who spend longer times in the hospital in many cases tend gradually to start reading more valuable literature. The person distributing the books can effectively support this by presenting non-fiction from various fields and other valuable books” (Sairaalakirjastotyön, 1944, p. 26). It was generally assumed that reading guidance was important because many patients did not know much about literature. On the other hand, there were warnings against being too obviously patronizing. There was a consensus that, after the war, the only way to continue the work would be to integrate it into regular library work. Society must ensure that there are enough funds for this kind of activity (Sairaalakirjastotyön, 1944; Kinos, 1944).

Because the damage and suffering caused by the war was seen as a general social problem, it often led to increasing intervention by the state and the municipalities to guarantee equality of all the citizens and to find symbolic expressions of the solidarity and democratization arising from the common experiences of the people during the war. In the case of hospital libraries, the official and professional were integrated in the same persons, such as Helle Kannila, who acted as both civil servants and representatives of the professional association. What the developments professionally should be had become apparent before the war, gained momentum during the war, and were put into practice after the war. Especially decisive were the
contacts between professional librarians and hospital personnel. A good example of how the takeover of hospital library service by the city library occurred is the case of Kivelä hospital in Helsinki. As a result of discussions between library director Mauno Kanninen and nurse H. Ahlbäck, who was in charge of the hospital, the city council created the first permanent civilian hospital library as a branch of the municipal library system with its own room in the hospital. This was inaugurated in Helsinki in January 1945 (Wirila, 1945).

Modern professional hospital librarianship in Finland, it can be concluded, grew directly from the voluntary work of librarians in military hospitals during World War II, as British hospital librarianship had grown out of the British experience during World War I. In the years after the war, Finnish hospital library service quickly spread as a normal part of library operations in most larger cities, although its adoption in smaller places came only in the 1960s.

Notes
2. What are called soldiers’ homes in Finland, Sweden, and Germany should not be confused with the soldiers’ homes in the United States, which are homes for retired or wounded soldiers. The nearest equivalent to the Finnish soldiers’ homes in the U.S. Army are the MWR (morale, welfare, and recreation) operations of each branch of service run by civilians. See, e.g., MWR History (n.d.).
6. Sairaalakirjastojen neuvoittelupäivät [Seminar on hospital libraries], papers of the State Library Bureau [Valtion Kirjastotoimiston arkisto], National Archives of Finland [Kansallisarkisto], Helsinki, Finland.

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From Reading Guidance to Thought Control:
Wartime Japanese Libraries

SHARON DOMIER

ABSTRACT
Japanese public libraries failed to make a significant impact with either the state or the people for close to a half century after their introduction in the 1860s. The state was under too much pressure to modernize and militarize to see any value in funding a recreational facility that served personal needs, and librarians did little to market themselves to the people to increase their support base. It was not until the state began to see a role for librarians to provide ideological thought guidance through reading material that libraries began to receive more attention and support. But the library community was hesitant to abandon traditional library services (based on free reading by individuals) in favor of social education (guided reading of mandatory texts), and as a result libraries were not effective vehicles in the state’s moral suasion campaigns to ensure that all citizens were fully committed to the war effort.

INTRODUCTION
When midlevel officers in the Japanese army took “direct action” in Manchuria in September 1931, blowing up part of the South Manchurian Railway and blaming it on the Chinese so that they would have a good excuse to declare war, the Japanese nation entered into a period later known as the Fifteen Year War (1931–45). The uncontrolled impulses of various branches of the military, acting in the name of the emperor, could neither be restrained nor outwardly criticized, and they continued to propel the country toward full-scale war. Direct action by young military zealots at home led to a series of assassination attempts between 1932 and 1936,
culminating with the February 26 Incident, in which the list of assassinated officials included the current and previous prime ministers and one of the three top generals. Japan officially entered into war with China in July of 1937, began its formal campaign for a New World Order in 1940, and declared war on the Allied nations through the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941. Against the larger, mightier, and richer Western powers, the Japanese leaders decided that its best weapon was the spiritual unity of the nation and that reading guidance would play an important role in ensuring that all Japanese were united in the war effort. Finally, the leaders of the Japanese library movement found themselves on centerstage receiving the attention and support that they had long sought, but they were playing a very different role than they had originally imagined.

Between the “opening” of the country in the 1860s and the end of the war in 1945, the Japanese nation had spent most of the time either preparing for or engaged in social and military conflicts. Fear of social unrest and the influence of “dangerous thoughts” contained in reading material continued to plague the Japanese government and contributed to increasingly strict censorship and thought-control legislation throughout the entire
Unsupervised reading groups, beginning with the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement in the 1870s, resurfaced after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 among the socialists and anarchists; they appeared again after the First World War among proletarian and communist sympathizers and continued to form across the country and stock private libraries with banned books. The Japanese government looked for ways that it could control dissent and improve the mental health of the nation by engaging the cooperation and leadership of the Japan Library Association.

According to Sheldon Garon, the Ministry of the Interior and (to a lesser extent) the Ministry of Education actively sought the cooperation of various civic organizations and local bureaucracy to promote moral suasion campaigns designed to manage various social problems; they hoped through these campaigns “to spiritually guide the people’s sentiments and elevate and improve public morals.” In most cases, the organizations were willing to comply even when the government’s aims conflicted with their own. Garon claims:

Yet far from obstructing official efforts, these tensions may be one of the keys to understanding the efficiency of Japanese social management. The intermediary activists in this study have not always blindly obeyed the dictates of the state. Often they have acted from their own managerial impulses or in pursuit of what they deemed to be in their own interests. Whatever the motivation, their active collaboration more often than not strengthened the state’s capacity to regulate society to a greater degree than if a small cadre of bureaucrats had simply imposed its will from above. (Garon, 1997, p. 236)

A recent book by Tôjô Fuminori on the politics of libraries in Japan (2006), which examines library development through the lens of celebrations and commemorative events, seems to support the Garon hypothesis. An examination of the reading guidance movement in Japan will help to elucidate the dilemma faced by Japanese library leaders as they struggled to get recognition and funding from the state to support library development while at the same time protecting what they believed to be the fundamental spirit of librarianship. Compared to their American colleagues, Japanese librarians actually contributed very little to the war movement. Many of the lower-level library staff, poorly paid and poorly trained, hid behind routine work. Some refused to compromise their principles and left the field. Others, like Nakata Kunizô, recognized that the state of war necessitates compromise in order to protect what they valued as long as possible. Nakata Kunizô struggled long and hard to create an environment where rural youth could learn to become readers and through self-education prepare themselves to be intelligent citizens. By the time the country had entered the final phase of total war, however, Nakata’s concepts of self-education
through carefully selected book collections had been refashioned to serve the needs of the state. Yet, despite the clear advantages of cooperating with the various moral suasion campaigns, the reading guidance movement was not enthusiastically implemented nationwide.

How well prepared was the library community to answer the call to take a leadership role? For more than fifty years, from the introduction of the Western concept of libraries in the late 1860s until the needs of the nation necessitated a more “Japanese” form of libraries, the role of public libraries was to acquire, catalog, and make available good reading material. The Japan Library Association (JLA) formed in 1892, only sixteen years after the founding of the American Library Association (ALA), held its first national conference in 1906, began publishing its official journal the Toshokan Zasshi (The Library Journal) in 1907, and formed a committee in 1914 to recommend books appropriate for public libraries (Welch, 1976, pp. 162–63). But public library movements had failed to make much of an impact with either the state or the people. Most libraries had closed stacks and charged entrance fees. Librarians, as the emperor’s emissaries, were often rude and patronizing to the public and scared away all but the most dedicated users. Most libraries were so poorly funded that in 1930 more than 95.2 percent of the 4,609 public libraries were unable to buy sixty books in a year (Takeuchi, 1979, p. 273). Furthermore, the police regularly made the rounds to collect reader’s slips and arrest people who were suspected of thought crimes. While the Ministry of Education would pay lip service to the role of public libraries, it was not convinced of the value of providing governmental funds to support what it considered a private activity (reading for personal reasons).

The 1920s: Seeking a More Active Role for Libraries

The decade of the 1920s may be characterized as a period of transition for the Japan Library Association. The JLA celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 1922. Many of the founding members and library elite, graduates of the Tokyo Imperial University, were coming to the end of their careers. As they looked back at the past decades, most expressed frustration with how poorly libraries were funded and that they still were not appropriately acknowledged as professionals. A revision to the Ordinance of Library Governmental Personnel in 1921, for example, allowed the transfer of senior government officials and teachers into the top administrative posts of libraries while the rest of the library staff were treated as clerks (Takeuchi, 1979, p. 89). It put into effect a divided system of administration, where librarians could not become directors and directors rarely if ever had any library experience. The most blatant example of this was when the Ministry of Education chose to replace Tanaka Inagi, director of the Imperial Library and founder of the Japan Library Association, with a Normal school prin-
incipal named Matsumoto Kiichi who had no previous library experience. Official protests from the JLA and the threat of a strike by Imperial Library Employees had no effect on the decision (Tôjô, 2006, p. 67).

When the Ministry of Education finally took an interest in supporting the work of public libraries it was because an official in the Ministry of Education, Norisugi Kaju, had been inspired by the American Library Association’s Read to Win campaign during World War I and saw a more effective role for public libraries. He began to pressure the JLA to take a leadership role in providing ideological guidance to help solve the “thought problems” that were beginning to rock the nation (Norisugi, 1921, p. 7). During the previous decades, the number of small libraries created as commemorative events and the number of private libraries had grown rapidly, but neither the JLA nor the Japanese government were pleased with the developments. While some large cities, such as Osaka and Tokyo, developed extensive and progressive libraries services, they were the exception rather than the rule. In the countryside, Young Men’s Associations and other private groups were building their own libraries and sponsoring reading circles.²

Beginning in 1921 the Ministry of Education asked JLA conference members how libraries could be more effective social education institutions and assist the government in gaining better control over youths and adults. Several library leaders were firmly opposed to libraries trying to imitate schools and mandating reading in particular. The JLA evaded the issue by suggesting more support for children’s libraries because adults would not use libraries if they are not taught to do so as children.³ In 1924, at the Japan Library Association annual meeting, the Ministry of Education was more explicit in requesting a “policy to deepen the effect of libraries on the ideological guidance of the people.” Once again, the majority of librarians refused to take the request seriously (Ishii, 1975, p. 165).

By 1926 the atmosphere at the annual meeting had changed considerably. For one thing, the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 had given police free reign to investigate and interrogate anyone suspected of attempting to overthrow the current form of government. Beginning with radical student organizations, the thought police arrested hundreds of students and seized research materials from well-known professors such as Kawakami Hajime (Mitchell, 1976, p. 73). The effect of the new powers of the thought police reverberated throughout the country, and all government employees were called on to meet the crisis. At its annual meeting in 1928, the JLA could no longer sidestep the issue of its role in providing ideological guidance. Two major areas came under discussion at this meeting: censorship and providing reading guidance. In the initial draft of the response, the JLA suggested that all libraries remove and destroy “dangerous materials” in their collections and censor their selections much more carefully in the future. Nakata Kunizô spoke out against making judgments on whether books
were “good” or “bad” and suggested that such a response was shortsighted and would have a negative effect on later generations. The revised version was toned down sufficiently to ask that the government do a better job of censoring publications so that “dangerous materials” do not accidentally make their way onto the library’s shelves (Nihon, 1929, p. 189). A representative from the Ministry of Education criticized the amended response and reprimanded librarians for taking too passive a role as educators. Since many librarians did not feel qualified to (or interested) in getting involved with “thought improvement,” one suggestion was to hire a reader’s advisory specialist who could keep a careful eye on thought problems.

**Nakata’s Vision of Reading Guidance**

While Nakata was the only one to stand up and criticize thoughtless censorship in libraries, he was also one of the only library directors outside of the large urban areas to be active in outreach and reading guidance. Unlike most librarians who were being dragged kicking and screaming into social education, Nakata came into librarianship through his pioneering efforts with social education and reading guidance, and he was strongly influenced by his university training in Nishida philosophy. Hired as a social education supervisor by the prefecture of Ishikawa in 1925 and unhappy with the lack of opportunities for lifelong learning open to young men and women and with their lack of understanding about the importance of self-education, Nakata devised a plan that would provide an equivalent to a middle school education through the careful use of guided reading. First he set out to learn more about the reading habits of the people in his jurisdiction. He not only surveyed reading interests in the libraries but also went into homes and looked at what kinds of materials people purchased. Then he spoke to them about what kinds of reading interests they had and whether libraries were meeting those needs and interests.

Nakata saw a clear difference between “school education” and “library education.” School education is based on teaching, while library education is based on learning. With school education, students gather based on the topic being taught, while with library education people with a desire to learn gather to learn the skills and motivation that will allow them to pursue lifelong education. School education uses set books, is taught at set times, and takes place in a classroom and primarily through lectures, while library education covers a broad range of topics to encourage the reader to develop a desire to study and occurs at any time in any place through the words of the author. The end result of school education is the mastery of a set number of subjects, while library education provides independence so that the reader can go on to learn more about any topic he or she chooses (Maruyama, 1971, p. 46).

Nakata believed in the power of careful selection. In the early years he
often chose texts that were too difficult for the readers. He created three different levels of library collections so that readers could gradually work their way up to more difficult materials. Collection A was designed for people up to the age of twenty who had completed compulsory education so that they could attain the equivalent of a middle school education. Collection B built on A and was intended to give them the equivalent of a high school education. Collection C was intended for anyone who wanted to study different aspects of culture more deeply. Within each level, he divided the collections into different topics: (1) civic culture, (2) cultivation of aesthetics, (3) cultivation of scientific knowledge, and (4) improving economic and social lifestyle. What kinds of materials were included? A report in 1933 shows that participants in his reading groups were reading Tolstoy, Tagore, Marx, Engels, and Kropotkin, along with a wide range of Japanese writers (Kajii, 1977, p. 461).

The 1930s: Finding an Appropriate Role for Public Libraries

In the summer of 1931 members of the Japanese Army in Manchuria blew up part of the South Manchurian Railway and blamed it on Chinese insurgents, creating an opportunity for the army to take control of Manchuria. Japan officially entered into a period of emergency, and police control tightened significantly. Within the library world, many of the liberal-minded, Western-trained librarians had either moved into Japan-occupied colonial libraries or private libraries where they had slightly more freedom. Within the Japan Library Association leadership had changed from “pure” librarians to social educators. Matsumoto, first introduced to the library world when he was installed as director of the Imperial Library in 1923, had been elected president of the JLA in 1928 but was dislodged in 1930 when the membership voted in one of the senior librarians. In what could only have been orchestrated at the highest level of government, Matsumoto was invited to give a lecture to the emperor on the mission of libraries in 1931. It was the first time that any member of the library profession had been so honored, and the invitation gave the library community hope that they would finally receive the recognition that they deserved. Matsumoto was reelected president of the JLA soon after, and the Ministry of Education began to talk about revising the library laws, improving librarians’ qualifications, and placing more importance on the role of libraries in the social education movement. In July 1933 Matsumoto announced in Toshokan Zasshi that the JLA would move its administrative offices into the Ministry of Education building along with other social education organizations to facilitate its work on behalf of the state.

Draft versions of the revised legislation had promised pay increases for librarians, mandatory legislation of public libraries, and a centralized
library system. Expectations ran high, and when the long-awaited library legislation revisions were published, they did include a number of changes that had been recommended by the JLA. But mandatory establishment of libraries was not one. Even worse, the salaries and rank of library staff were reduced. Least controversial was the establishment of a central library system, which was responsible for providing oversight for all libraries within its prefecture. Prefectural governors were to appoint the library director, and since the Ministry of the Interior appointed prefectural governors, it meant that the Ministry of the Interior had its people in key positions in all prefectural libraries. Apparently, few librarians spoke out against the role of inspection because they believed that the poor quality of book selection evident in private libraries reflected badly on all libraries (Koreeda, 1986, p. 40). Furthermore, many librarians believed that the fact that not only local police but also the “thought police” and military police routinely entered the library to remove banned books and check for antiwar activity was proof that librarians were not treated as responsible government officials. One library director took his new role very seriously and published his findings in *Toshokan Zasshi* in 1934 (Nakata, 1934). Otobe Senzaburô, director of the central library in Nagano, complained about all the left-wing books he discovered in the private libraries run by the Young Men’s Associations in his prefecture (Otobe, 1934, p. 244). This could have hardly come as a surprise to anyone, however, since more than 208 teachers in Nagano had been caught in the sweep to remove “reds” from the school system the year before, and many of them had been supervising small library collections.

One clause caused considerable debate: the one concerning the central purpose of libraries. Rather than the Japan Library Association’s proposal that “the library’s purpose is to collect books for the public to read and assist in their cultural development,” the revised legislation stated that “libraries may serve as supplemental facilities for social education.” Matsumoto Kiichi celebrated the revised legislation for providing libraries with a chance to shed their passive role as a storehouse of books and reinvent themselves as centers for whatever activities are necessary for social education (Matsumoto, 1933, p. 276). While many voices grumbled quietly, the main voice of opposition came once again from Nakata Kunizô. A discussion at the national conference is revealing. Matsuo Tomoo, from the Ministry of Education, suggested that appropriate activities could include sponsoring judo classes in the library if other facilities were unavailable. When Nakata pointed out that since the legislation used the term “may” it was an option and not an obligation, Matsuo called him “unpatriotic,” which could have (and probably did) cause him to be put under surveillance by the thought police.

Nakata (1934) and Matsuo (1934) took their disagreement to the pages of the *Toshokan Zasshi* in a series of essays. Matsuo suggested that in the countryside, where the population was not particularly literate, it would make more sense for libraries to become part of a larger social education
facility and that the employees should take on whatever tasks are needed.\(^8\) Nakata’s article was entitled “Let the Library Develop as a Library,” in which he worried that the library’s role in facilitating the valuable mission of learning through books was in danger of being lost. Since Nakata refused to back down, the result of the debate was the establishment of a committee to investigate appropriate social education activities for libraries. Naturally both Nakata and Matsuo were asked to serve on the committee, along with seven other prominent librarians.

According to Takei Gonnai, careful examination of the work of the committee is essential to understanding how reading guidance turned into thought control before the end of the war and the fundamental role of libraries evolved during wartime (Takei, 1960, pp. 202–3). The committee published three draft proposals in *Toshokan Zasshi* before submitting its final report in 1937. In the end, a toothless report concluded that library activities could be labeled as being either direct or indirect. Direct activities involved reading and books and were activities that librarians should undertake if at all possible. Indirect activities did not particularly involve libraries or books but could be done within the library if the librarian had any free time. Indirect activities, it was added, should be considered as a means of drawing new people into the library. Nakata’s influence on reading guidance was evident, however, as the committee recommended three different levels of library service depending on the type of library user.

**Type 1.** Those who come voluntarily to the library, select the books they want to read, and have the ability to understand what they are reading.

**Type 2.** Those who have the ability to read and are able to educate themselves through reading but do not know how to use the library or select the books they want to read.

**Type 3.** People with a certain degree of knowledge but who have not realized the need for self-study, or those who do realize the need for self-study but social conditions do not allow them to fulfill the need.

According to the report, public libraries need to pay the most attention to the second and third types of users. In particular, the report gave concrete advice on how to appeal to type 2 people, such as:

- supply multiple copies of important books;
- adopt an open shelf system;
- operate easy to use catalogs, and provide advice to users on proper use of the catalogs;
- set library hours that are convenient;
- simplify lending procedures;
- establish branch libraries and lending collections; and
- expand reading consultation work and increase contact time between staff and users (Takei, 1960, p. 289).
The committee finished its report by asking for mandatory establishment of libraries; minimum standards for staffing, collections, and budgets; library education programs; and state subsidies for library costs (Takei, 1960, p. 290). But the final report came so long after the initial debate that the political situation had changed significantly.

**National Spiritual Mobilization Collections, 1937**

In May 1937 the Ministry of Education published *Kokutai no hongi* (Principles of the National Polity), which stressed the unique identity of the Japanese and the sanctity of the nationalist imperial state where individualism was extremely difficult (and certainly undesirable) and service to the state the supreme virtue (Hunter, 1984, p. 99). The *Kokutai no hongi* became the principle ethics text in schools, and the government looked for a way that it could ensure that the text would also be read by all adults. Copies were distributed to all schools and libraries, and study groups were formed under the supervision of teachers who had been provided with government-approved commentaries so that there would be no misunderstanding and no deviation (*Sources*, 1958, p. 278). The introduction to the text begins as follows:

> The various ideological and social evils of present-day Japan are the result of ignoring the fundamental and running after the trivial, of lack of judgement, and a failure to digest things thoroughly; and this is due to the fact that since the days of Meiji so many aspects of European and American culture, systems, and learning, have been imported, and that, too rapidly (*Sources*, 1958, p. 279).

In the summer of 1937 Japan formally declared war on China, and in the fall of 1937 the Konoe cabinet announced a campaign to support the war effort called the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement (*Kokumin Seishin Sōdōin*). Libraries looked for positive ways to participate in the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement, and the Japan Library Association proposed the purchase and distribution of small circulating collections of “appropriate materials.” The Ministry of Education supported the plan and provided a subsidy of 350 yen to each central library and a catalog of recommended books from which to make their selections. Some central libraries sent circulating collections to military hospitals, and others were made available free of charge to the families of deceased soldiers. Other libraries responded by sponsoring exhibitions of war-related materials, creating lending collections, and doing some propaganda. One slogan that received attention was “The fruits of national spirit are in your library!” (*Nagasue*, 1984, p. 320). The slogan for National Library Week was “National Spiritual Mobilization Members: Read! To Mobilize National Strength” (*Kakinuma*, 1974, p. 93).

At the same time voluntary participation in moral suasion campaigns...
took on a different air when a section chief of Police Affairs (part of the Ministry of the Interior) was appointed as the Head of Social Education in 1937 (Takeuchi, 1979, p. 12). Furthermore, in 1938 General Araki Sadao was appointed the Minister of Education, finally providing for a complete penetration of the military in all aspects of education. Youth vocational centers and youth training centers had been established in 1935 because military exams to new conscripts had proven that young men with no more than an elementary education performed poorly on aptitude tests. But since few youths voluntarily attended improvement courses, the Ministry of Education decided to make attendance compulsory beginning in 1939 (MEXT, n.d.).

1940: The New Order and Libraries

By 1940 rationing was in effect in all areas of life, from paper to fuel to food. The annual meeting of the Japan Library Association was discontinued because of travel restrictions and reformulated the next year in a slightly different format. National Library Week, previously under the auspices of the JLA, had been replaced by “Reading Promotion Week” and taken out of the hands of the JLA (Tôjô, 2006, p. 77). In December 1941 Japan’s declaration of war on the Western world further pushed Japanese librarians into developing a more “Japanese” form of librarianship. The New Order in East Asia (Tôa shinchitsujo) called for a leadership role for Japan within Asia (later known as the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere) to liberate Asia from communist and Western threats under the political, economic, and military supervision of Japan. To quote from the plan for the “New World Order”:

Occidental individualism and materialism shall be rejected and a moral world view, the basic principle of whose morality shall be the Imperial Way, shall be established. The ultimate object to be achieved is not the exploitation but co-prosperity and mutual help, not competitive conflict but mutual assistance and mild peace, not a formal view of equality but a view of order based on righteous classification, not an idea of rights but an idea of service, and not several world views but one unified world view (Sources, 1958, p. 298).

As always, the Ministry of Japan had asked the JLA to consider concrete roles that the library could play in developing the “New Order.” One suggestion made by the JLA was to have the government create a reading list of recommended readings and distribute the list and copies of the titles to all libraries. The libraries would then supervise the reading of these titles by all citizens (Nagasue, 1984, p. 320).

The Toshokan Zasshi published two articles by librarians on how libraries could function under the New Order. Akioka Goro, for example, stressed that the libraries had an important role to play in the re-education of adults who had been raised under philosophies of liberalism and individualism (Akioka,
1941, p. 149). Furthermore, given the severe paper shortages, libraries were the most effective way for a large number of people to have access to the limited amount of reading material. Akioka also proposed establishing an exam based on subjects covered in the “good citizen’s reading collection” and offering certificates of completion. Tanaka Inagi had made a similar suggestion in 1908 as a way of attracting the Ministry of Education’s interest in public libraries as social education centers (Tanaka, 1908, p. 7).

In May 1941 the JLA celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. At its celebration, the invited speaker called for the JLA to join forces with other organizations under the umbrella of the Imperial Rule Assistance Organization to bring culture to the rural areas through the reading guidance movement. Librarians were encouraged once again to be active participants in the New Order and to free themselves from the confines and isolation of library buildings to take a more active role. The call for action continued the next year when the Ministry of Education insisted that given the seriousness of the situation, all out war on all fronts, librarians could no longer hide behind calls for improved funding or library legislation. They had to become active and they had to become involved in re-educating adults. The reading guidance movement used librarians’ knowledge and skills, made maximum use of a small number of books, and freed them from the confines (and costs) of the physical library building.

While no one was willing to go on record as being opposed to the plan, one librarian made the pointed suggestion that “there seemed to be a great deal of pressure from above” (Koyama, 1942, p. 423). Ono Noriaki, a very well respected academic librarian, pointed out a number of flaws in the plan. Given the current paper shortages, by the time libraries read about books being recommended, they are out of print. Furthermore, library legislation did not give librarians the authority to serve as social educators, and even if the librarians saw themselves that way, the public did not. Taking his argument one step too far, Ono claimed that if the government did not have sufficient funds to build libraries or maintain library buildings, then how could it expect to have enough funds to wage war. It was at this point that the chairman squelched all further comments and his own were not published (Nihon 1942, p. 418).

In the end, the JLA requested that the library’s nationalistic mission be written into library legislation, as well as (once again) mandatory establishment of libraries in all towns, cities, and prefectures. Furthermore, libraries should be renamed “national libraries” (kokumin toshokan) because they are imbued with the same charge as national schools (kokumin gakkô). And, in order to spread the national mandatory reading program, the JLA requested that the government increase the number of “mandatory reading” materials published, further control supervision of the commercial publishing industry so that unsuitable materials were no longer published, and establish a single organization to recommend appropriate reading
materials so that librarians were no longer confused by which recommendations to follow (Toshokan Zasshi, 1942, p. 429). The Ministry of Education took these suggestions seriously, and by February 1943 public libraries were on the priority list to receive newly published recommended texts.

Until the spring of 1942, despite the continual pushing for libraries to become more active, the Ministry of Education was still focusing its attention on central/prefectural libraries promoting reading through the use of small circulating collections. But during a meeting with central library directors, Nakata took several high-ranking Ministry of Education officials to see the reading guidance work of Kajii Shigeo, one of Nakata’s protégés. They were clearly impressed, and by September of 1942 the Ministry of Education and Japan Library Association had jointly produced guidelines for providing reading guidance, held the first conference specifically on reading guidance, and provided funds to five prefectural/central libraries to set up reading guidance programs. Reading guidance, once intended for young men, would be broadened to serve all adults. More importantly, reading was no longer a private or personal action (as in selfish); it was a government-mandated contribution to the war effort and intended to increase one’s awareness as a citizen community effort (Maruyama, 1971, p. 50). People did not read for their own needs but for the needs of the community. Librarians would be sent out to the factories and villages with small collections of approved books, thus eliminating the need for library facilities. Factories were obligated to set aside time for their reading guidance programs. One-on-one consultation or small group guidance would ensure that the reader had properly understood the content and significance of the text and limited participants to reading one text per month so they would not become confused by too much information (Toshokan Zasshi, 1942, p. 377).

Unlike Nakata’s original plan, this new plan focused on improving aptitude and teamwork spirit. Furthermore, it was to prepare all citizens for their future roles as the emperor’s soldiers and advisors for the other members of the New World Order (Koreeda, 1986, pp. 36–43). According to a Ministry of Education report on reading guidance in rural areas, recommended texts included biographies of famous Japanese militarists and politicians, War and the Body, and the Way of the Subjects. Instructors included principals, schoolteachers, and librarians (Monbushô no Chihô, 1943). Since most librarians were not comfortable in the role of “teacher,” they tended to assume the managerial role (arranging for rooms, paperwork, and coordinating) rather than the guidance role.

Nakata published an article in the November issue of Toshokan Zasshi explaining how the JLA planned to deal with the campaign to increase reading across the nation. Nakata stated that the membership had spent the previous year debating the best method for increasing reading and had finally decided on the course of reading guidance. The effectiveness of the campaign differed widely between prefectures depending on the leadership
of the director of the central library (Nakata, 1943b). Otobe Senzaburô, the
director of the Nagano Prefectural Library, published article after article
in the magazine Dokusho Shinshû (Shinshû Reads) on the role of reading to
support the war effort (Koreeda, 1983, pp. 176–77). Toyama Prefectural
Library received funds to purchase 11,500 volumes, which were transported
in 365 boxes and sent to 110 of its 213 towns, villages, and cities for the use
of over 190 organizations (Hôjô, 1965, p. 282).

Despite the overt controls (censorship, paper restrictions, thought
police) and dangers of criticizing any public decision, in January 1943
Shibuya Kunitada (librarian at Yokohama Municipal Library, promoted to
library director at Maebashi Municipal Library in September of that year)
published an article in Toshokan Zasshi in which he criticized the approach
taken by most librarians concerning reading guidance. Shibuya subtitled
his essay “from the perspective of a ‘pure’ librarian.” Shibuya considered
himself a “pure” librarian in comparison with Nakata Kunizô, who had
abandoned the librarian “ship” (Nagasue, 1984, p. 334). Shibuya believed
that reading guidance had assumed too prominent a place in the library
world, and that many librarians were jumping on the bandwagon without
really believing in its value in order to ingratiate themselves with the gov-
ernment and to secure funding for their libraries. Shibuya argued that the
current approach to mandating the reading of a set number of texts would
turn libraries into schools and library books into textbooks. As Nakata had
pointed out a decade earlier, most librarians believed that library users
needed to be free to choose their own reading materials according to their
own interests” (Nagasue, 1984, p. 9).

At the time Nakata was editor of Toshokan Zasshi, so he must have sup-
ported the article’s publication even though he was the main target of
criticism. Indeed, Shibuya’s comments were a reflection of the beliefs of
many, and Nakata probably felt it was important for the membership to
air their opinions. The Ministry of Education reacted swiftly to this article,
however, by warning Nakata (as editor of the journal) that no such articles
should be printed in the future because it would create misunderstanding
of the reading guidance movement (Nakata, 1943a, p. 4). Nakata did not
immediately answer Shibuya’s charges. Instead the subsequent issues were
full of reports of reading guidance activities across the countryside. Finally,
Nakata found a way to answer Shibuya indirectly through an article that
was addressed to a Chinese librarian interested in reading guidance and
published his article in the October 1943 issue. Nakata pointed out that
Shibuya put too much emphasis on individual free choice and that the
system allows for individual selection of texts from within the collection.
Furthermore, he advised Shibuya that continuing to push for individualism
at this point would likely end his career as a public librarian. Certainly, he
knew what he was talking about, since it came to light long after he died
that he had been arrested on charges of lèse-majesté in 1937 for having made
critical comments about the behavior of Japanese soldiers in China to a small group of librarians (Yamazaki, 1986).

Plans for training people to provide reading guidance went forward. The Ministry of Education and Imperial Rule Assistance Association decided to co-sponsor two three-week training camps scheduled for February and March 1944, with the goal of combining spiritual training and knowledge. An advertisement published in the January 1944 issue of Toshokan Zasshi (Monbosho narabi, 1944, p. 36) included the following information:

Thought Drill for Guiding Reading Circles
   Dates: 11 Feb. to 4 March (session 1) and 8 March to 30 March (session 2)
   Participants: prefectural and central library directors, librarians, and other persons involved with reading guidance with the recommendation of their prefectural governor.
   Lectures: Kokutai no Hongi (Fundamentals of our national polity)
Daily schedule:
5:00    wake up
5:00–6:30 morning preparation
6:30–7:00 breakfast
7:00–9:00 self-study
9:00    opening ceremony
9:00–12:00 lectures
12:00–1:00 lunch
1:00–2:00 self-study
2:00–4:30 work in the fields
4:30–5:30 afternoon preparation (meditation, cleaning, routines)
5:30–7:00 dinner and bath
7:00–9:00 discussion
9:00    closing ceremony

There are no published reports on the results of the February session and the March training session was cancelled, likely due to the Tokyo air raids that began in March 1944. Toshokan Zasshi published its last issue in September 1944. While some public libraries in large cities continued to function during the last year of the war, most had been burned out or shut down because materials and manpower were needed elsewhere.

Conclusions

Horiuchi Koson was one of the young leaders of the reading guidance movement during the war. In 1950 he reflected on his experiences during the war and attempted to address the criticisms that he and other supporters of the movement received during the occupation period. Horiuchi claimed that launching the national reading guidance movement in 1941 was likely the Ministry of Education’s biggest achievement during the war, and the fact that the Imperial Rule Assistance Organization and other major social management groups came together to support the JLA’s reading guidance movement rather than compete for their own projects was a huge bonus,
even if much of it was just for show (Horiuchi, 1950). He regretted the fact that by the time the movement really got organized, it was too late to have much of an effect because the intended participants (young men) were all off on the war front and everyone left on the home front was either working in factories or scrambling for food. But overall he did not regret his involvement in the reading guidance movement because he believed that the basic path it took finally put libraries squarely in the center of the cultural movement, helped to keep libraries alive, provided some reading sustenance to the people who sought it, and keep some sense of culture alive during a very difficult period.

Despite the fact that many members of the Japan Library Association continued to oppose censorship and mandating reading throughout the period, Sheldon Garon’s hypothesis that social management organizations collaborated with the government in spite of misgivings because it helped them to achieve their own goals seems to be valid for the Japanese library experience. In the case of the Japan Library Association, cooperation with the state was partially orchestrated by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of the Interior, which placed social educators in strategic positions. In particular, two social educators in their role as library directors represent eager collaboration and reluctant collaboration. Although Matsumoto Kiichi served in the highest library post in the country for more than twenty years and as president of the Japan Library Association for a decade, there is very little written about him and his real thoughts on libraries during the war. He represents the eager collaborationist and sought to reshape the Japan Library Association to be more attentive to the needs of the state. In the area of reading guidance, he reflects his initial training as an educator and believed that young men had the desire to read but not the skills to select appropriate materials.

Nakata Kunizō, on the other hand, represents the reluctant collaborationist. He opposed heavy-handed governmental interference and believed firmly in the value of self-education and allowing books to serve as teachers. Nakata came under suspicion during the war for his liberal beliefs and after the war for his role in the reading guidance movement (Ichimura, 1966, p. 257). Unlike Matsumoto, there are many articles about Nakata’s contributions to Japanese library development and how his “reading collection” concept became fodder for thought control. Despite the fact that the reading guidance movement is generally attributed to Nakata, the wartime model was very different than his original model. When the Ministry of Education adopted Nakata’s text-centered “reading collection” model for its own purposes it changed it into a teacher-focused reading guidance model where readers were told how to interpret the content of the books. How Nakata felt about this change is unknown. As with the news of his arrest and subsequent supervision by the thought police, Nakata kept his feelings to himself.
NOTES
1. The best research done in English on Japanese censorship during the period is by Richard H. Mitchell (1976, 1983). This article follows the Japanese tradition of listing family name before personal name.
2. There are several excellent accounts of the development of libraries established by Young Men’s Associations. One example (Koreeda, 1983) clearly explains the changes throughout the period.
3. The relationship between libraries and schools was not congenial throughout most of the period of 1868 to 1945. Most teachers were opposed to children reading outside of the proscribed textbooks because it confused their minds. Some schools issued blanket bans against visiting libraries. One of the reasons typically given for the lack of development of public libraries is because children were not taught how to use libraries while they were in school, therefore they could not be expected to use libraries as adults (Ôta, 1921).
4. Other than an announcement made by Matsumoto in the pages of the Toshokan Zasshi, there is no record of what he actually said to the emperor. The National Diet Library (postwar version of the Imperial Library) does not have a copy.
5. Announcement from Matsumoto published in Toshokan Zasshi (July 1933), 55.
6. According to Welch, Japanese librarians would have kept the centralized systematic approach to library service in the postwar period had the occupation forces not been strongly opposed to it (Welch, 1976, p. 65).
7. The legislation was Imperial (enacted under the name of the emperor), therefore any disrespect to the wording or the intent of the legislation could be deemed lèse-majesté (treason).
8. It is important to point out that this social education facility did come to fruition early in the postwar period (kōminkan).

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Doing Their Part: The Services of the San Diego Public Library during World War II

Tamara Shaw

ABSTRACT
As the United States was gearing up for war in 1940, San Diego, California, was one of the cities most affected by the increase in both military personnel and civilian defense workers. Confronted with a rapidly increasing population and a growing demand for information to support the aircraft and shipbuilding industries, the staff of the San Diego Public Library exemplified the important role that libraries played in educating citizens, building morale, and maintaining a sense of normalcy in a very uncertain world.

INTRODUCTION
In 1940 San Diego already was gearing up for war. Home to a number of significant military installations, including the Eleventh Naval District Headquarters, the United States Naval Training Center, Naval Air Station San Diego, Miramar Naval Air Station, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, and Camp Pendleton, and numerous defense-related industries, San Diego was experiencing a population explosion that put a tremendous strain on city services and infrastructure (Brandes, 1981, p. 181). With new recruits, defense industry workers, and their families pouring in at the rate of 1,500 a week, San Diego’s population went from 203,341 to over 300,000 in just one year (Taschner, 1982, pp. 1-2). San Diego was America’s fastest growing city.

Housing, highways, water and sewer systems, schools, and hospitals were all feeling the crunch, and so, too, were the libraries. The San Diego Public Library had been waging a campaign for a new main library or substantial expansion of the existing one since 1916, when the population stood at 92,000. Repeated bond measures failed and desperate pleas to the Carnegie Corporation were rejected. Some relief from overcrowding came
from renting annexes near the main library to house departments such as Cataloging, the Children’s Room, and the Newspaper and Periodicals Reading Room, but these were meant to be temporary measures. By 1941, however, little progress had been made in securing new facilities, and the library collection was still trying to recover from the lean years of the Great Depression. Despite the enormous challenges facing the librarians, when the war came calling they answered with every resource at their disposal (Breed, 1983, pp. 49, 52, 54).

**The Library as a War Information Center**

Within days of the attack on Pearl Harbor and America’s entry into the war, the call went out for every public library to become a War Information Center. Ideally, these centers would be set up in visible areas of libraries and would work closely with the Office of Civilian Defense to disseminate much-needed information to civilians, members of the military, and defense workers. The Office of Civilian Defense requested that the United States Information Service in the Office of Government Reports be responsible for distributing all of its publications to libraries. Archibald MacLeish, the Librarian of Congress, requested that all government agencies send copies of all of their publications relating to the war to the Office of Government Reports for distribution to libraries. In response to these requests, the United States Information Service in the Office of Government Reports began a program called War Information Service to Libraries. This service was planned “solely to assist libraries in bringing before the public information that should help them adjust their lives to this time of crisis, confusion, and bewilderment” (Vormelker, 1942, p. 27). The service started in February 1942 with a series of monthly exhibit packets. Each packet consisted of publications relating to a specific subject from a number of different agencies. With each exhibit was included at least one poster, to “add verve and color to the exhibit,” and an annotated list of the publications included in the packet. The first exhibit packet, entitled “National Defense,” included material about the armed services and the War and Civilian Defense Agencies, booklets on buying defense bonds and stamps, and other information about the war in general. The second exhibit was on nutrition, and the third contained publications on training plans, including such things as data on jobs suitable for women, reports on converting use of industrial equipment from making goods for civilian needs to manufacturing war goods, and suggestions for volunteer work. It also included copies of the president’s fireside chat, “memorable for its announcement of ceilings on income and prices.” With War Information Centers in libraries, the public would have a single place to turn to have their war-related information needs met, and valuable resources, such as paper and ink, could be conserved by placing publications in a place where they could be used by as many people as possible (Vormelker, 1942, pp. 26–28).
The main branch of the San Diego Public Library was officially designated by the American Library Association as a War Information Center (Breed, 1983, p. 73). Originally the center was set up on the lawn of the library, but it was soon moved into the lobby. While many libraries had to rotate staff from the various library departments to serve at the information desk, San Diego was fortunate to be able to have one person, Mrs. Leona Manley, in charge of the project and two Works Progress Administration (WPA) assistants to help her. In addition to displaying the government pamphlets, the staff clipped articles from newspapers and magazines and filed them by subject. The types of questions asked at the center ranged from where a man would go to register for the draft to how one might obtain a sugar ration card or where one might get training for work in a war industry. A popular question among young people was “Can a fire be built on the beaches at night?” Having one desk to handle such routine questions as these spared many other library and city departments from countless interruptions. Emily Miller Danton, a publicity expert from the American Library Association (ALA), traveled the country in 1942 gathering data on war-time activities of public libraries. During her visit, “she complimented San Diego for doing ‘much with little’ in serving San Diego library patrons.” In an article written about the War Information Centers she visited, Danton noted that “San Diego, California, hangs ephemeral war maps on newspaper sticks and has two or three racks full all the time. They are easily seen and handled, easily changed when supplanted” (Danton, 1942, p. 505).

Of course the War Information Centers would be useful only insofar as the public knew about them. In conferences the U.S. Information Service had with various agencies, the statement was made over and over again that libraries wouldn’t know how to use this current information material and that the public would certainly not expect to find it there. One man said, “What would libraries do with this air raid warden material? You know perfectly well they will just catalog it and put it on the shelf.” No, no! We shall have to see to it that the air raid wardens get it, and of course, if we have a lot left over, maybe we could send you some for the libraries. (Vormelker, 1942, p. 28)

In the face of such sentiments as these, librarians certainly had their work cut out for them.

Library Publicity

Under the leadership of city librarian Cornelia Plaister, San Diego Public Library already had a strong publicity program in place. When Miss Plaister arrived in July 1926, she determined that a bond issue for a new library would never pass unless the voting public had a greater understanding of the library’s needs. “Consequently she took immediate steps to increase
publicity about the Library, bombarding local newspapers and radio stations with frequent news releases about library services, accepting speaking engagements anywhere and everywhere, and encouraging the staff to become more visible as speakers and book reviewers” (Breed, 1983, p. 59). These publicity efforts intensified as U.S. involvement in the war increased and any information pertinent to the war effort was especially appreciated. In September 1940 Mrs. Follick of the Public Relations Department of the library reported that

in a conference with Mr. S. W. Fuller, Manager of KGB broadcasting studio, he agreed to make spot announcements daily on the San Diego Public Library and its service to the community. The Public Relations Department was to supply him with short notices of two or three sentences on any library service or activity. Whenever a program fell short of the time schedule a library spot announcement would be made. Mr. Fuller said he thought he would average one a day.

The library had a similar agreement with the *San Diego Union*. One of the more popular news items was a feature called “Answers by the Public Library.” During the war years it focused primarily on news of war interest such as facts about the navy, army, and air force and details about the theater of war. Some of the featured topics were facts about outlying outposts such as Wake Island and Guam, navy slang, and facts about ships. Articles related to the war tended to be welcomed by the *San Diego Union* and other papers and printed immediately upon receipt.4 Library news on other topics did not always fare so well. Mrs. Follick writes in her March 1943 report on the Public Relations Department:

It is interesting to compare the difference in editorial attitude toward news now and in pre-war days. A long article sent to the paper about paintings by the local artist, C. A. Fries, being on display at the Library was reduced to a few inconsequential lines. A talk given by Miss Owen on “Tolstoy’s Russia Surges On” was given much space and reported in detail. Before the war it was Russia that would have been in a short note and the local artist in a long article.

In addition to the *San Diego Union* and the *San Diego Tribune-Sun*, the library ran articles in several special interest publications such as the *Consolidator*, Consolidated Aircraft’s company newspaper, a local union organ, and a new publication called “The Jewish Press,” which was contacted and printed copy on new books on Germany and short articles on the racial and European situation.5

Apart from publicizing its services in the media, the San Diego Public Library appealed more directly to the public in several ways. Displays of new book jackets were posted in store windows near some branch libraries; other branches that were housed on school grounds maintained bulletin boards in the schools’ corridors promoting new books and vacation reading programs. In October 1941 library personnel undertook an ambitious
effort to reach out to all newcomers to the city. They enlisted the aid of the Boy Scouts to distribute door to door “thousand of leaflets inviting new residents to enjoy the services the Library offered. 15,000 dodgers were handed out in this way and another 7,000 given out through stores and other community agencies.” All of the library’s publicity efforts attracted the attention not only of San Diego residents but of national library organizations as well. In 1940 and 1941 the San Diego Public Library was placed on the national library publicity honor roll, which was established by the H. W. Wilson Company and the American Library Association. Samples of their newspaper publicity, the annual report, and a special folder explaining library rules were displayed at ALA’s 63rd Annual Conference in Boston. The library was one of seventy-two libraries chosen for that honor.

Besides publicity outside the library, another effective means for drawing patrons to the library was displays, particularly those that highlighted some aspect of the world situation. In late 1942 the library sponsored several displays that proved to be popular with the public. In December the Circulation Department had a display of army insignia in the display case in the lobby. This exhibit aroused a great deal of interest, especially among the men and boys. One teacher was also interested and sent her Latin class to copy the Latin mottoes. A display of the flags of the United Nations had a number of patrons sending away for their own sets from the Bowker Company. Yet another display featured objects collected from the battlefield at Tarawa. So as not to neglect contributions made in the local community, one year the library decorated the Christmas tree entirely with items produced in San Diego. Included were popcorn, milk, coffee, spaghetti, cheese, butter, noodles, canned fish and soups, bread, ice cream, aluminum castings, and bottles of San Diego water. Names of the firms donating the articles were hung on the tree in the form of greeting cards. Of particular interest to the public were the miniature books by San Diego authors.

Library Service

Serving the Public

The San Diego Public Library was a microcosm of the tremendous impact of the war on almost every aspect of daily life. Working for the war effort, which it seems almost everyone did in one way or another, determined where people lived, worked, and ate and how they spent their leisure time. All of these considerations in turn helped determine the types of materials and services offered by the library and the hours and locations in which they would be offered. One of the most readily apparent changes was the decrease in circulation throughout the war years. This did not necessarily signal a decrease in the use of the library, just that with less leisure time available for reading owing to defense work or related volunteer activities, people were only checking out one or two books at a time rather than five.
Besides the lack of time for reading, some people were checking out fewer books because gas rationing induced them to use public transportation and it was simply too difficult to carry more books on the street cars and buses. Other people who planned to use their cars only once in two or three weeks for errands asked to be allowed to borrow more than the five books allowed and keep them for four weeks instead of the usual three. Shift work at the war plants and weekend liberty for servicemen led to Sunday hours at the Main Library from 2 to 5:30 pm beginning November 2, 1941 (Breed, 1983, p. 73). In 1942 the Library Commission recommended that an hour a day be added to the schedules of the Main Library; branches provided that the hours of employees were lengthened and that they were properly compensated for those longer hours.9

With so many new people moving into town, the library became something of a welcome center. Miss Dysart of the Circulation Department wrote in April 1942: “Many times a day the librarian on duty at the information or readers aid desk pulls out the city map and directs a patron to a given destination. Since more and more strangers are coming into the city and are using street cars and buses the staff is becoming very familiar with the layout of the city.” Men in the armed forces frequently asked, “What is there to do in San Diego?” so a schedule of events was posted on the adult education bulletin board. The severe shortage of housing led many families to live in downtown hotels when they first arrived. A great many of them ended up at the library asking, “Where shall I look for a house to rent?” One young man who was visiting the library for the first time said, “I’ve never been in a public library before but a guy down the street told me that was where you went to find out things in this town.”10 Apparently the publicity was working.

In addition to being a source of information, the library was becoming known as a place where service was offered. In March 1941 Miss Dysart of the Circulation Department wrote: “During the time of filing the income tax, numerous people came in saying that they had been told the ‘girls at the library would help fill out the returns.’” A few months later a young Scandinavian man who worked at Consolidated Aircraft Company appeared at the City Librarian’s office and asked her if she would like to give him an examination. As Miss Plaister explained, “This was a bit startling at first, but it turned out to be a case of a student who had left his university to come here to work, on condition that he would go on studying and take his final examinations under adequate supervision. The City Librarian was happy to help him.”11

Serving Community Organizations

While striving to meet the needs of individual patrons, the librarians worked tirelessly and made sacrifices of time, equipment, and space to serve the needs of the community as a whole. In September 1940 the Business
Department participated in the Convention of the League of California Cities by contributing a display of books on national defense. The display included a collection of model airplanes, tanks, searchlights, boats, and other military objects loaned to the library by Kenneth Johnson, “a young colored boy.” The collection attracted a great deal of attention. The library cooperated with other agencies to provide textbooks and supplementary materials to support their coursework. For classes in nutrition and canteen cookery being offered by some community agencies, the library borrowed books from Miss Anderson, the dietitian of the Scripps Metabolic Clinic. These were kept for reference at the library and were in almost constant use for many weeks. The library also purchased new material and circulated available books and magazines on these subjects. The Red Cross gave the library twenty copies of their textbook on first aid to be used for reference by students. The Circulation and Business Departments worked together on a comprehensive bibliography on “marriage and family relations,” which was to be used by the San Diego Association for Family Living in a series of lectures to be given in the city and county. Members of the staff also served on local committees engaged in defense and war work, including the Nutrition Committee of the Civilian Defense Council, the Civilian Morale Committee of the Civilian Defense Council, the U.S.O. Executive Committee, the War Bond Committee, the Inter-Church Spiritual Defense Committee, the War Recreation Coordinating Council, and the Youth Defense Council. Participation on these committees, although it often involved a sacrifice of the staff’s personal time, allowed the library to better serve the needs of the organizations and acquire information in advance of city-wide demand.¹²

_Serving Special Libraries_

Although many of the local bases and defense industries had their own libraries, their librarians had no bibliographic tools, so a steady stream of questions was directed to the Order Department of the Public Library. Miss Gordon of the Order Department wrote: “We take great pride in the fact that we have many ‘satisfied customers,’ and have built up a friendly and efficient service to those librarians who are trying to build up useful collections in their specialized fields.” The library also provided bibliographies for lectures being given by the Offices of the Army, Navy, and Marines and fielded numerous ready reference questions for the local newspapers. The Publicity Department at Consolidated called for advance material on their many distinguished visitors and asked the librarian to verify their greetings in Spanish to Mexican and South American delegations. The library contributed three typewriters to the U.S. government even though they really did not have three to spare, and they donated space in their annexes to the galleries and museums that were forced out of Balboa Park to make more room for the Naval Hospital.¹³
Establishing New Branches

Of all the ways the library served the community, perhaps what reached the largest number of people was the creation of new branches and stations wherever the library saw a pressing need. No matter how stretched they were for resources and manpower, if the librarians knew of a population group that could not easily get to an existing branch, they somehow found a room, some extra books, and one or two people to take charge of it. Stations were fairly easy to set up since they relied mostly on gift books. They were intended primarily for pleasure reading; because they were typically only open for a few hours two or three times a week, they could be staffed by responsible community residents with minimal supervision from the library. A station was established, for example, at the Riverlawn Dormitory for women, located about two blocks north of Consolidated Plant Number 2: “300 books, 50 scrapbooks, 75 gift copies of paper bound mystery stories and a few magazines were sent over from the library for the 800 women living in the dormitory. The station would be staffed by volunteers from the dorm.” A similar arrangement was made for young men living in the National Youth Administration barracks elsewhere in the city. A new station was even set up in the Harbor View Hospital, the new venereal disease treatment center in the women’s section of the jail. The books sent were from the Victory Book Drive or volumes about to be discarded from the library. The Victory Book Drive was a national effort by the American Library Association, the American Red Cross, and the United Service Organizations, Inc., to encourage citizens to donate books in usable condition that could be sent to the troops to supplement the library materials provided by the government (Warren, 1942, pp. 34–35). Books that were not sent to the military were added to other collections where needed. The women had to stay in the hospital six weeks, so the books were a welcome addition.14

One of the most newsworthy branches to be opened during the war was the Linda Vista branch. Many national publications carried news of the largest government housing project in the United States, which was built on the mesa in Linda Vista (see, for instance, Elgin, 1942, pp. 705–10). The goal was to build 3,000 houses in 300 days. With over 6,000 adult residents and 5,000 children, by November 1941 Linda Vistans were pleading for library services. City manager Walter Cooper reluctantly agreed to a new branch library—provided it did not cost any money. The Housing Authority was willing to move the little gardener’s cottage to a more central location and to remodel it. It was affectionately dubbed “And One” because the government’s official count of buildings was three thousand and one. Books were scrounged from other branch libraries, from the Victory Book Campaign, and from collection centers in other states (Breed, 1983, p. 75). Three high school librarians, three teachers (including the principal of Kit Carson School), and two residents with some previous library expe-
rience each worked at least one afternoon or evening each week to staff the library, and seventh grader Bonnie Riddle shelved books for an hour or two every afternoon. The library opened June 30, 1942. During its first month of operation, 3,420 books were circulated in 54 hours of open time, an average of 63 books per hour. The library only had 1,500 books! They were being checked out almost as soon as they were returned. The next month, circulation increased to 91.9 books per hour.\(^\text{15}\)

**Serving the Military**

Although the armed forces were supposed to have their own library service, the needs of the troops stationed in San Diego were increasing faster than the government could provide for them, so the Public Library stepped in to fill the gap. San Diego Public Library helped establish a branch library at Fort Rosecrans in February 1941. It was organized by Mrs. Fiet of the Circulation Department and staffed by two WPA workers under her supervision until the army was prepared to take it over in May 1942 (Breed, 1983, p. 72).\(^\text{16}\) Also in February 1941, San Diego launched a “Books to Barracks” campaign almost six months before the national Victory Book Campaign was under way (Breed, 1983, p. 72). The tens of thousands of books from this and subsequent book drives were distributed to Fort Rosecrans, Camp Callan, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, and an outpost in Alaska, and, after the 1943 book drive, a distribution point was finally secured on the pier for books to service transport ships. When the book drives failed to provide enough technical books to meet the needs of the military, special letters were sent out asking for funds to buy them. Over $300 dollars was received, which meant that, taking publishers’ discounts into allowance, over $600 worth of technical books could be purchased.\(^\text{17}\)

The bases eventually had their own libraries, but the Public Library continued to be a source of help and information to them. San Diego Public Library assisted Miss Dent, in charge of the library at Camp Callan, for example, in preparing a rush order of 5,000 books. The librarians also answered Miss Dent’s many questions, providing her with such information as directions to Russia and the locations of Apache reservations. When a group of navy men needed a good article on the theory of aerial warfare advanced by the Italian General Dounet but no adequate English publication could be found, the library sent away to the California State Library for a French text, which librarians then translated into English for them.\(^\text{18}\)

**Building the Library Collection**

Expansion of the aircraft, shipbuilding, and related industries in San Diego changed the direction of the library’s book selection. The library had been developing an aviation collection since 1931, but now quantities of technical books, trade catalogs, and house organs were needed (Breed, 1983, pp. 72–73). In an effort to cooperate with vocational schools of the
city in meeting the demands for books of special interest to students preparing for national defense jobs, the Business Department ordered duplicate copies of many titles. Noted Miss Leech in her monthly report of the Business Department: “The circulation would have more than doubled if the supply could have been met.” Medical personnel frequently asked for materials more advanced than what was in the library’s collection, which had been planned principally for use by lay readers. Since there were no other medical libraries in the city open to the public, the library gradually began building up its medical section. Patrons concerned with issues on the homefront sought books on nutrition, home canning and preserving, backyard farming, and consumer buying. Leisure reading tended toward books about the war, the most popular being personal accounts of war correspondents. Russia was a popular topic, more so than any of the other countries in the United Nations. And interest in spiritualism was growing, much as it had during the First World War.\textsuperscript{19}

**Wartime Challenges**

With all of the services the librarians were offering to meet war-time demands, their jobs were being made ever more difficult by circumstances brought on by the war. The money available for purchasing new materials was often difficult to spend because of problems in the publishing industry. A shortage of paper meant that fewer books were being published, so new titles were often out of stock soon after publication and standard titles rapidly went out of print. Nationwide transportation difficulties resulted in erratic delivery of books. The books that finally did arrive showed a marked increase in imperfections because paper and ink qualities were poor and publishers were no longer able to secure skilled workmen in their printing and binding departments (see Brandt, 1945; “Scarcity problems,” 1942). Clearing orders that could not be filled, creating new orders for substitutions, and correcting error-filled bills required much time and effort in the Order Department. The rapidly shifting population of the city meant that much time had to be spent registering new borrowers and filing changes of address for those who moved. There was a considerable increase in overdue books, possibly due to more demands on people’s time and higher wages, which made paying fines less burdensome. This entailed more work in sending notices and, in some instances, sending a staff member as personal messenger to procure books from delinquent patrons. Considerable time was spent attending meetings of defense committees, preparing the library buildings against disaster, and preparing Civilian Defense Bibliographies. In the fall of 1942 the War Department, through the American Library Association, asked for the removal from library shelves all material on secret inks, ciphers, and explosives. Miss Plaister, the city librarian, noted that this was not a simple task: “As this involved books of formulas which were used constantly, it created quite a problem. Each user of the books had to sign
a card as to the information desired and the reason for his need of it. He had to prove his identity and sign his name and address. Those cards were then turned over to the F. B. I. 20

All of the stress brought on by the extra work due to the war was compounded by one of the most disturbing problems of all: the high turnover of staff members. Although the professional librarians were devoted to their jobs, there were relatively few of them. Much of the routine library work was done by staff members, almost all of whom were women. For the first time women were being offered jobs in the defense industry with pay equal to that of men, so they were leaving traditional, lower-paid women’s work in droves. No sooner would the library hire and train replacements than they, too, would leave, either for higher-paying jobs or because full-time work did not suit them after all. 21

The Difference They Made

With all of the services they were offering and with every effort made to meet every need, librarians still occasionally asked themselves if they were doing their part to help win the war. One librarian wrote: “There’s lots going on these days in this town. First aid, plane production, house construction, victory gardens, etc., etc. Sometimes it seems that just about everyone, with the exception of myself, is frantically engaged in an activity they call ‘doing something about this war’ which engulfs us all. Yet at other times these occasional misgivings vanish, and we see our work as something alive and vital and of lasting worth.” When men stationed overseas wrote back and said how much they would enjoy going into a library where there were books in English to read, they knew they were giving people far away something to look forward to upon their return. 22 Branch librarian Miss Allsebrook expressed her feelings about the contributions the librarians were making to the war effort as follows:

As we register young service wives, one after another, we feel that we are helping to maintain civilian morale; as we cheerfully help the children with their reading, we feel that we are helping to maintain their serenity and feeling of security; as we purchase and circulate books either specifically technical or generally informative about the war we know we are rendering a definite service. One might expand this theme further, but it is summed up in our hope that our freedom to give the services of a free public library to a free people may never be seriously curtailed or hindered. 23

Perhaps the profound and lasting impact the librarians had on their patrons and in their community can be illustrated best by their devotion to the San Diegans of Japanese descent interred in war relocation centers. Most of the Japanese-American children had been long-time patrons of the library and were well-known to children’s librarian Miss Clara Breed. When the children came to the library to return their books one last time and surrender their library cards before reporting for deportation, they were
given stamped postal cards and told to write and let the librarians know how they were doing. Miss Breed and other library staff members went to the Santa Fe depot the day the Japanese left San Diego to say goodbye and to hand out more postal cards to the children they had missed (Breed, 1943b, p. 257). Deeply moved by the unjust treatment they were receiving and missing their steadfast presence in her library, Miss Breed visited the children in the camps (Breed, 1943a, pp. 120–21), sent books and presents throughout their internment, and spoke out publicly against their treatment. Just as important for the children as the books and presents, however, was the contact with the outside world. The faithfulness of the librarians in corresponding with their Japanese friends let them know that someone remembered them, cared about them, and believed in them. Distance did not end their service to their patrons, and public opinion did not deter it. This same unswerving commitment to everyone who entered the library was their way of doing their part to win the war and to make a more peaceful world in the process.

NOTES
24. For more information about Clara Breed’s work on behalf of the Japanese internees, see Breed (1943a, 1943b) and the tribute to her on the Web site of the Japanese American National Museum (http://www.janm.org/exhibits/breed/title.html).
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libraries.
Abstract
American book publishing during the Second World War had to cope with a huge increase in demand for books coupled with scarcity of resources, especially paper rationing imposed by the War Production Board. Based on research in the Random House archives and focusing on the Modern Library series, this article examines how publishers coped with wartime challenges and opportunities. Random House grew rapidly during the war. Sales reached the million dollar mark in 1941 and exceeded three million dollars by 1946. Many new titles were published in smaller printings than demand would have justified and were out of stock for extended periods before they could be reprinted. The psychological uncertainties and dislocations of wartime affected the kinds of books that were in demand. Sales of philosophy and poetry increased at a disproportionate rate. The Oracles of Nostradamus, published two months after Pearl Harbor, became one of the Modern Library’s best-selling titles. Shortly after the war ended the Modern Library became embroiled in a censorship controversy involving the removal of poems by Ezra Pound from a Modern Library poetry anthology. The end of the war was accompanied by rapid inflation in all areas of the economy, and paper remained in short supply despite the end of rationing. It was not until September 1948 that all Modern Library titles were back in stock for the first time since the war.

Introduction
For American publishers and libraries, the Second World War was a time of plenitude and scarcity—plenitude in the sense of a huge increase in
demand for books, scarcity in terms of resources with which to meet that demand. Publishers, who had to cope with paper rationing and other shortages, were directly affected by the scarcities and felt them most keenly. The focus of this article is book publishing during the war. Most of the examples come from research in the Random House archives and relate primarily to the Modern Library series. In addition to addressing problems endemic to publishing, I will discuss shifts in reading taste during the war and touch on an example of censorship perpetrated by the Modern Library.

It will be helpful to begin with a few words about the Modern Library series and Random House. The Modern Library was conceived shortly before American entry into the First World War by Albert Boni, a young Greenwich Village bookseller and occasional publisher. His objective was to promote the currents of European modernism in the United States by publishing inexpensive reprint editions of the works of such authors as Samuel Butler, Henrik Ibsen, Friedrich Nietzsche, George Bernard Shaw, August Strindberg, and Oscar Wilde. The firm Boni and Liveright was created to publish the Modern Library, and the first twelve volumes appeared in May 1917. The series grew rapidly during its first two years, but Boni’s connection with it was short-lived. The two partners were incompatible, and Boni left the firm in July 1918. Horace Liveright was more interested in publishing new American writers than in the relatively unglamorous business of reprint publishing. He became one of the most important literary publishers of the 1920s with a list that included Hart Crane, Theodore Dreiser, T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Eugene O’Neill, and Ezra Pound. In the summer of 1925, when he needed money, he sold the Modern Library to Bennett Cerf and Donald S. Klopfer. Of the 115 Modern Library titles published by Boni and Liveright, 64 had appeared in 1917 and 1918.

The Modern Library’s new owners were young men in their twenties. Within five years they transformed the series. They broadened its scope to include older classics and more American authors and made major improvements in format and design. The first of the Modern Library’s subsidiary series, Modern Library Giants, began in 1931. The Giants included two kinds of books: works like War and Peace that were too long for the compact format of the regular Modern Library, and substantial collections like The Complete Novels of Jane Austen, The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, and The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill. A second subsidiary series, the shorter-lived Illustrated Modern Library, was published between 1943 and 1948.

Cerf and Klopfer called their firm The Modern Library, Inc. After a few years they began publishing other books under the imprint Random House. The imprint was used initially for fine limited editions and occasional trade books published “at random.” After the Crash and the subsequent collapse of the limited editions market, they turned Random House into a general trade publisher. They acquired Eugene O’Neill and his editor Saxe Commins in 1933 from the Liveright bankruptcy, published the first American
edition of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in 1934, and absorbed the firm of Harrison Smith and Robert Haas in 1936. The acquisition of Smith and Haas brought a list that included Isak Dinesen, William Faulkner, Robert Graves, André Malraux, and Jean de Brunhoff, author of the *Babar* books. At this point Random House became the corporate name, and the Modern Library became a subsidiary of its offspring. The two principals of Smith and Haas joined Cerf and Klopfer as partners of Random House. Smith stayed for less than a year; Haas remained until his retirement in 1956.

The war brought many changes to the firm. Klopfer, who was a few weeks away from his fortieth birthday, applied for a commission in the air force. He spent the later years of the war in England with the Eighth Air Force, serving as an intelligence officer for a heavy bomber squadron. Cerf was four years older than Klopfer and too old for military service. He remained a civilian, looking after Random House and playing an active role in the Council of Books in Wartime. Haas was in his early fifties, but he was touched most deeply by the war. His son, a junior lieutenant in the navy, was killed in action in 1943.

Cerf had his hands full running Random House. The firm grew rapidly during the war; sales reached the million dollar mark in 1941 and exceeded three million dollars by 1946. Cerf told a friend in 1943, “I think we have reached the major leagues as publishers now and I damn well mean for us to stay there.” Part of the growth could be attributed to a series of best-selling war books. Richard Tregaskis’s *Guadalcanal Diary*, published in January 1943, was the first Random House book to sell over 100,000 copies (Cerf, 1977, p. 163). *Thirty Seconds over Toyko*, by Ted W. Lawson, followed a few months later.

It was during this period that Cerf began to be known to the public at large as a writer and speaker. He took over the “Trade Winds” column in the magazine *Saturday Review of Literature* in February 1942. For the next fifteen years he enlivened the magazine’s pages with a weekly mixture of publishing gossip, jokes, and stories. He also began to compile what became a long series of best-selling humor books. The first, *The Pocket Book of War Humor*, was an original paperback published by Pocket Books. His next project was a collection of humorous anecdotes and stories, *Try and Stop Me*, published in 1944 by Simon and Schuster. It became a best seller and was reprinted as an Armed Services Edition, which was distributed to American military personnel around the world. Cerf also became known as an engaging speaker. His first exposure came with tours of well-known authors selling war bonds for the Treasury Department. This was followed by a weekly radio program, “Books and Bullets,” for the Council on Books in Wartime, in which Cerf interviewed authors of war books. The radio program led to lecture tours through the Colston Leigh agency. By the early 1950s, through extensive lecturing and his participation as a panelist on the Sunday evening television program “What’s My Line,” Cerf had become a celebrity.
Plenitude and Scarcity

The increase in demand for books during the war had several causes. For civilians, gasoline rationing and other wartime restrictions reduced options for spending leisure time away from home. Large numbers of people in this pretelevision era turned to reading. Extended periods of inactivity are characteristic of military life in wartime, and many soldiers and sailors passed the time by reading. The Armed Services Editions, published with the cooperation of the American publishing industry, distributed nearly 123 million copies of paperbound books between 1943 and 1947 to American military personnel overseas.

The war also affected the kinds of books people were interested in reading. The best-seller lists from this period reveal a strong interest in books about the war. In 1942 seven of the top ten nonfiction titles were war books. War books accounted for eight of the top ten nonfiction titles in 1943, seven of the top ten in 1944, and four of the top ten in 1945 (Hackett & Burke, 1977, pp. 133–41). The psychological uncertainties and dislocations of wartime also affected the kinds of books that were in demand. There is evidence of increased demand for books dealing with human values, especially philosophy and poetry.

The surge in demand for reading matter affected both publishers and libraries. For publishers, who had never before encountered such demand for books, the experience was dazzling. But it also had its downside. Cerf commented in 1943, “When you are able to sell any junk that you can get between covers it takes a little of the kick out of putting over the really good new numbers.”

As wartime restrictions increasingly affected the publishing industry, publishers found themselves unable to satisfy the demand for books. Paper shortages brought about a decline in the physical quality of books. Publishers used cheaper grades of paper and squeezed more text onto each page. Publishers frequently found it necessary to choose between bringing out new books and reprinting backlist titles. When newly published books attracted large audiences, publishers were often unable to keep up with demand. Cerf described a typical situation in his gossipy “Trade Winds” column: “The head of one firm greeted me cheerily at the Plaza last week and told me that he has no less than six books on the current Tribune best-seller list. Then his face fell. ‘I might as well add,’ he said, ‘that five of them are out of stock’” (Cerf, 1942, December 12).

The paper shortage was caused by a combination of factors. According to Joseph A. Brandt, director of the University of Chicago Press, the crisis began in the forests. “Woodcutters began to discover that they could earn much more if they moved to the war-industry centers,” he wrote, “and almost before we knew it the essential raw ingredient of paper manufacture had become a rarity.” Large quantities of available paper supplies were required for military purposes. Every 75-mm shell, for example, had to
be packed in its own paper carton. Publishers were unable to get all the paper they could have used. To make matters worse, there was also a shortage of printers and binders. Neither of these occupations was classified as essential and many printers and binders were drafted into the military (Brandt, 1945, p. 101).

The War Production Board, which was responsible for allocating paper supplies, was established in January 1942, a few weeks after the United States entered the war. Its purpose was to direct war production and assign priorities to the delivery of scarce materials. Paper use in the publishing industry was limited in fall 1942, when each publishing firm was allocated a paper quota based on its use of paper in 1941. Initially publishers were restricted to 90 percent of the paper they used before the war. This was not a severe hardship, especially compared with Britain, where publishers in 1942 had to get by with 37.5 percent of the paper they used in 1939 (Cerf, 1942, August 29).

Paper restrictions became increasingly severe as the war continued. There was an additional 10 percent cut in 1943, and a further 15 percent cut early the following year.

Paper rationing meant that newly published titles had smaller printings than demand would have justified. It was common for books to be out of stock before they were reprinted, if they were reprinted at all. Cerf reported in spring 1944:

> Not only we, but every other book publisher in the country, has had to slash schedules into shreds and let perennial back list dependables go out of print. . . . To show you what’s happened to Random House, we have only 24 out of 64 Giants now in print, and over 100 Modern Library titles are now out of stock. Yesterday, the Army called up and asked if we could possibly fill an order for 400,000 Modern Library books. . . . If we could give them 10% of the order . . . we’d be lucky. Houghton Mifflin had over fifty books scheduled for publication during the rest of 1944. They have just cut this list to twelve, and think it possible that they won’t have a single book left for sale after October 1st. Macmillan last week announced that twenty-four titles on its already published catalogue had been postponed until further notice.

Random House favored the regular Modern Library and new trade titles at the expense of Modern Library Giants when allocating paper supplies. Despite paper shortages and occasions when titles were out of stock, regular Modern Library sales made impressive gains every year of the war. The growth began in 1941, prior to American entry into the war, as Table 1 indicates.

Modern Library sales during the first six months of 1943 were 100 percent ahead of the record-breaking 1942 sales. That pace could have been maintained throughout the year if paper had been available. October sales were merely 70 percent ahead of the previous year because of paper restrictions. Paper was not yet in as short supply as it would be later, and few Modern Library titles were out of stock in 1943.
Modern Library books were not rationed, and orders from regular customers were filled as they came in. But no new accounts were opened during the latter part of 1943, even though large retailers who had not traditionally sold books were clamoring for them. Cerf noted:

Publishers have had to turn down thousands of dollars worth of business from chain stores and other outlets that are ready to use books as a stop-gap because there are so many other standard lines that they can’t get at all. Ironically, these are the accounts we have been wooing unsuccessfully for years, and it is tough to turn them down when they come around with their hats in their hands. Our first obligation, however, it to our first customers, particularly when we realize that these chain stores will probably drop books completely as soon as they are able to get their old lines back.\(^\text{10}\)

Thirty-five regular Modern Library titles and fifteen Giants were out of stock by January 1944. Availability of specific titles varied from week to week. When the firm’s New England sales representative visited college stores during this period, he recalled, “faculty members would be waiting to ask me what titles were in stock in the Modern Library so that they could choose among them for reading assignments” (Consolino, 1977).

Later that year the Modern Library stopped reprinting Giants altogether. Newly published Giants continued to appear at a rate of two a year, but backlist titles were allowed to go out of stock until after the war. This was a sensible policy. The profit margin was lower than that of regular Modern Library books, and the Giants were paper guzzlers. The 8-by-5.5-inch Giants were larger than regular Modern Library books, and many of them exceeded 1,000 pages in length.

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Table 1. Modern Library and Random House Dollar Sales, 1940-48

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Regular Modern Library</th>
<th>Giants</th>
<th>Random House</th>
<th>Company Total</th>
<th>Modern Library and Giants % of Company Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>$171,346</td>
<td>$175,359</td>
<td>$542,657</td>
<td>$889,374</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>309,710</td>
<td>269,290</td>
<td>772,569</td>
<td>1,351,580</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>339,902</td>
<td>224,216</td>
<td>967,313</td>
<td>1,531,448</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>596,454</td>
<td>360,147</td>
<td>1,650,313</td>
<td>2,606,921</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>601,525</td>
<td>241,436</td>
<td>1,591,434</td>
<td>2,434,406</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>796,346</td>
<td>92,085</td>
<td>1,955,919</td>
<td>2,844,385</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>834,907</td>
<td>486,682</td>
<td>1,909,840</td>
<td>3,230,442</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>946,415</td>
<td>544,632</td>
<td>1,760,140</td>
<td>3,330,987</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>882,809</td>
<td>533,915</td>
<td>1,981,143</td>
<td>3,341,072</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The decline in Giants sales in 1944 and 1945 was due to the large number of out-of-stock titles. Company totals include some additional income from sources other than Modern Library, Giants, and Random House sales.
Shifts in Reading Taste

The war brought increased demand for books in general and also shifts in demand for certain kinds of books. In Britain, data collected by Mass Observation, a grass-roots movement that enlisted volunteers to conduct surveys documenting contemporary life, indicated that sales of poetry picked up during both world wars. A similar phenomenon appears to have occurred in the United States. Cerf reported that sales of poetry and philosophy titles increased at a disproportionate rate and that demand was especially strong among those in the service. “It seems that men who face danger want to know what makes them tick,” he commented in a 1943 radio interview. “We find orders coming from army camps for Plato and Shelley and Keats” (“Of Men and Books,” 1943).

The Random House archives do not include comprehensive sales information for the Modern Library, but there is enough information to support Cerf’s statement, at least in part. Complete Modern Library sales figures exist for 1942/43, so it is possible to establish rankings of individual titles following American entry into the war. Prewar sales figures are not available, so we cannot compare wartime with prewar sales. But we have 1951/52 sales figures for the 100 best-selling titles in the regular Modern Library (out of 285) and the 25 best-selling Giants (out of 75). So it is possible to compare wartime sales with sales in the early 1950s.

Cerf referred to Plato and Shelley and Keats. The Modern Library included two volumes by Plato at this period: *The Works of Plato*, a collection published in the series in 1930, and *The Republic*, published in fall 1941. In 1942/43 *The Works of Plato* ranked fourteenth among regular Modern Library titles in terms of sales and *The Republic* ranked twenty-first. We do not know how *The Works of Plato* sold before the war, but both volumes were strong sellers during the war. They were even better sellers in the early 1950s, when *The Works of Plato* and *The Republic* climbed to the sixth and seventeenth positions in terms of sales. The postwar increase probably reflects the growing importance of the college market. Young people whose college careers had been interrupted or postponed by the war returned to earn their degrees, along with large numbers of other veterans whose attendance was made possible by the G.I. Bill.

Keats and Shelley’s *Complete Poetical Works* was a Modern Library Giant originally published in 1932. It was the fifteenth best-selling Giant in 1942/43 with annual sales of 6,619 copies. It did not rank among the twenty-five best-selling Giants in 1951/52, so it appears to have slipped in relative popularity.

Cerf’s observation about the appeal of poetry during wartime is also supported by available sales figures for Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*. The Modern Library published two editions of *Leaves of Grass*, one in the regular series and another in the Giants. Like Keats and Shelley, Whitman suffered a decline in sales between 1942/43 and 1951/52. During the war *Leaves of
Grass was the twenty-eighth best-selling title in the regular Modern Library and the twenty-fourth best-selling title in the Giants. By the early 1950s the regular edition slipped to sixty-second in terms of sales, and the Giant did not rank among the twenty-five best-selling titles in that series. These figures suggest that sales of poetry in the Modern Library were stronger during the war than in 1951/52.

The uncertainties of wartime almost certainly account for the unanticipated success of The Oracles of Nostradamus, which was published in the Modern Library in February 1942, two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The decision to include Nostradamus in the series had been made before the United States entered the war. Cerf commented, “We put that title in possibly with our tongues in our cheeks, because people seem to be interested in predictions of a strange character” (“Of Men and Books,” 1943). Paul Galdone, who designed the jacket in November 1941, did not foresee the Japanese attack. The jacket merely refers to “fateful happenings predicted tomorrow for Europe and America by the sixteenth-century soothsayer whom Hitler relies upon today” (Ward, 1942, book jacket front panel). When the United States declared war on Japan on December 8 and recognized a state of war with Germany and Italy three days later, the future looked dark and the outcome of the war was uncertain. The Oracles of Nostradamus immediately became one of the Modern Library’s best-selling titles. It sold 16,043 copies between May 1, 1942 and November 1, 1943. Only five Modern Library titles—W. Somerset Maugham’s Of Human Bondage and Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s Crime and Punishment in the regular series, and The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, James T. Farrell’s Studs Lonigan, and The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway in the Giants—sold more copies during this period. The Oracles of Nostradamus did not rank among the Modern Library’s one-hundred best-selling titles in 1951/52.

**EDITORIAL INITIATIVES**

The Modern Library added and dropped titles as usual during the war. The series (regular Modern Library and Giants) grew from 278 to 316 volumes between 1941 and 1946. The number of new titles was significantly larger than this suggests, since twenty-eight titles were discontinued during these years. Titles dropped in 1941 and 1942 because of poor sales included William Beebe, Jungle Peace (1925); Irving Fineman, Hear, Ye Sons (1939); Anatole France, The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard (1917); George Gissing, The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft (1918); James Huneker, Painted Veils (1930); Olive Schreiner, The Story of an African Farm (1927); Gertrude Stein, Three Lives (1933); and Evelyn Waugh, Vile Bodies (1933). 13

The most notable new addition was the complete works of Shakespeare, published in three volumes in fall 1943. Cerf and Klopfer had long wanted to include Shakespeare, but the length of the volumes, which averaged
nearly 1,200 pages each, made it difficult to keep them in print. The Shakespeare volumes had first printings of 20,000 copies each, and the Modern Library warned that there would be no paper for additional copies until the following year.\textsuperscript{14} There were one or two additional printings during the war, but printing costs made Shakespeare marginally profitable at best. Postwar inflation erased whatever profit margin the volumes may have had, and they were out of stock through much of 1945 and 1946. They returned in fall 1946, divided into a more economically feasible format of six volumes.

A heightened sense of patriotism may have been responsible for the cluster of American history titles that appeared during this period. \textit{The Federalist} (1941) was followed by \textit{The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln}, edited by Philip Van Doren Stern (Modern Library Giant, 1942); \textit{The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson}, edited by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (1944); \textit{A Short History of the United States}, by Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager (1945); and \textit{The Selected Work of Thomas Paine}, edited by Howard Fast, published in one volume with Fast’s novel \textit{Citizen Tom Paine} (Modern Library Giant, 1946).

One project that never materialized was a Modern Library edition of Alexis de Tocqueville’s \textit{Democracy in America}. Max Lerner, whose edition of Machiavelli’s \textit{The Prince and The Discourses} had been published in the Modern Library in 1940, appears to have suggested Tocqueville for the series. No good unabridged edition of \textit{Democracy in America} was then available, and Cerf authorized Lerner to proceed. Almost immediately a problem arose. Professor Phillips Bradley of Queens College advised Lerner that he was preparing a new edition of the work. Bradley believed he had staked a claim to Tocqueville and thought it would be a breach of academic ethics for Lerner to prepare a rival edition. Cerf urged Lerner to go ahead, but Lerner’s enthusiasm for the project appears to have been sapped and he failed to deliver his introduction. Two and a half years later he indicated that he was ready to resume work on the project, but by then Cerf had turned elsewhere. Henry Steele Commager was preparing an abridged edition of \textit{Democracy in America} for Oxford University Press, and Cerf hoped that the Modern Library could reprint that edition.

Tocqueville never joined the ranks of Modern Library authors. Bradley’s edition was published by Alfred A. Knopf in two volumes in 1945 and immediately took its place as the standard English edition of Tocqueville’s work. Commager’s abridged edition was published in 1946 in the World’s Classics, Oxford University Press’s series of inexpensive editions of classic works, and therefore was unavailable to the Modern Library.

No war books as such were included in the Modern Library. Cerf tried to get reprint rights to Hitler’s \textit{Mein Kampf} in 1942, but Houghton Mifflin, its original American publisher, was bringing out a new edition of their
Two titles published in the series in the 1940s had some relevance to the war. Karl von Clausewitz’s *On War* appeared in the Giants in 1943, but it sold poorly and was discontinued three years later. Edgar Snow’s *Red Star over China*, originally published by Random House in 1938, was reprinted in the Modern Library in 1944 with a new chapter by Snow bringing the work up to date. The front panel of the jacket of the first printing proclaimed in bold lettering, “THIS IS THE BOOK THAT TELLS WHY JAPAN CAN’T WIN!” The typographic jacket was revised in 1946 when the Modern Library edition was reprinted. The new jacket noted that the book included such topics as “The life of Mao Tse-tung, China’s Lenin,” “China’s war against Japan,” and “How Chinese partisans built the foundations of the new democracy emerging triumphant in China today.”

**The Ezra Pound Affair**

Shortly after the war ended the Modern Library became the subject of a public controversy over the removal of poems by Ezra Pound from a Modern Library poetry anthology. At issue was *An Anthology of Famous English and American Poetry*, a Modern Library Giant edited by William Rose Benét and Conrad Aiken, published late in 1945.

The anthology was something of an anomaly. The American portion, edited by Aiken, was a revised version of an anthology that had been a staple of the regular Modern Library since 1929. The English portion, edited by Benét, had been prepared for the Modern Library with the expectation that it would be published on its own. Aiken’s two anthologies in the regular Modern Library, *A Comprehensive Anthology of American Poetry* and *Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, were out of stock for extended periods during the war. Aiken complained bitterly about the hardships he was suffering because of the loss of royalty income. He described the thousand dollars or so that he had received each year from the two anthologies as his “lifeline.” He revised both anthologies in 1944. The 2,000-copy first printing of *A Comprehensive Anthology of American Poetry* sold out in ten days, and he was told it would be at least three months before it could be reprinted. Aiken responded, “So harrowing for us to know that if there were paper our livelihood would be definite and assured—we’d have an income on which we could live.” Around this time someone at Random House—probably Commins or Linscott—had the idea of packaging Aiken’s anthology with the anthology of English poetry that Benét had submitted and publishing both as a Giant. The motivation appears to have been to provide Aiken with a bit of additional income to compensate for his lost royalties from the regular Modern Library edition.

The timing was unfortunate. In May 1945, as the anthology was being prepared for publication, Pound was taken into custody in Italy and returned to the United States to face charges of treason. Cerf insisted on
the removal of all of Pound’s poems from the volume. He ignored Aiken’s strenuous objections but agreed to list the twelve omitted poems and to include the statement that Aiken had been “overruled by the publishers, who flatly refused at this time to include a single line by Ezra Pound” (Benét & Aiken, 1945, p. 788). Cerf’s distaste for Pound’s politics was focused entirely on the forthcoming anthology. There was never any suggestion of purging Pound from Aiken’s recently revised anthologies in the regular Modern Library.

The removal of the poems was widely condemned. Lewis Gannett in the *New York Herald Tribune* compared the action with Nazi book burning. Many of Cerf’s friends, including Henry Steele Commager, Max Lerner, and the Random House editor Robert Linscott, opposed the decision. W. H. Auden, the most prestigious poet on the Random House list, informed Cerf that he was prepared to leave the firm over the issue.  

Cerf had not expected this kind of reaction and began to question whether he was right. He devoted his “Trade Winds” column in the *Saturday Review of Literature* to the controversy, giving his side but also reprinting Gannett’s column (Cerf, 1946, February 9). He invited readers to let him know their views. A slim majority of the 289 letters that came in opposed the exclusion of Pound’s poems (Cerf, 1946, March 16). The twelve poems were restored in a subsequent printing along with a footnote that read:

> After the publishers of the Modern Library omitted the poems of Ezra Pound from the first edition of this volume, a veritable avalanche of praise and blame, equally divided, descended upon them. Nothing could have been further from the intention of the publishers than to exercise arbitrary rights of censorship. We now have decided to include these poems of Ezra Pound in order to remove any possible hint of suppression, and because we concede that it may be wrong to confuse Pound the poet with Pound the man. (Benét & Aiken, 1945; 1947 and later printings, p. 788).

**Postwar Developments**

The war in Europe ended in May 1945 and Japan surrendered in August. Paper rationing was lifted immediately after the war, but it took time for paper mills to get back to prewar levels of production. Every publisher was trying to reprint out-of-stock titles, but paper remained in short supply. Cerf commented in September that “paper plants, printing houses and binderies are working twenty-four hours a day and still running weeks and weeks behind. . . . [W]e have on order exactly one million and a half Modern Library books. If we get 100,000 of them before January 1st, I will be surprised.”

A wave of strikes that accompanied the return to a peacetime economy disrupted publishers’ spring 1946 production schedules. Klopfer, who was back at Random House, remarked that summer, “We are having the usual
hellish time getting our books out and the situation amongst the suppliers is certainly no easier than it was at any time during the war.”

The extraordinary demand for books that had been a product of wartime conditions began to weaken. Spring 1946 was a good season for the publishing industry but not as good as some had hoped. The most popular books did well, but the secondary books—which Cerf defined as books that sold 6,000 to 10,000 copies before the war and then jumped to 20,000 to 30,000 copies because of wartime demand and orders from the army and navy—returned to prewar levels (Cerf, 1946, July 15). The market for war books collapsed so completely that not even remainder dealers could absorb all the copies left in publishers’ warehouses.

The main problem for publishers was getting back into full production. Many new titles had been postponed during the last two years of the war, and there were backlists to reactivate. The spring 1946 Random House catalog indicated that two-and-a-half million regular Modern Library volumes were in the process of being printed and bound and that most titles would be back in stock by March. The Giants were slower to return. It was not until September 1948 that the Modern Library could announce, “Every title in the Modern Library and the Modern Library Giants is now in stock for the first time since the war.”

The books no longer sold at prewar prices. The end of the war was accompanied by rapid inflation in all areas of the economy. A Modern Library advertisement in October 1946 noted that production costs of books were about double what they had been five years before. Maxwell Perkins of Charles Scribner’s Sons confirmed this in June 1947 when he indicated that book manufacturing costs had risen 100 percent in the past six years, mostly on account of wages.

The retail price of Modern Library Giants increased from $1.45 to $1.75 on January 1, 1946, but the increase was little noticed. Hardly any Giants were then available. In November the retail price rose again to $1.95 and the price of regular Modern Library books increased from ninety-five cents to $1.10. The ninety-five-cent retail price had been in effect since 1920; the new price lasted five and a half months. On April 15, 1947, the price went up to $1.25. Booksellers were supplied with gummed price-change stickers for the jacket flaps since most Modern Library books in stores still bore the old price of $1.10 or even ninety-five cents.

**Conclusion**

I have focused on the problems that American publishers faced during the war, but the war years also provided extraordinary opportunities for growth, as Modern Library and Random House sales figures indicate. The problems, real as they were, were insignificant compared to those faced by publishers elsewhere. The book community in the United States emerged from the war relatively unscathed. Shortages were less severe than in Britain
and other countries. There were no cultural or human tragedies on the order of those that devastated libraries and the book trade in Europe and Asia. No American authors, librarians, or publishers were forced into exile or executed. No American libraries, publishing houses, printing plants, or book wholesalers were destroyed by enemy action.

Notes
Unpublished letters by Random House personnel in the Random House Papers at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, have been quoted by permission of Random House, Inc. Unpublished letters by Conrad Aiken in the Random House Papers have been quoted with the permission of Joseph I. Killorin. I wish to express my gratitude to the staff of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, for their helpful and informed assistance over the course of three decades. Work on this article was supported in part by a grant from the Wayne State University Humanities Center, which is gratefully acknowledged.

1. For general accounts of the Modern Library series, see Neavill (1981) and Satterfield (2002). See also Neavill (2004), a review of Satterfield. Several passages from the review have been incorporated into the present article.

2. For an account of the Illustrated Modern Library, see Neavill (forthcoming), a companion study to the present article.

3. Bennett A. Cerf to Charles Allen Smart, August 26, 1943, Random House Papers (hereafter RHP). Smart was an Ohio author who worked in publishing and taught at Choate School in Connecticut before moving to a farm in Chillicothe, Ohio, which he had inherited from his aunt. He wrote eleven books, including three published by Random House between 1940 and 1947. He was serving in the U.S. Navy at the time of his correspondence with Cerf.

4. Cerf to Smart, October 19, 1943, RHP.

5. During the First World War, the English publisher Martin Secker reorganized the text of Norman Douglas’s *South Wind* (1917) from fifty to forty chapters to reduce the amount of blank space after chapter endings. The Modern Library edition, published by Boni and Liveright in 1925, was the first to appear in the author’s intended form of fifty chapters.

6. See Neavill (forthcoming) for an account of how Random House secured additional paper within War Production Board guidelines to launch a new series in 1943, the Illustrated Modern Library.

7. Cerf to Smart, August 26, 1943; Cerf to Lewis Browne, April 4, 1944, RHP. Browne was an author, radio commentator, and lecturer. His anthology *The Wisdom of Israel* was published by Random House in 1945 and reprinted as a Modern Library Giant in 1956.

8. Cerf to Browne, April 4, 1944, RHP.

9. *Publishers’ Weekly*, July 31, 1943, 317; Cerf to Smart, October 19, 1943, RHP.

10. Cerf to Smart, August 26, 1943, RHP.


12. “Eighteen Months M.L. & Giant Sales, 5/1/42 to 11/1/43” [typescript]; “100 Best Selling Modern Library Titles; 25 Best Selling Giant Titles (Nov. 1951–Oct. 1952)” [typescript], RHP. I have adjusted the 1942/43 sales in one example from an eighteen-month to twelve-month basis.

13. Dates in parentheses indicate the year the work was added to the Modern Library.


16. Conrad Aiken to Linscott, November 4, 1944, RHP.

17. Aiken to Linscott, March 16, 1945, RHP; emphasis in the original.

18. W. H. Auden to Cerf, January 29, 1946, RHP.

19. Cerf to Browne, September 13, 1945, RHP.

20. Klopfer to Cerf, August 14, 1946, RHP.

21. Random House catalog, spring 1946, p. 18, RHP.

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“Children who read good books usually behave better, and have good manners”: The Founding of the Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls, Montreal, 1943

Chris Lyons

Abstract
The founding of the Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls in Montreal in 1943 provides a unique and interesting case study in Canadian library development. It was founded and operated by an umbrella group of local community organizations, using money raised locally, initially to combat a perceived rise in juvenile delinquency during the Second World War. The arguments made in favor of the library by the general public and the organizers were widely reported in the local press. The documentary record provides a rare account of the beliefs held about the efficacy of reading and libraries to shape children, a neglected aspect of children’s library development in Canadian historiography.

Introduction
In 1942 a number of community groups in the Notre Dame de Grace district of Montreal came together to discuss a matter of great common concern. The Second World War had been raging for three years, and many felt that one of the major consequences of this on the home front had been a rapid increase in juvenile delinquency. Frightened by newspaper reports of increases in youth crime in Britain, the United States, and Canada, including incidences occurring locally that were being reported in the weekly district paper the Monitor, over forty groups joined together to create the Notre Dame de Grace Community Council. The community council was formed to tackle youth crime and other problems. Their first major undertaking was to raise funds to open and run a library for local children and youths up to age sixteen. After much effort and support from
the local community and Montreal’s newspapers, the Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls was officially opened on November 8, 1943.

This brief description of the founding of a children’s library in wartime Montreal raises the question as to why a community group would feel that a children’s library was a relevant way to combat juvenile delinquency. This is a difficult question to answer because of the paucity of studies on children’s library history in Canada. In his articles on Canadian library historiography, Peter F. McNally notes the almost complete absence of works dedicated to children’s libraries (1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1996a, 1996b). This is in keeping with the trend in American historiography identified by Christine Jenkins (2000). She points out the general lack of work that analyzes children’s library development within a larger social, political, and cultural context, or that considers the opinions and attitudes toward children’s library services held by nonlibrarians (Jenkins, 2000, pp. 127–29). The insular approach of much children’s library history is reflected in and reinforced by the prescriptive statements made by librarians and others in the past who did not examine the documentation that could have provided a much-needed context for library history (Jenkins, 2000, pp. 123–24). There is also a lack of literature related to the Canadian home front during the Second World War. Wartime jitters over juvenile delinquency is an ill-remembered and, in Canadian writings, virtually ignored aspect of the home front experience (Brannigan, 1986; Keshen, 1997, 2004). In this sparse material there is no mention of Canadian libraries. The primary material relating to the foundation of the Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls, especially newspaper accounts, gives a clear picture of the beliefs people held about the power of books to shape character. This episode in Canadian library history suggests the numerous factors that motivated a community to develop a children’s library, one that was in keeping with the public library movement in Great Britain and the United States. This study of the creation of the Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls will draw on a variety of primary and secondary sources, adopting what Michael Harris calls an externalist approach, in which developments in libraries are placed within the broader social and political context (1975, p. 107).

The Public Library Movement and Children’s Services

Generally, the development of public libraries and children’s services in them is explained as a response to societal problems. Writers concerned with the founding of public libraries in nineteenth-century America and Britain usually describe how an underlying belief in the power of books to affect profoundly people for good or ill lay behind the development of the public library movement (see, for example, Robson 1976; Black 1991; Harris, 1973; Harris and Spiegler, 1974; and Dain, 1975).¹ There also seems to be a similar pattern to the explanations offered by leading scholars of the emergence of children’s library services in the United States (Long 1969;
Jenkins, 2000; Garrison, 1979; Parker, 1997). These services were considered to have developed as part of the child welfare movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A number of organizations were founded or expanded at that time to improve the lot of children, such as Children’s Aid Societies, settlement houses, and the YMCA/YWCA. Many of these early organizations included among their services the provision to their charges of what they considered to be good, uplifting reading, as well as attempting to shelter them from harmful “trash.” This resulted in child welfare agencies and public libraries eventually making common cause, and the two groups often worked together to reach children. By the early twentieth century serving children became one of the principle activities of public libraries.

But how relevant is this U.S. model of children’s librarianship for Canada? A first observation is that ideas flowed north into Canada in the form of pioneering Canadian children’s librarians such as Patricia Spereman (McKenzie, 1999, p. 139) and Lillian Smith, who had studied in the United States and returned to Canada (Johnston, 1990). Canadians also read U.S. library journals and were active in the American Library Association (ALA). Early writings on children’s librarianship by Lillian Smith and others repeat the claims made in the United States about the benefits of their work for the formation of children’s characters. A study of the creation of the Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls suggests that these beliefs were held by Canadian child welfare advocates and the general public as late as the Second World War.

**The Second World War and Juvenile Delinquency**

The Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls library was organized partially in response to fears of growing juvenile delinquency during the war. The juvenile delinquency scare that swept over Britain, the United States, and Canada during the war is a little-studied phenomenon. Although historians Jefferey Keshen (1997 and 2004, pp. 204–27) and Augustine Brannigan (1986) have determined that the problem in Canada was more apparent than real; public perception was inflamed by sensational reports in the press and other media about youth running wild. A number of causes were blamed. For example, there was a perceived lack of parental discipline because of absent fathers in the military and busy mothers (a situation made worse by the federal government’s campaign to induce women to work outside the home to help relieve the labor shortage in wartime industries). Bad housing was thought to force children to stay outside or put them into too close intimacy with others; and there was the corrosive influence of the war itself and what was believed to be the influence of crime and of horror comics from the United States (Brannigan, 1986, pp. 111–18).

The *Monitor*, a substantial and award-winning local weekly newspaper, carried a number of stories about juvenile crime within and outside Notre
Dame de Grace. One article, for example, described how two youths had snatched a woman’s purse and were planning to commit more crimes until arrested by the police. Interestingly, the reporter linked this incident to bad media influences on the young criminals. He explained that “reading dime novels, sensational detective stories and other similar literature, the too frequent visits to movies, and the present day custom of youngsters of playing ‘police and robbers,’ evidently influenced the minds of two lads who were arrested by the police of number 23 police station after they had snatched a purse from a woman.”

Notre Dame de Grace was an anomalous district in Montreal in that three-quarters of its 60,000 inhabitants were Anglophone in a city whose population was overwhelmingly Francophone (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1941). Notre Dame de Grace was also wealthier than average, being predominately a middle-class, white-collar suburb (van Nus, 1998, p. 62). The district’s developers in the early twentieth century had intended it to be an attractive and orderly place, and later community leaders were not about to let that change. It was within this emotional background that the Notre Dame de Grace Community Council was formed in early 1942. The dominant force behind the movement to unite the various local community groups was Jack Duckworth, a United Church minister and executive secretary of the Notre Dame de Grace branch of the YMCA, who wanted to create an organization that could deal with large community issues, such as juvenile delinquency, and foster a sense of community spirit and involvement (Blum, 2002). Within a year about forty community organizations had affiliated with the council. Altogether, they represented a broad cross-section of interests, from churches, synagogues, and the local hospital to branches of the Canadian Legion and businessmen’s associations. By far the most numerous of the organizations involved were connected with children, such as home and school associations, the Boy Scouts, Big Sisters, the Child Welfare Association, the Parks and Playgrounds Association, and, of course, the YMCA.

This interest in children, and the related issue of juvenile delinquency, was reflected in much of the early work of the council. Its first high-profile action after its foundation in 1942 was to mobilize enough public pressure to have the city take away the license of a pool hall that had opened in the area. Other early activities included supporting the Kiwanis Club of Montreal’s call for a ban on gangster radio shows. The rationale for censoring these shows was parental concern over the “possible effect on the morals and character of their children and the consequent danger to their entire future.” It also sent to the Member of Parliament for Notre Dame de Grace a resolution calling for the criminalization of “crime comics which luridly portray crime and violence in all its forms and tend to persuade juveniles to violate the law or at least to corrupt their morals.” The most prominent undertaking, however, was the establishment of a children’s library in 1943.
Children’s Library Services in Montreal

The public library situation in Montreal was surprisingly weak in the 1940s (Hanson, 1997; Chabot, 1963). Despite being the largest city in Canada, Montreal’s library system lagged far behind Toronto’s. In 1944 Montreal had a population of 900,037 but only one municipal library, whereas Toronto had twenty libraries for a population that was more than 25 percent smaller (Waldon, 1944, p. 171). Montreal’s public library only began to offer children’s services in 1941, whereas Toronto, under Lillian Smith’s pioneering efforts, already had children’s departments in fifteen of its branches, plus the separate Boys and Girls House (Riley, 1944, p. 174). The reason for this paucity of service in Montreal has been generally thought to be the hostility of the then-powerful Roman Catholic clergy to the dissemination of ideas outside of its control. The church kept a close, censorious eye on municipal library issues (Lajeunesse, 1995, 2004). Thus, it is not surprising that Montreal’s impressive municipal library building, opened in 1917, held less than one-tenth of its 400,000 book capacity as late as 1933 (Carter, 1945, p. 3). Moreover, until 1943 users had to pay a $3 to $6 deposit to borrow books. The library also closed each summer until 1943 (Lajeunesse, 1995, p. 149).

Library services in Montreal up to the mid-twentieth century were essentially provided by nonmunicipal bodies. French readers were served in a very limited way, for example, by parish and other church-run libraries stocked with religious books. Anglophone Montrealers were slightly better off. Children’s services appeared with the establishment of the Montreal Children’s Library in 1929. This was created by the local Council of Women, a philanthropic group that raised the money for books and a librarian. The Montreal Children’s Library set up branches in downtown Montreal and two suburban municipalities. Although this library did have some French books, Francophone children really only began to benefit when the Bibliothèque des Enfants opened in a poor area in the east end of the city in 1937, also as a philanthropic gesture by a committee of French-speaking women (Putnam, 1939, pp. 186–88). This library and the Montreal Children’s Library later combined to establish a bilingual children’s library in the Rosemont district of Montreal in 1941, which was helped along by a $5,000 Carnegie Foundation grant (Crooks, 1946, p. 63). As Louise Riley described it in 1944, “in Montreal, Canada’s largest and one of her oldest cities, library work with children is in the pioneer stage” (p. 174). None if these libraries was located in Notre Dame de Grace.

The Founding of the Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls, 1943

At the fourth meeting of the Notre Dame de Grace Community Council, held on January 14, 1943, a Library Committee was created to investigate the idea of creating a library. As part of its investigations, the council invited
Donalda Putnam, head librarian of the Montreal Children’s Library, to discuss the requirements for establishing a library. Council members were also asked to canvas their sponsoring organizations to find out the extent of support for the proposal. The response must have been sufficient because on April 8 the Library Committee decided to go ahead with the work, even though the whole council only formally endorsed the decision on April 27. A fundraising goal was set at $5,000. New committees were created to deal with finances, publicity, and finding a location for the library. One of the first acts of publicity appears to have been the launching of an essay contest on the theme “Why I Would Like a Children’s Library in Notre Dame de Grace.” Prizes were to be given out in three categories: children under 11, children between 11 and 14, and children 14 and over.

The project enjoyed support in the Montreal press from the beginning. One of the English dailies, the Gazette, published an editorial requesting that people support the campaign because “the city has failed to do its duty” in providing adequate children’s library services in contrast to Toronto. It was the Monitor, however, that really took the campaign to heart. From the moment the Library Committee decided to go ahead with the project, the Monitor’s editorial policy was to back it. Like the Gazette, the Monitor’s initial editorial took the municipal government to task because “of all the large cities on this continent, Montreal is probably the most backward in the matter of providing public reading facilities for its citizens.” A library was seen as “a great boon to the district, as it would tend to give the youngsters a worthwhile alternative to the trash they are picking up now with their spare nickles [sic] and dimes.” The Monitor also supported the campaign by printing many stories and favorable letters about it, and by reporting verbatim “man in the street” opinions in its “Roving Reporter” section. What is especially interesting are the claims that emerge about children’s libraries and the value of reading in general. As was noted earlier, much of the library literature simply reports the claims made by librarians and other insiders, such as board members, about the value of children’s libraries. The stories and letters carried in the Monitor give us a chance to see what the public actually had to say about them. It should be noted that although the paper explicitly supported the campaign, opposition to it was not ignored. In fact, the May 20 Roving Reporter column stated that “he is still looking for an outright opponent of the project.” The lack of criticism leads one to conclude that public opinion, at least that segment of the public that was willing to make the effort to express itself to the Monitor and other newspapers, heavily supported the library campaign.

Some Notre Dame de Grace residents emphasized the educational benefits of the library. Robert A. Spiers, one of the Library Committee members, stated that a library “would be giving our children not only the answer to the thousand and one questions that arise in their inquiring minds but also the key to open the door that will reveal a new world of
knowledge and adventure.” Mrs. Cartier used the familiar medical analogy to make her point that books are “like a vital, candy coated medicine. The youngsters take it and like it. No compulsion, no resistance. Presto! Religion, education, music, art and health all to be discovered within the walls of the library.” The Monitor also reported many other expressions of belief in the educational benefits of the library, often by parents with children in elementary or high school.

Another frequently offered argument for the library was the equally conventional one that reading and libraries would have great benefits for the character and morals of children. Mrs. F. C. Donovan told the Roving Reporter that

There is so much unfit and indecent literature in circulation today and its evil influence upon the minds of readers is far reaching, especially among the young and impressionable. The proposed N.D.G. Community Library for Children is highly commendable, inasmuch as suitable and supervised reading can be easily available to those whose character is in the forming and who will need a solid foundation upon which to face their problems in the difficult years of this war’s aftermath.

On May 6 C. J. Dandy of the Boy Scouts Association discussed the relationship between the rise of juvenile delinquency and bad reading, and he stressed the idea that good books made available in libraries was an ideal antidote. On May 13 Rabbi Julius Berger wrote to the Monitor linking the importance of good influences found in libraries to the future conduct of children. He stated that “Biblical precept tells us to train a child in the way he should go so that when he is old he will not depart therefrom.” A few citizens focused on how a library could also combat juvenile delinquency simply by offering a recreational alternative to hanging out in the street and getting up to no good. Mrs. E. N. Little, for example, told the Roving Reporter that the library was needed “especially at this time, when so many youngsters are running wild. I am convinced that the appalling increase in Juvenile Delinquency is largely due to the fact that there is no place for the children to go after school.” Another fairly common argument was that libraries help preserve democracy because they provide children with access to ideas and information with which they can develop their own opinions.

How pervasive these arguments were in Notre Dame de Grace at the time is revealed by the submissions for the children’s essay contest. Six winners were chosen out of the hundreds of essays submitted. Inevitably, the essays reflected the commonly held ideas of the general public at the time. Robert Armstrong, the first prize winner in the under eleven category, wrote that “when they have the library the children will go there after school. A library will keep children off the streets.” The second prize winner in this category, Glenda Anderson, wrote that “the books would all have good stories in them and the mothers would not be afraid to let their children have the books,
for they know that they are good for them. Children who read good books usually behave better, and have good manners." The essays also highlighted the educational arguments that had been made. The second prize winner in the eleven- to fourteen-year-old category, James Ambrose, claimed that the library “also would improve my English tremendously. This would give me more knowledge so that if one of my friends asked me a big word I could tell them in a jiffy.” The winning entry in the over fourteen category, sixteen-year-old James McIlwain, highlighted both the educational and moral benefits of reading good books found in the library. While these winning essays may have been selected because they reflected the beliefs of the professional librarians judging the competition, these beliefs, as has been pointed out, were also widely held publicly.

The extent of the support for founding a children’s library in Notre Dame de Grace is also reflected in the fundraising for it. The most important official in the city administration, executive committee chairman J. O. Asselin, told a delegation from the Library Committee that the city could not give the library any money, in part because the city’s policy on libraries in general was under consideration. Some interpreted this as a smokescreen for municipal indifference. It did mean, however, that the Finance Committee had to raise locally the $5,000 that had been set as their fundraising goal. Remarkably, several hundred dollars over this target was raised, the money mostly donated by individuals who gave small amounts of between one to ten dollars either directly or through collections raised by local organizations. Donation patterns are easy to trace because the Monitor published long lists of donors each week along with the amounts they gave. A few individuals or businesses gave more substantial sums, but individual donations of modest amounts dominate the lists. The final, audited receipts showed that $251 was collected from district stores, $1,893.29 from community agencies, and $3,550.75 from personal gifts and through mail canvassing.

Once the financing was in place, the Library Committee began to set up the library. Although unwilling or unable to give any money, the city did provide a rent-free location for the library in the city-owned Notre Dame de Grace Community Hall. This location was somewhat problematic in that it was on the eastern edge of the district, but it was accepted anyway. The city also redecorated the rooms and built the shelves and furniture. The idea was to strive for a bright and cheerful interior. In the library proper, the door lintels and curtains were red. The shelves were light yellow with turquoise-blue edges. The room also had six large windows. There were four tables, one being circular with specially built small chairs for very young children, and a circulation desk. There was also a work and mending room. The library was only open for a limited number of hours: from 3:00 to 5:30 pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and from 10:00 AM to noon on Saturday.
The Library Committee made an agreement with the Montreal Children’s Library to help establish and run the new library. A librarian from the Montreal Children’s Library, Grace Crooks, was designated to work a quarter of her time with the new Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls. The Monitor assured its readers that she was very highly qualified, having trained at the University of Toronto Library School and worked as a librarian under Lillian Smith at Boys and Girls House and in several Toronto Public Library branches. Mrs. F. C. Warren was named her assistant. Mrs. Warren had studied librarianship at McGill University and had also worked at the Montreal Children’s Library.28

Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls had 1,256 books in both English and French when it opened, as well as access to the Montreal Children’s Library rotating collection of 10,000 books. The stock consisted of works of fiction and nonfiction for the very young to the high school level student. There were also special activities such as storytelling, exhibitions, and hobby shows planned.29 The Notre Dame de Grace Community Council appointed a Library Management Committee to oversee its activities. Jack Duckworth was named chair. Other members included Robert Spiers, the president of the Notre Dame de Grace Community Council, and Mrs. J. O. Asselin, wife of the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Montreal City Council, which was surely a political move on the community council’s part. To ensure that the library served all the children in the community, the council also appointed representatives from the Francophone and Jewish communities, the school boards, and the Montreal Children’s Library.30 Given that the library was created by all segments of Notre Dame de Grace to benefit all the children of the locality, the community council wanted to ensure that this spirit of collective cooperation was maintained.

Unfortunately, there is no record in the archives or the press of any attempt to assess the impact of the library in combating juvenile delinquency, one of the ostensible reasons for creating it. The library’s popularity survived this specific wartime need, however, and in fact it prospered after the war. It continued to operate for almost a half century, eventually opening six additional branches in the area. It also began to receive municipal grants, as well as continuing to raise money locally. The library closed in 1992 after the city cut off its grants, in part because the city had built its own library near the main branch of the Notre Dame de Grace Library.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to explain why a community organization would launch a campaign to develop a children’s library as a means of combating juvenile delinquency during the Second World War. The extent of the support that this vision would receive in words, deeds, and donations suggests how widely it was held. The reports of public opinion, especially in the pages of the local weekly newspaper, the Monitor, give us a
rare insight into the arguments that were instrumental in moving the people of a local community to do what in so many other places was generally the work and responsibility of the municipal government. What happened in Notre Dame de Grace in the 1940s was just one layer in the history of the conviction that reading maketh the man. In the social, political, and economic upheavals of the nineteenth century, this idea was an important factor in the creation of the public library. In the United States the idea strongly motivated those who developed children’s library services in the last decades of the nineteenth century. These pioneering efforts were, as pointed out at the beginning of this article, also influential in Canada some fifty years later and help explain why the Notre Dame de Grace Community Council acted as it did in 1943 to create its own children’s library. Was it unique for a library or more typical of library development in twentieth-century Canada, especially during such a stressful time socially as that of World War II? Only more research along the lines advocated by Christine Jenkins will tell (Jenkins, 2000, p. 130).

Notes

I would like to thank Diane Mittermeyer, Peter McNally, David Crawford, Martin Cohen, and W. Boyd Rayward for commenting on earlier versions of this article, and especially to my wife Francoise for her continued support.

1. Although there is much to criticize Harris (1973) for, such as the fact that he builds his thesis almost solely on the utterances of a few men, it is hard to fault him on the basic idea, perhaps simply a truism, that public libraries were perceived and developed as solutions to social problems. For an example of criticism of Harris’s work, see Fain (1975). Dain (1975) takes issue with Harris’s idea that libraries were essentially the creation of a social elite. She states that a variety of people, including immigrants, believed in the value of reading. The fact that diverse groups, such as workers and ethnic and religious groups, founded libraries attests to this.


3. List taken from the stationary of the NDG Community Council, found in the Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls Scrapbook, NDGC.

4. Letter, Gordon Paterson, Corresponding Secretary, to members of the Notre Dame de Grace Community Council, February 14, 1944, NDGC.

5. “Minutes of the 14th Meeting of the Executive of the Community Council held in the Library on October 12th, 1949,” NDGC.

6. I am not including the Westmount Library in this description since this was in a separate municipality, albeit surrounded by Montreal. Montrealer did not have the right to borrow from it, although they could read material there.


8. “Library Location Committee Named,” Monitor, April 15, 1943; “Higher objective is sought for children’s library,” Monitor, April 29, 1943, p. 3.

9. “Library Location Committee Named.”


21. Changes in the city’s charter in 1940 had created a City Council consisting of ninety-nine members who were selected by three distinct groups: property owners, lease-signing tenants, and appointees of various organizations. The council selected a six-member executive committee, the chair of which exercised the powers usually associated with a mayor. The elected mayor of Montreal was little more than a figurehead.


25. Ibid.


29. Ibid.


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Notre Dame de Grace Community Council Archives, Box 1 (1943–1949). Cited as NDGC. The items cited in the text from the local newspaper, the Monitor, are found in Notre Dame de Grace Library for Boys and Girls Scrapbook in this source.

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The International Relations Office, 1956–1972

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ABSTRACT
The second International Relations Office of the American Library Association was established in 1956 with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Its directors advised the association, foundations, United States government, and individual librarians who were involved in programs of technical assistance and other international activities. The office closed in 1972 when its final Agency for International Development (AID) contract was terminated. This article discusses its establishment, its directors, its activities, and its demise.

The American Library Association (ALA) has had three International Relations Offices: the first existed from 1943 to 1949, the second from 1956 to 1972, and the third was founded in 1986 and is still with us. Each has had a distinctive character: the first was project oriented, primarily involved with book programs for European libraries and library development in Latin America; the second was the planning and advisory body the first had been intended to be; and the current office handles business that directly concerns the association or its members, such as representation in international organizations and exchanges of librarians (Kraske, 1995; Brewster, 1976; International Relations Office, 2005; Michael Dowling, personal communication, September 30, 2005). It is the second office, described in the ALA Archives as the “New” International Relations Office, that is the International Relations Office discussed in this article. It functioned in the period of the Cold War between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the rapid transformation of European colonies into independent states, and the widespread adoption of planning in these newly independent nations to promote economic and social development.
After World War II—in contrast to the isolationism that followed World War I—the United States was engaged internationally in every possible way: politically, militarily, economically, and culturally. The United States was a leader in the United Nations, the principal organizer of NATO, and with the Marshall Plan and Point Four, the originator of extensive programs of foreign aid. In a 1954 Gallup poll survey that asked people to characterize themselves as “isolationist” or “internationalist,” 61 percent chose internationalist and only 17 identified themselves percent isolationist (Gallup, 1972). Optimism, self-confidence, and a “can-do” approach, characteristics long associated with Americans, were at an all-time high.

Private organizations and individuals supplemented official efforts. As an organization, the American Library Association had been committed to international participation since its inception; its charter was amended in 1942 to read “to promote library interests throughout the world” (Charter, 1907). At the time the second International Relations Office (IRO) was founded in 1956, the International Relations Board, the section of the association responsible for its international activities, was working on a regular basis with government agencies like the Department of State, with foundations, with other associations, and with foreign libraries. The activities of the board encompassed the exchange of persons, overseas operations, United States government operations, international representation, and administrative functions for the association. The board administered two projects for foreign librarians under contract to the Department of State, a five-month visit to the United States for twelve university librarians from India, and a five-month visit to the United States of twelve public librarians from all parts of the world. It assisted American librarians seeking opportunities to study or positions abroad and foreign librarians who sought positions in the United States. It was deeply involved in two major projects: the Rockefeller Foundation–funded Japan Library School at Keio University and the Ford Foundation–funded library education program at the University of Ankara. Different government agencies regularly called upon the board for advice on library matters, often requesting lists of candidates for particular overseas assignments. The board “maintained a lively and influential interest” in the government’s overseas information program and in 1953 arranged for three members of the ALA, including the then chairman of the board, Douglas W. Bryant, to testify before the Senate committee overseeing the program. It worked to represent the association in international organizations in the field of librarianship and bibliography, such as the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the International Federation for Documentation (FID), in the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and with groups like the Organization of American States (OAS, formerly the Pan-American Union). In addition, it was responsible for such matters as approving the translators, translations, and publication arrangements for foreign publication of ALA publications.
The members of the board were volunteers and all of their work was done on a shoestring budget. Bryant began his summary of the activities of the board by pointing out that it needed adequate funding if it was to support the country’s foreign relations. For the previous four years, that is, 1951–55, the board had “subsisted” on $2,500 made available from endowment capital. As he put it:

This sum (together with the administrative portions of grants obtained by the board) has sustained the board for these years only because every cent has been made to count by living as frugally as possible, by leaving undone a number of things which in the best interests of the Association should have been done, and finally by levying altogether too heavily on the time and institutional budget of the Board’s chairman and members. The board can never realize its full effectiveness without at least modest administrative assistance.³

By 1955 library leaders were beginning to talk about the need for some kind of central clearing house.⁴

Enter Charles Burton Fahs. Fahs was a Japanese specialist who had been a professor of Oriental affairs at Claremont College in the 1930s. He had spent World War II as an intelligence analyst; in 1955 he was director of the humanities program of the Rockefeller Foundation. Fahs was the son of the librarian of the Missionary Research Library in New York and as a young professor at Claremont had been active in developing the library’s Oriental holdings. He had a real interest in libraries. An entry in his 1953 diary of his trip to Mexico reported that when the group visited the new University City, “CBF was of course particularly interested in the library building.”⁵

It was probably during the fall of 1955 that Fahs came up with the idea of an ALA office for overseas development. By 1955 the Rockefeller Foundation was providing support for a variety of library projects, either directly, as with the Japan Library School at Keio University, or, more indirectly, such as supporting a library as an essential component of one of its agricultural or medical projects, as well as a number of individual foreign librarians through the Rockefeller Fellows program. Fahs saw the office as essentially a one-man operation, its director a “top-level counsellor.”⁶ The idea was not particularly innovative—Rockefeller had provided major support for the 1943–49 International Relations Office of the ALA—but it was exactly what the situation called for. The association needed an officer to coordinate the increasing number of projects for which it had some degree of responsibility; ad hoc arrangements like the advisory committee for the University of Ankara Ford Foundation–supported library education program were multiplying, and the volunteer International Relations Board was already stretched. The foundations, not to mention the U.S. government, needed the kind of truly knowledgeable, professional advice that could only be developed by an individual who made a full-time, long-term commitment.
Discussions with librarians like Helen Wessells, the editor of *Library Journal*, and Douglas Bryant, chair of the International Relations Board, helped crystallize Fahs’s ideas. In January 1956 he traveled to Chicago to talk to the leaders of the ALA at the midwinter meeting. Several meetings are reported in Fahs’s diary; Fahs described his meeting with Keyes Metcalf, the retired librarian of Harvard; David Clift, the executive secretary of the ALA; and Ralph Shaw, its incoming president, in the following terms: “Everyone concerned confirms CBF’s [that is Fahs’s] supposition that the demand on the ALA for help in international library problems is likely to be substantial and to involve other agencies as well as the RF in questions of support. They have themselves felt that the greatest weakness in these projects was inadequate planning and they therefore feel that such an arrangement as was discussed would be most helpful.”

Events moved quickly in the spring of 1956. In a letter to William Dix, the chair of the International Relations Committee (the International Relations Board had become the International Relations Committee, a name change that brought little change in responsibility) on February 9, Clift described Fahs’s vision as “an office which would study and investigate, particularly, library education needs in various parts of the world.” Considerable travel would be involved.

The proposal submitted by the ALA elaborated on this outline. The director would travel extensively and work closely with foreign university officials, government officials, and library leaders. Within the United States he would develop close working relationships with government agencies concerned with education abroad and the exchange of persons and would keep himself informed on foundation fields of interest and government programs. He would develop proposals for foundations; the office would serve as a center for information concerning exchanges and be a source of independent advice for foundations, government agencies, and library groups concerned with assistance to foreign librarians.

As the proposal recognized, “The selection of the right person as Director is obviously the key to the success of the project.” Fahs had envisioned the director as someone very senior, perhaps at or near the age of retirement, a prestige figure, who could deal with government agencies and negotiate with foreign governments and universities. The proposal described him as “a man of stature, capable of commanding the respect” of the people with whom he would deal with broad experience that included contact with library education and some practice in university administration. He should, of course, be interested in international aspects of librarianship.

The search for a director with the requisite personality, experience, knowledge, and prestige revealed some of the tacit assumptions that underlay the new undertaking. Fahs had originally thought of Metcalf, but in February Metcalf decided that he could not undertake the assignment and the search became the most pressing task of the International Rela-
More than twenty individuals were considered, although interest quickly centered on a few; they came almost exclusively from university libraries because that was where foreign activity was concentrated. One individual was eliminated because he was “cold,” another because he was somewhat acerbic. Flora Belle Ludington, who had preceded Bryant as chair of the International Relations Board, could not be considered seriously because she was a woman; David Clift commented that it might be difficult for a woman to do the job and Fahs, while expressing “the highest regard for Miss Ludington’s abilities,” knew that “she would have two strikes against her—particularly in Asia and Latin America.” By mid-April the list was down to three: Douglas Bryant, assistant librarian of Harvard and with several years of experience in London with the United States Information Service (USIS) and five years as chair of the International Relations Board; David Clift, executive secretary of the ALA and former assistant librarian at Yale; and Jack Dalton, eleventh librarian of the University of Virginia and former head of the Board of Education for Librarianship. Fahs had hoped to have a director named by the time the proposal went before the Rockefeller Foundation board in April, but it was not until June 27 that Jack Dalton had been offered and accepted the position.

Dalton served from 1956 to 1959, the years of the initial grant. An excellent fit for the position, his years of experience on the Board of Education for Librarianship had given him an edge over other candidates since library schools were singled out in the association’s proposal as the foundation for improving librarianship in foreign countries. Of equal importance was his ability to establish rapport. Harry Clemons, his predecessor as the librarian of the University of Virginia, described him in the following terms: “Jack Dalton is a sympathetic and patient listener. Even people who have just met him or heard him speak have been eager to pour out to him their personal problems. The comprehension and concern he has manifested have led to the consumption of a staggering amount of his time. In these intimate interviews he does not preach—rather, he subtly injects a fresh and wholesome point of view.”

After the initial grant expired in 1959, the Rockefeller Foundation extended it for a period of two years. Dalton was succeeded by Raynard Swank, who like Dalton was a university librarian. A friend describes Swank as a likable man who had a real talent for sizing up the political realities of a situation. He wrote skillfully and could address sensitive issues in a diplomatic way. Unlike Dalton, Swank did not resign his position as director of the Stanford libraries when he became the director of the IRO and served only two years, from 1959 to 1961. When a third Rockefeller grant was made, it was for five additional years, a period probably intended to give the director an incentive to remain longer. Lester Asheim, the dean of the Graduate Library School at Chicago, directed the office from 1961 to 1966. Asheim was a man noted for his intelligence, good sense, and ability to remain poised in difficult situations.
After 1966 the office was less stable as funding became a major problem. The Rockefeller Foundation did not normally fund projects for longer than ten years: programs had ten years to prove their worth and become either self-supporting or obtain other sources of support. The Rockefeller Foundation made an exception for the IRO, giving it one additional year in 1967, but that was the end. As directors, Thomas R. Buckman (1966–1967) and Ralph T. Esterquest (1967–1968) were one-year appointments. The office did achieve some stability when it obtained a contract with the Agency for International Development (AID) in 1967, but the end of that contract in 1972 spelled the end of the office. David Donovan (1968–1972), assistant director of the office under Esterquest, was its last director; he was the first to have long-term project experience overseas, although most of the earlier directors had done some consulting in foreign countries before their selection.

During its years of operation the office grew from a director plus half-time secretary to, under Ralph Esterquest, a director, assistant director, AID project officer, assistant project officer, and several secretaries. Some of this staff expansion was achieved with money from the Council on Library Resources. The office also moved with some frequency. Dalton ran the office from his home in Charlottesville. During the Swank, Asheim, and Buckman years, it was in Chicago, quartered in or close to the ALA headquarters. During its last years it was located in Washington in order to be more accessible to AID, although the assistant director was in Chicago.

The announcement of Dalton’s appointment described the function of the office and the duties of the director:

The specific function of the new Office will be to study and investigate the state of library development and the need for library education in various countries. The Director will spend several months of each year in foreign travel and first-hand observation, working closely with university and government officials, and library leaders. He will draw upon the experience of American librarians with the library problems of foreign countries. Within the United States, close working arrangements will be maintained with government and private agencies concerned with education abroad, and the exchange of persons.

Swank’s 1960 description of the office used slightly different language, describing its function as “primarily study, planning, and liaison.” A position paper of Asheim’s on its future in 1964 broke the functions down more elaborately, but the fundamental purpose did not alter.17

Intended to encourage American participation in the development of library services abroad, travel was at the heart of the office’s activities. The director was expected to spend about four months a year on the road. In his first two years on the job Dalton visited Japan (twice), Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, India (twice), Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, Mexico (twice), Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Spain, Ger-
many, France, and England. The itinerary for Lester Asheim’s 1961–62 visit to Africa conveys something of what “travel” meant. In seventy-six days Asheim was in Paris, Accra, Lagos, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, Leopoldville, Salisbury, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, Lusaka, N’Dola, Dar-es-Salaam, Moshi, Nairobi, Kampala, Addis Ababa, Khartoum, and Cairo. Such travel was physically demanding and the socializing that was part of the job brought additional stresses, but there were compensations, like Asheim’s visit to Victoria Falls. It also had personal costs. Swank described the life as “too much for a married man for more than a few years, however exciting and rewarding,” and it is not coincidental that Asheim, an unmarried man, spent rather more time traveling than either Dalton or Swank, both of whom were married.

Sometimes a visit was exploratory; at other times the director would devote a major part of his time developing a project or advising on an already existing one. Occasionally, the purpose was to investigate a problem. At all times the director represented American librarianship. In a 1964 letter to Douglas Bryant, Swank described the impression that Dalton, as “Mr. American Library,” had made in Japan.

Face-to-face contact and lengthy conversations with the individuals who were in charge of programs, with those who did the real work, and with interested observers brought an unparalleled level of understanding. Asheim’s four-day stay in Colombo in 1964 produced twelve single-spaced diary pages. One conversation was with Dick Heggie, the Asia Foundation representative about, among other things, the House of Representatives Library. The Asia Foundation had tried to convince the authorities that it should be a real library, but there was no reference service worthy of the name at the moment. Later, at a luncheon with a Ceylonese library official, he found out from his host’s son, a practicing advocate, that the library did indeed have “reference” service, but probing revealed that “reference service” meant that if you have the number of the book you want, a peon will get it for you. The Asia Foundation wanted to send a man to the United States for observation and perhaps training, but this was “sticky-wicket politically—not neutral enough.” Asheim suggested that the IRO might be able to identify legislative reference libraries for the man to visit in countries such as Nigeria. These non-U.S. libraries could then be added to his itinerary in the hope of taking some of the curse off the proposed trip.

Jack Dalton’s diary of his visit to Ankara in May 1958 supplements the bland official reports of a Rockefeller Foundation grant to Jella Lepman of the International Youth Library for a tour to promote children’s literature in developing countries. He reports on a conversation with Lewis Stieg, the director of the library education program at the University of Ankara, and Anne Davis, the USIS librarian in Ankara:

Talk turned fairly quickly to the Jella Lepman visit and I sat back and listened for a long half hour or more. Davis teed off on this one. Mrs.
L. says in her confidential report that one of the people she “contacted” here was Ann Davis whom she describes as a children’s librarian. Ann was out of the country at the time of the visit. Stieg took over immediately, since he was here, and described how unhappy Mrs. L. was with her hotel, his efforts to find American food for her, her companion’s flunkey role and one or two incidents with customs and visitations, her insistence to the key man in the Ministry that Turkey was Asian, that unhappy result and her insistence next day with a group of Turkish ladies that their man was wrong and the subsequent unhappiness in that group. A tale of appointments made at her request and broken at her pleasure and unhappiness behind. Dangling of Rockefeller money until they were afraid not to get together and not even turning up where it was important that she should, shortening her visit here with subsequent time lost fiddling with reservations, and on and on. A very embarrassing visitation all around, I gather. Davis found herself facing the story on her return, but not surprised apparently because of earlier dealings dating back to Germany in the middle forties. A miserable tale all around. They insist that the report, Mrs. L.’s confidential report on her journey, is a tissue of misrepresentation and bad reporting so far as this part of the story is concerned.24

Particularly helpful in understanding the troubled Ankara project is Dalton’s account of a visit with the dean who administered the school.

In the late afternoon with Stieg to visit the Dean of the Faculty of Letters who gave with much double-talk and promised undying loyalty to all our enterprises. Hmm? I asked him to tell me the difference between an Institute and a Dep’t and his reply was that the only difference was that the word Institute was more popular these days and money could be more easily secured for one. The Only? I asked. Yep, sez he. All my other informants tell me that an Institute can be wiped out any minute on a single vote of the faculty, whereas a dep’t is permanent! No member of the Institute meets with the general faculty; a departmental chairman would be a member of that body. The isolation at this post is fearful.25

Examination of the 1963–64 annual report of the office provides a comprehensive picture of its operations at maturity. Asheim divided the report into three categories: travel, office activity, and information activity. He estimated that he spent five months in travel outside the United States: one trip to South Asia and the Middle East, another to Rome and to Indonesia, a brief visit to Montreal, and a month in Africa. This travel was related primarily to development projects—Canada may not have been a developing country but it was developing a library school at the University of Montreal—and secondarily to international organizations like IFLA. The office activity included administering book acquisitions for both the University of Algiers and the University of the Philippines; helping with numerous searches for librarians for projects abroad, such as a cataloging librarian for the University of East Africa and a visiting professor for the University of the Philippines library school; assisting the Universities of
Brasilia and Delhi; providing help to American libraries wanting to appoint foreign librarians for a limited term search; facilitating exchanges; supplementing the training of two groups of Peace Corps volunteers; acting as a clearing house for ALA international activities and foreign visitors; and holding discussions about the office’s future with the IRO, the executive secretary of the ALA, and the ALA International Relations Committee. It also provided major administrative support for an international field survey of the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), a project designed to provide the information necessary to address the well-founded complaints of many foreign librarians that American and Western European bias limited the utility of the DDC in other countries. Under information activities, Asheim listed his speeches to the Friends of American Writers in October, to the students and faculty of Kent State University in November, to the Chicago Library Club in November, to the ALA Staff Association in May, and to the International Relations Round Table in June. He also participated in a symposium on the library of the future that was sponsored by the Wilson Library Bulletin, assisted in several sessions of a workshop on comparative librarianship at Columbia University in June 1964, and wrote an article for Library Journal’s November 15, 1964, issue on international relations.26

From the abundance of well-documented activity, some shifts in emphasis of the office’s activities can be detected, most of which reflected the changing priorities of the foundations and the U.S. government. The first shift was geographic. In Dalton’s years most attention went to Asian countries; Swank’s period was balanced among Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa, as had originally been intended when the office was established; and under Asheim Africa and Latin America were of particular importance. Another shift was in the character of the projects with which they worked. The Rockefeller Foundation’s University Development Program (UDP) is typical of the later period, when, instead of a series of independent projects, aid was focused on a single university in a very limited number of countries in an effort to raise the entire level of the university and of higher education in that country; the University of the Philippines was one of the UDP universities. This approach meant that library projects were less likely to be stand-alone projects. Finally, there is the major shift that came with the cessation of Rockefeller Foundation support. At that point, the office moved to a combination of ALA and AID funding.

Evaluation of the accomplishments of the IRO is difficult. As Asheim wrote in his annual report for 1961–62, “It is in the nature of the work of the IRO that much of its activity has delayed results, or intangible ones which are difficult to identify.” Some equivalent of the word “long-range” recurs frequently. For example, in his description of the IRO Swank emphasized that the IRO was a long-term endeavor: “a great deal of time is needed to develop communications and understanding, to define programs, and to formulate projects in some parts of the world.”27
What could be counted was. An example of this is the long list of projects and potential projects with which the office was involved that was appended to the report of its first five years. A total of sixty-five projects were mentioned, ranging from the reorganization of libraries to library education to cataloging of historical collections in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa. India alone had eight library-related aid projects, including such diverse activities as support for the University of Delhi library school; consulting by Archie McNeal, director of libraries at the University of Miami, and Keyes Metcalf, retired Harvard librarian and expert on library buildings; workshops presented by Laurence Kipp, librarian of Harvard’s Baker Business Library, and his wife Rae Cecilia Kipp; three different tours of the United States by different groups; a field seminar in the United States for state and district librarians; a rural or district public library demonstration; and the compilation of a union list of scientific periodicals. In addition, there were projects that extended beyond the boundaries of a single country, like the field survey of the Dewey Decimal Classification, a new library school at the University of Hawaii for training of Asian as well as American librarians, an investigation of the difficulty of obtaining microfilms from the United States, and a seminar for Latin American and North American library directors. The USIS library program remained a subject of special interest.

The true accomplishments of the IRO were diffuse, imprecise, and general, but so were its goals. The office did indeed study and investigate the state of library development and the need for library education in various parts of the world. Its directors did develop close relationships with government agencies and foundations concerned with these matters. They did work to develop appropriate proposals. And the office did serve as a center of information. But proving that these things had been done and that they had been of value was often next to impossible. The Rockefeller Foundation archives contain a brief note from Elissa Keiser, administrative assistant to Ralph Davidson, the deputy director for the humanities and social sciences at the Rockefeller Foundation, to Kenneth Thompson, vice-president of the foundation, concerning a conversation she had had with Davidson: “He feels that the International Relations Office has not been terribly successful and that probably the extension is not deserved.” Dorothy Parker, another Rockefeller Foundation officer, who handled many of the library-related projects, wrote on Keiser’s note, “The IRO program has had both successes and failures.” Asheim’s comment on his 1965 tour of the Middle East may be insightful, but it is not the kind of “proof” that appeals to budget officers: “More than ever before, I was able to make use of the background and the experience that I have been gathering in these four years of travel for the Int Rel Ofc. The value of continuity in the Office was impressed upon me more forcefully than it has been on any of my other trips—perhaps because I now have more experience than I have had before.”
Did the IRO have any relationship to U.S. foreign policy? Yes, it did have a direct official relationship in its work with State Department programs like the tours and exchanges of librarians and through the AID contract. But was it an instrument of U.S. foreign policy? Perhaps, but only in an amorphous sense, as a part of the massive foreign aid and technical assistance that the United States government and many private organizations gave to developing countries in those years.

One fundamental fact about the IRO, however, needs to be kept in mind when evaluating any of its activities and accomplishments: a lack of power. The director of the IRO was an advisor, a counselor, a facilitator; he did not have the power to command nor could he control. At most, he could influence the foundations and government agencies that did control the flow of money and that turned to him for advice. He could also advise the recipients of their largesse about how to make their proposals more appealing.

The last years of the IRO were overshadowed by fiscal uncertainty. The fundamental problem was that the funding agencies preferred more concrete accomplishments than the IRO could produce since it was an information collecting and disseminating organization rather than an administrative unit. The IRO helped others with their projects; it did not have projects of its own. Nor did the ALA command sufficient resources to support the office adequately on its own. In a detailed memorandum to the International Relations Committee, Asheim reviewed the IRO and explored its prospects for the future. He began with a statement on the aims and objectives of the office:

The International Relations Office, under the policy guidance and advice of the International Relations Committee, acts for the American Library Association in matters within the field of international relations. Its aim is to offer the assistance of the Association in the promotion of good library service and education for librarianship around the world, with particular attention to the developing countries. The stress is not on the promotion of American librarianship and its methods in other countries, but rather on evaluating the goals that those countries have themselves set for their libraries, to see in what ways American libraries and librarians can be helpful. To promote these ends, its duties are divided between exploration and investigation of librarianship abroad, and establishment of close working relationships with librarians, educators, foundations and other agencies in the United States and elsewhere. Its functions are primarily study and planning on the one hand; stimulation and liaison on the other. It seeks to combine the professional expertise represented by the American Library Association and the special knowledge of foreign librarianship gathered in the course of foreign travels with the resources of American or international agencies so that they may together make the most fruitful contribution to the advancement of library services abroad.

Asheim then summarized the questions for discussion with the International Relations Committee as follows:
• Were the objectives in the statement an acceptable set of objectives for the IRO in the future?
• Were the activities of the IRO the most suitable ones to pursue to meet its objectives?
• Did the services fulfill the objectives?
• And if the answer was “no” to any of these, what alternatives or changes were advisable?32

Asheim’s 1964–65 annual report addressed the same issue. In it, however, he was more direct, discussing the implications of changes. In his description of what the IRO would be if it had to adopt a pay-as-you-go policy, he emphasized that the office’s ability to give professional assistance and counsel to other agencies, institutions, and individuals, U.S. and foreign, would be severely curtailed and travel would be restricted to projects for which a funding agency was willing to pay. If it was eliminated completely, not only would there be no assistance and advice forthcoming, all other areas of activity would also be unserved.33

An agenda from early 1965 of the International Relations Committee has a note in Dalton’s handwriting: “1965 equiv of Burton Fahs 1956???”34 but there was no Charles Burton Fahs of 1965 and Asheim’s prediction that “IRO assistance will in most cases have to be based to a great extent upon anticipated income and not solely on the urgency of the need”35 came to pass when the Rockefeller Foundation terminated its funding. From 1967 until its close, the office was supported by a combination of ALA funds and an Agency for International Development contract. The records of these last years show very limited travel and far less breadth in activities. The IRO continued to facilitate exchanges of librarians and acted as an information center, but most of its activity was tied to AID projects.

In the end, a combination of factors brought about the demise of the IRO. Perhaps most important was a simple but massive shift in outlook. The truth was that by 1970 the country, which included librarians, was less international in outlook and more concerned with the domestic scene; civil rights and Vietnam consistently ranked highest among concerns (Gallup, 1972). The big foundations like Rockefeller and Ford, which had been so prominent in support of foreign libraries, were altering their priorities and approaches. The Committee on Program Evaluation and Support (COPES) recommended that ALA close the IRO to make available more funds to programs to aid the disadvantaged of the United States. By the late 1960s funding from AID was increasingly problematic, and while the IRO got considerable praise, the agency could not renew the contract and the American Library Association would not support it. In September 1972 the International Relations Office closed.
NOTES
7. Ibid.
12. The list of potential candidates for director that Ludington submitted contained no women, although her list of thirty-one special consultants did include eight women. IRCC, Box 9, Folder: IRC-International Relations Office, 1961/62.
13. Charles B. Fahs, Diary, February 7, 1956, and April 2, 1956, telephone call with Mr. Dix; William S. Dix to Charles B. Fahs, June 27, 1956, RF-OLD.
15. E-mail communication from Michael Buckland to Margaret Dalton, October 22, 2005.
16. E-mail communication from Abraham Bookstein to Margaret Dalton, October 25, 2005; conversation of W. Boyd Rayward with Margaret Dalton, October 27, 2005.
17. Announcement of appointment of Jack Dalton as Director, 1956, IRCC, Box 9, Folder: IRC-Historical Materials, Reports and Studies, 1956–60 (ALA); “ALA International Relations Office,” IRCC, Box 9, Folder: IRC-Historical Materials, Reports and Studies, 1956–60 (ALA); Lester Asheim and Joseph Shubert to the International Relations Committee, Future of the IRO, April 28, 1965, IRCC, Box 7, Folder: IRC Agenda of Meetings, Memorandum (ALA).
18. In his report Dalton pointed out that the European stops had been arranged for conferences with UNESCO, the director of the International Youth Library with which ALA had worked, and for meetings of IFLA, the organization through which much of previous ALA international activity had been carried out.
19. Notes on the International Relations Office, 1956–1958, IRRC, Box 10, Folder IRC-International Relations (ALA); Itinerary in Africa Prepared for Dr. Lester Asheim, RF-IRO, Folder: 2604.
25. Travel Diary: April 21, 1958–May 14, May 5, IRRC, Box 10, Folder: IRC-IRO Director, Diary, Correspondence, 1957–59.
29. Elissa Keiser to JEB [Joseph E. Black], KWT [Kenneth W. Thompson], 12/28/66, IRO.
30. Lester Asheim to J. A. Quinn, December 17, 1965, ALA, Series 7/2/6, Box 1, Folder: Ford Foundation—Correspondence, 1961–66.
31. Swank thought that it should.
32. Memorandum, April 28, 1964, IRCC, Box 7, Folder: International Relations Committee, Agenda of Meetings.
34. “Some Questions for General Discussion,” IRCC, Box 8, IRC Correspondence, 1965.

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Man’s Right to Knowledge: Libraries and Columbia University’s 1954 Cold War Bicentennial

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ABSTRACT
Celebrating its 200th anniversary in 1954, Columbia University organized bicentennial symposia, publications, and ritual observances around the theme “Man’s Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof.” While not part of the original bicentennial plan, libraries became emblematic of its message. As librarians strengthened their commitment to intellectual freedom, libraries throughout the United States and abroad hosted the Bicentennial Panel Exhibit documenting with quotations and illustrations the worldwide quest for knowledge. Using books, film, recordings, and discussion groups on the bicentennial theme, libraries at the height of the Cold War demonstrated their role in providing free access to information.

INTRODUCTION
Celebrating its bicentennial in 1954, at the height of the Cold War, Columbia University put the role of free information in a free society at the center of its 200th anniversary celebration. Downplaying the usual self-congratulation, Columbia’s trustees and its president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, adopted as the bicentennial theme “Man’s Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof.” Combining institutional observance and media blitz, high culture and Madison Avenue, the year-long program evolved from a campus observance to an international focus on free expression in academic and civic life. Planned during the darkest days of McCarthyism, the bicentennial promoted an ideal of free information starkly at odds with the times. Although not part of the initial vision for the bicentennial, libraries were essential to its success, emblematic of its values, and agents of its message. Through their participation in the bicentennial, librarians affirmed their own commitment to intellectual freedom.
Planning began in 1946 in the immediate postwar period. Following the bicentennials of Princeton and Penn and the tercentenary of Harvard, Columbia sought to put its own mark on the ritual occasion. Its location in New York, world publishing capital and headquarters of the United Nations, gave Columbia its unique identity. Arthur Sulzberger, Columbia graduate and publisher of the *New York Times*, suggested to his fellow university trustees that Columbia build its bicentennial around a universal theme, “Man’s Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof” (Black, 1954). The basic outline of the celebration was sketched by a committee of faculty and alumni (on which neither the university library nor Columbia’s School of Library Service was represented). In the bleak aftermath of World War II, the committee preferred a somber, reflective observance to an unabashedly celebratory one. It proposed a full year of events, scholarly convocations that promoted dialogue, the involvement of institutions worldwide, and the use of radio and television to expand the reach of the bicentennial. Like Sulzberger, they favored an overarching idea to connect all the varied activities. Unaware of his suggestion, they proposed the theme “The Education of Free Men in the Service of Man.”

Named president of Columbia University in 1947, Dwight D. Eisenhower did not alter this broad outline. On the advice of a committee of trustees, he appointed Arthur Sulzberger to chair the Bicentennial Central Committee and in late 1949 approved the adoption of Sulzberger’s original theme, “Man’s Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof,” thus extending the focus beyond academic freedom. Soon to take leave from Columbia for a NATO assignment in Europe, in May 1950 Eisenhower issued an invitation to 1,080 universities, museums, and libraries around the world to join the observance of Columbia’s bicentennial, in whatever way they felt appropriate, and to reaffirm their faith in the freedom of inquiry and expression (*Columbia’s bicentennial*, 1956, p. 6). To dramatize the theme, he asked universities in the Soviet Union and others behind the Iron Curtain to participate.

**Columbia on Communism**

As the Columbia Bicentennial Committee and public relations staff developed the celebration’s theme, planned events, and invited speakers, university officials grappled with the possible presence of communists in their academic ranks. Conceived in the early days of the Cold War, the bicentennial theme initially distinguished between freedom in the Western democracies and suppression and thought control in the Soviet Bloc. As the House Un-American Activities Committee investigated subversion at home, the theme took on domestic significance. Columbia officials sought to articulate whether communist professors were entitled to academic freedom. After Eisenhower was elected president of the United States in 1952, Grayson Kirk, his successor at Columbia, made clear that adherence to com-
munist dogma was incompatible with the spirit of inquiry and open-mindedness required by the academic community. At the same time, Kirk believed that universities should protect “the ‘honest scholar’ whose ideas did not coincide with those dominating public opinion at the moment.” Kirk thus assumed the position taken by many universities, defining communists in terms of behavior and attitude that excluded them from the protection of the First Amendment. According to Ellen Schrecker, Columbia’s “relatively liberal administration” generally avoided virulent anticommunism, engaging in rather sophisticated subterfuge to rid itself of one left-leaning lecturer and tolerating former communists who were tenured (Schrecker, 1986, pp. 255–58). On February 15, 1953, the same day Columbia formally announced its bicentennial plans, Arthur Sulzberger wrote an article in the New York Times Magazine asking, “Have we the courage to be free?” He stated that he would not knowingly hire communists at the Times, but, in contrast to Senator Joseph McCarthy, would not seek to expose them.

Indeed, the bicentennial celebration reflected a distinctly corporate capitalism. Board member Thomas Watson, president of IBM, had actively recruited Eisenhower for the Columbia presidency. In 1949 Douglas Black, president of Doubleday, Columbia trustee, and publisher of Dwight Eisenhower’s bestseller, Crusade in Europe, joined the Bicentennial Central Committee. Frederick E. Hasler, a director of the Chemical Bank and Trust and former president of the New York State Chamber of Commerce, was hired to direct the fundraising associated with the campaign. With businessmen and PR staff aboard and Sulzberger at the helm, the bicentennial ship sailed from the sheltered cove of academia onto the high seas of marketing and mass communication. Named executive director of Columbia’s new Office of Development in 1950, Charles Anger, a former advertising agency vice president, brought a Madison Avenue perspective to the bicentennial effort. As he later told Tide, a magazine of sales and advertising trends:

We had a four-fold job to do as we saw it. . . . First, we had an idea to sell. Second, we had certain vehicles to use. Third, we had definite audiences to reach and fourth, we had the standard communications media through which to reach them. Then, too, as a practical matter, we had four fronts on which to operate: the university, the 200,000 living alumni (technically, to the University what stockholders are to a business), the world of scholarship and finally, the world of public opinion.

Thus the bicentennial wedded the idea of free information to the mechanism of free market capitalism in a campaign to sell “Man’s Right to Knowledge.”

In keeping with tradition, many bicentennial events involved a limited scholarly audience. Twenty conferences were held on campus, organized by the schools making up the university and leading to a variety of publications by Columbia University Press. During the bicentennial year the press issued a special list of thirty-two volumes, including a history of Columbia’s
But in order to reach a broader audience, the Bicentennial Central Committee undertook a series of efforts that combined scholarly expertise and mass media. In 1951 William Paley, chairman of the Columbia Broadcasting System, another New York media executive on the Columbia University Board of Trustees, proposed a series of radio lectures on CBS (Columbia’s bicentennial, 1956, p. 26). The weekly half-hour talks would feature world-renowned scholars in every field giving their own perspectives on an assigned topic. Recording their lectures in homes or offices around the world, they would bring an international perspective to issues facing mankind. Beginning in January 1954 with Arnold Toynbee speaking on “The Idea of Man: The Ancient Mediterranean View,” the series would conclude in December with atomic physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer speaking on “Prospects in the Arts and Sciences.”

Panel Exhibit

In February 1950 Richard Logsdon, Columbia’s associate university librarian, reported that librarians everywhere were strongly interested in the theme of “Man’s Right to Knowledge.” He had already begun work on an exhibit of library materials and quotations related to the theme. In December 1951 the Bicentennial Central Committee formally adopted an exhibit as a bicentennial project. An Exhibit Committee including Columbia historians Henry Steele Commager and Allan Nevins gathered additional suggestions from the entire faculty. Quotations and illustrations on the theme of “Man’s Right to Knowledge” were chosen from the world’s literature, across cultures and centuries, and organized around five subthemes: “The Inclusiveness of Man,” “The Value of Knowledge,” “The Aspects of Man’s Right to Knowledge,” “Man’s Right to the Free Use of Knowledge,” and “The Responsibilities of Knowledge.” Contemporary references to totalitarianism, illiteracy, racial segregation, women’s rights, low voter participation, compulsory recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, and textbook censorship joined a historical cavalcade of controversies.

Built around primary sources, the exhibit reflected Columbia’s own Great Books tradition. Panels featuring quotations from Aristotle, Shakespeare, John Milton, Francis Bacon, John Dewey, and Oliver Wendell Holmes were among the many affirmations of intellectual freedom selected. Illustrations ranged from a fifteenth-century drawing of Joan of Arc to a sculpture by Alexander Calder and photographs by Margaret Bourke-White. Libraries were represented by a photograph of Butler Library at Columbia, the text of the American Library Association Library (ALA) Bill of Rights, a letter from David Berninghausen, chair of ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee during this period, and a table showing how, in 1952, the percentage of the population served by libraries varied from state to state. Using the rotunda of Low Memorial Library as the prototypical site, a professional
design firm produced a series of panels measuring 20” x 20” combining themes, texts, and illustrations. These were reproduced in complete sets of 60 panels and smaller sets of 25 panels to be loaned to museums, libraries, and other organizations in the United States and Canada (Columbia’s bicentennial, 1956, p. 136).10

In a paperback guide accompanying the exhibit, Columbia professor and poet Mark Van Doren interpreted the panels’ multifaceted understanding of free expression (Van Doren, 1953). Van Doren had had his own brush with anticommmunist censors. In 1951 the Jersey City Junior College had removed four of his books from library shelves because of his alleged connection with communist-front organizations. Van Doren responded at a rally sponsored by the Hudson County Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) where he reported that only the previous week he had
received a copy of ALA’s Library Bill of Rights. It was, he said, a welcome sign that groups of Americans were taking steps to safeguard the spirit of freedom and the right to criticize (Van Doren, 1951b).\textsuperscript{11} He quoted its third paragraph declaring that libraries must challenge censorship as part of their responsibility to provide public information and enlightenment through the printed word. In the accompanying text he wrote: “Man’s right to the free use of knowledge is a matter which naturally interests librarians, whose function presumably does not include the making of decisions as to what should or should not be available to their readers, although it is their duty to distinguish between well and badly written books, or between accurate and inaccurate ones” (Van Doren, 1953, p. 34).

**ALA on Intellectual Freedom**

Although the bicentennial logo featured the statue of Columbia’s alma mater seated with an open book on her lap, planning was well advanced before libraries joined the observance. When Sulzberger proposed the theme in 1946, he probably did not have libraries in mind. Nevertheless, while Columbia University designed and expanded its bicentennial plan, the American Library Association was elaborating and strengthening its commitment to intellectual freedom. As Louise Robbins has shown, in the late 1930s and 1940s librarians began to recognize their central role as information providers rather than cultural arbiters (Robbins, 1996). In 1939 they had adopted a Library Bill of Rights that only briefly considered censorship but had followed this in 1940 by creating a Committee on Intellectual Freedom to Safeguard the Rights of Library Users to Freedom of Inquiry. As the House Un-American Affairs Committee ramped up its activities, librarians made this committee permanent and changed its name to the Committee on Intellectual Freedom.

In 1948 the ALA adopted a stronger version of the Library Bill of Rights (Robbins, 1996, p. 35). Drafted by Helen Haines, it strengthened the profession’s commitment to fighting “censorship by volunteer arbiters of morals or political opinion by organizations that would establish a coercive concept of Americanism” and to joining with other organizations to resist “all abridgment of the free access to ideas and full freedom of expression that are the tradition and heritage of Americans.”\textsuperscript{12} In the late 1940s the American Library Association undertook a Great Issues program to make available diverse points of view on the central issues of the day. The ALA published booklists on current topics, including civil rights, world government, and U.S.–Russian relations; provided posters and other PR materials; and urged librarians to organize discussion groups and promote the library as a site for civic debate.\textsuperscript{13} Despite these measures, however, many librarians still had to be convinced of their professional obligation to safeguard access to information in contrast to their traditional cultural role of selecting the best books and making them available to the most people at the least cost.
As the Cold War intensified, librarians felt the pressure of Truman’s federal security program, the imposition of loyalty oaths for government employment, and the rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s toxic patriotism pursuing communists in the State Department and subversive literature in overseas libraries. In 1950 Columbia University Press issued the second edition of *Living with Books*, the classic work on book selection by Helen Haines who had taught during summer sessions in Columbia’s School of Library Service (Haines, 1950; Trautman, 1954, pp. 40–41, 71). In 1952 Oliver Carlson accused Haines of communist leanings for recommending that public libraries collect books on Marxism (Carlson, 1952). The school organized an informal inquiry and found no basis to the charges (Crawford, 1997, pp. 159–60).

**Freedom to Read**

As the bicentennial year approached the ALA’s increasing commitment to intellectual freedom coalesced with growing concerns among publishers about censorship attacks. In particular, both were alarmed by efforts to remove allegedly subversive materials from U.S. government–supported libraries abroad (Robbins, 2001). Thus, in May 1953 Douglas Black, president of the American Book Publishers Council, and Robert Downs, president of the American Library Association, helped draft the Freedom to Read Statement with a group of thirty other publishers and librarians at a conference in Rye, New York (American Library Association, 1954). A powerful manifesto affirming the centrality of free information to the democratic process, the statement was unanimously endorsed by its drafters, led by Luther Evans, Librarian of Congress. Shortly thereafter, Dwight Eisenhower, having supported the bicentennial theme as president of Columbia, now proclaimed its message as president of the United States. Speaking informally at the Dartmouth College commencement in June 1953, he declared, “Don’t join the book burners. Don’t think you are going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don’t be afraid to go in to your library and read every book as long as any document does not affect our own ideas of decency. That should be the only censorship. How will we defeat communism unless we know what it is?”

His remarks were widely quoted. Addressing the ALA meeting in Los Angeles later that month, Robert Downs told librarians to take renewed hope and courage from the magnificent defense of books made by President Eisenhower at Dartmouth, then read a letter to the ALA in which Eisenhower reiterated his position. “Our librarians” wrote Eisenhower, “serve the precious liberties of our nation: freedom of inquiry, freedom of the spoken and the written word, freedom of exchange of ideas.” Echoing the bicentennial theme, Eisenhower declared that democracy depended on these principles for its very life and criticized those who would deny others the opportunity to study communism in its entirety: “its plausibili-
ties, its falsities, its weaknesses.” On June 25, 1953, the American Book Publishers Council and the ALA Council both endorsed the Freedom to Read Statement.

**Bicentennial Year**

Thus, Columbia’s plan to spread the message of “Man’s Right to Knowledge” to the broadest possible audience coincided with the ALA’s strengthening commitment to intellectual freedom. By the start of the bicentennial, libraries had become a symbol of the celebration theme and by hosting the panel exhibit would provide a means to reach an expanded audience. To begin the year, on January 4, 1954, Post Office officials unveiled a new bicentennial stamp featuring Columbia’s Low Memorial Library in a ceremony in the library’s rotunda. Governor Thomas Dewey of New York, another Columbia man, used the occasion to draw a line between free expression and the communist threat, while the Bicentennial Committee saw the stamp as 110,000,000 little advertisements for Columbia University. Later in the week, alumni of the Columbia School of Library Service, distinguished descendent of Melvil Dewey’s School of Library Economy, gathered for its bicentennial celebration dinner to hear Douglas Black speak on the topic “Your Right to Read” (Black, 1954).

On January 1 the panel exhibit began its tour in locations up and down the East Coast and through the Midwest. Notices in library journals had urged librarians interested in hosting the exhibit to contact Richard Powell, Columbia University law professor and director of the bicentennial. Libraries of all sorts had volunteered. The Bicentennial Calendar recorded:

**1954**

**January**


Designed to travel, the exhibit was displayed at an array of venues both at home and abroad throughout the year, staying about two weeks in each location before moving to another.

The diversity of institutions, the partnerships involved in each event, and the attendant publicity represented a public relations triumph for both Columbia University and local participants. Columbia had sought active alumni participation in the bicentennial through regional committees in each area of the country. The Bicentennial Committee had approached learned societies and professional organizations, including the American
Library Association, about their interest in the exhibit, but many librarians and faculty members had contacted the Bicentennial Office on their own initiative, asking to display the exhibit in public libraries and on campuses. Libraries and civic groups wishing to participate in the bicentennial were put in touch with local alumni who helped raise funds and coordinate and publicize events. To facilitate their work, regional alumni chairs spent two days at Columbia, in fall 1953, and received press kits to facilitate promotional efforts.

For Columbia University, which had subsumed its own celebration in the interests of promoting the theme of “Man’s Right to Knowledge,” the benefits of the panel exhibit were long term and intangible. For participating libraries, they were immediate and measurable. The exhibit, on a topic crucially important to libraries, came with the authority and cachet of Columbia University. For librarians still new to advocacy for intellectual freedom, it also provided some distance and protection. The exhibit attracted widespread interest, but if it proved controversial, it was Columbia’s interpretation, not that of the host library. Libraries with and without the panel exhibit used the bicentennial theme as a backdrop to displays of works from their own collections.

At a time when librarians were seeking support for federal funding of public library service, work on the exhibit helped develop relationships with influential community members and civic organizations. Speaking at the New Haven State Teachers College, ALA executive secretary David Clift expressed the hope “that the attention being called to the services performed by libraries in these ceremonies will lead to increased financial support for libraries” (Clift, 1954; Logsdon, 1954). Librarians often turned to other community groups as co-sponsors of the exhibit, both to enhance local interest and to secure the sheltering protection of strength in numbers. The public library in Greenwich, Connecticut, for example, listed the League of Women Voters, the Council of Churches, the Woman’s Club, the Town of Greenwich United Nations Council, the YMCA, the PTA Council, and the College Club as co-sponsors of the exhibit.

The panel exhibit and related events provided multiple opportunities to publicize the library. Drawn from the press kit provided by Columbia, the same basic copy appeared in news stories across the country. Articles in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on March 7 and in the *Linden [NJ] Observer* on April 1 were nearly identical, announcing the exhibit to be held at the library, outlining the five exhibit themes, describing a typical panel that showed an elderly citizen at a New England Town Meeting, quoting from James Madison, and adding a comment by Richard Powell on behalf of the bicentennial. Local news outlets could also insert information appropriate to their communities. Many articles featured interviews with library directors. Advance publicity varied greatly, however. The Atlanta Public Library seems to have mounted the exhibit with no publicity. The exhibit in Detroit
was announced in a barebones paragraph in the Detroit News sandwiched between “Tax Book on Sale” and “New Parking Law.” Host libraries may have sought to avoid controversy by letting the exhibit speak for itself.

In contrast, the Greenwich Public Library provided sufficient copy to the Greenwich Time for multiple articles about the exhibit, featured a speech at its opening by Columbia history professor Henry Graff, and showed a new full-length United Nations film presenting “the first overall look at the efforts of the United Nations to better the life of peoples everywhere.” Graff, whose remarks were reprinted in the paper, argued that society had retrogressed in terms of freedom since the eighteenth century and concluded that intellectual freedom was necessary to political freedom. A local columnist observed that although Greenwich had not developed a climate of suspicion and hysterical pressures as had other communities, organizations there had experienced pressure to change their views. He concluded, “Both those who operate in this manner and those who yield to it might find some stimulating ideology—pure, democratic, American ideology—in this library exhibit.”

The exhibit was displayed in some communities that were grappling with issues highlighted in its panels. An enthusiastic description of the exhibit in the Birmingham, Alabama, Post Herald noted that “One of the panels . . . illustrates the principle of ‘uniform and equal education’ for children and adults.” The Milwaukee Journal article observed that “The exhibit was timely—and possibly all the more controversial—because it was set up at a time when the library board itself was striving to develop a workable rule with regard to the freedom of access to books which some persons have attacked as objectionable.” In Indiana, where a community had banned Robin Hood for its alleged communist sympathies, the exhibit was shown at the Indiana State Library, the Indianapolis Public Library, and a total of fourteen sites across the state (Logsdon, 1954, p. 1007). In Toledo, Ohio, where the news account noted that the exhibit featured “outstanding book-burning ceremonies of history,” the Toledo Blade published a strong editorial on the meaning of the panels (Logsdon, 1954, p. 1006).

Tallying the results, the Bicentennial Committee estimated that 900,000 people had seen the exhibit in more than 400 sites in the United States and Canada and another 700,000 people in nearly 300 places abroad (Columbia’s bicentennial, 1956, p. 164). At the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California, approximately 100,000 people had viewed the panel exhibit and a special display of related items from the library’s rare book collection.

Libraries followed the multimedia lead of the Bicentennial Committee and built on their own interest in radio and film discussion groups. In Milwaukee a special episode of “Woman’s World” on station WTMJ-TV featured a “visual book talk” in which city librarian Richard Krug and a local college president discussed “Books That Have Shaped America.”
Some libraries used the CBS radio lecture series as the basis for library discussion groups. Others made use of a bicentennial film and record album produced by Columbia’s Center for Mass Communication with a $45,000 grant from the Fund for the Republic. Set in a public library, the fourteen-minute film, “Freedom to Read,” featured a father who wanted to protect his son by banning books by Voltaire, “an exposed Communist,” and John Milton “a well-known fellow traveler.” The town librarian, who sought to protect America’s heritage of freedom, quoted Eisenhower’s statement to the ALA. With the issue placed before the library board, the film concluded by asking, “How can a library best serve our freedom?”

The bicentennial album included four Long Playing records with dramatized stories of Socrates, Galileo, abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy, and Gandhi as they fought to overcome ignorance and prejudice. Originally broadcast over NBC radio, and featuring such actors as Frederic March, they were reproduced for use by schools and civic groups with background notes for teachers and discussion leaders.

In their selection of topics, images, and speakers, the bicentennial planners had not shied away from serious issues or controversial speakers. Nor had they overestimated the interest of a broad public in such fare. The choice of atomic physicist Robert Oppenheimer as the final radio lecturer of the year provided a model of the bicentennial message. Since being invited to speak two years earlier, Oppenheimer had become the target of an effort to remove his government security clearance, and over the summer of 1953 he had undergone grueling questioning by a panel of the Atomic Energy Commission. Columbia stuck by him, and his lecture, along with twelve others in the series on “Present Knowledge and New Directions,” were subsequently published by Columbia University Press (Man’s right, First series, 1954; Man’s right, Second series, 1954). The university’s official history of the bicentennial notes that “Experienced broadcasters shook their heads; there was no mass audience in America for such erudition” (Columbia’s bicentennial, 1956, pp. 40–41). Nonetheless, the first volume of lectures on the theme “Tradition and Change” sold more than 23,000 copies; the radio series itself earned a Peabody Award for broadcast excellence in radio education (Columbia’s bicentennial, 1956, p. 166).

The findings of the Public Library Inquiry, also published by Columbia University Press during the years of bicentennial planning, recommended that public libraries serve the nation’s communications elite by providing material of long-lasting value on serious and controversial issues (Leigh, 1951, p. 234). Libraries participating in the bicentennial validated this role. But using public relations techniques and multimedia materials provided by the bicentennial, they demonstrated as well that libraries could reach a broader audience on a central issue of the day. If the bicentennial was selling the idea of “Man’s Right to Knowledge,” then libraries proved to be one of its most effective retailers. As emblem and agent of the bicenten-
nial message, libraries celebrating Columbia’s 200th anniversary affirmed their own commitment to intellectual freedom and promoted their own role in a dangerous time, that of providing refuge in which to consider and experience the right to free information.

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Notes
3. During 1948 hearings on subversive activities at the University of Washington, one witness accused Eisenhower of harboring communists at Columbia and Sulzberger of being a party member (Schrecker, 1986, p. 96).
5. A. H. Sulzberger, “Have We the Courage to Be Free?” *New York Times Magazine*, February 15, 1953, pp. 12, 45–46. The subtitle of Sulzberger’s article read: “A plea that we not allow the fear of totalitarianism, from the left or from the right, to stifle our freedom of expression.” See also his Charter Day address at the University of Hawaii, February 16, 1954 (Sulzberger 1954).
9. Introduced in 1919, Columbia’s undergraduate core curriculum engaged students in reading and discussing works from the canon of Western literature, philosophy, and political thought. For a contemporary view see D. Denby, “Does Homer Have Legs?” *New Yorker*, September 6, 1993, pp. 52–57, 60–69, and Denby (1996).
10. The U.S. Information Agency paid to have the exhibit mounted for display abroad but did not modify its contents. The exhibit was shown in countries around the world including Argentina, Belgium, Burma, Ceylon, Cuba, Ireland, England, Germany, Guatemala, India, Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Scotland, Spain, and Venezuela.
11. For brief accounts of the controversy see “Van Doren Plea Ignored; Author Vainly Asks Hearing on Jersey College’s Book Ban,” *New York Times*, January 26, 1951, p. 15; “Author Defends His Work; M. Van Doren Speaks in Jersey City against Ban on His Books,” *New York Times*, February 21, 1951, p. 16. See also, “Mark Van Doren replies to ‘Communist’ charge,” *Publisher’s Weekly* 159, no. 31 (1951): 1129. In May 1951 Van Doren was principal
speaker at the first meeting of Friends of Columbia Libraries (Van Doren, 1951a). The books were restored to library shelves in November 1951 (“Van Doren book ban lifted in Jersey City,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1951, p. 15).


14. According to Trautman’s (1954) history of the School of Library Service, Haines taught Book Selection at Columbia during the summers from 1937 to 1945, except during the summer of 1943.


27. The Bicentennial Calendar provided dates of exhibit locations throughout the year. *Columbia’s bicentennial* (1956, pp. 169–93).


29. James L. Malletti, Assistant Director of the Bicentennial, to Dr. French Fogle, April 25, 1955, Henry E. Huntington Institutional Archives, Exhibitions/Columbia Bicentennial Exhibit—“Man’s Right to Knowledge” 22.2.1.1.20.


35. Robert D. Leigh (1954), who oversaw the Public Library Inquiry, authored one of the bicentennial discussion guides.

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Abstract
In 1951 librarians from the American Library Association’s International Relations Committee and publishers from the American Book Publishers Council Foreign Trade Committee met at the Library of Congress to discuss how to meet the “need for books in developing countries.” The nonprofit Franklin Book Programs they established existed from 1952 until 1978 and helped to make possible the publication of some 3,000 titles in languages such as Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, Indonesian, and Portuguese; involved the intelligentsia of each country in the process of book selection and translation; and established both a publishing infrastructure and a market for U.S. books in areas where there had been none. Why were these countries and languages chosen? Was the decision to establish a nonprofit organization that could accept funding from the federal government a result of concerns about Cold War censorship? Was the decision another manifestation of librarians’ and publishers’ assertions of the importance of free access to ideas as a counter to communist ideology? Was it a way to build an international market for American values or American publishers? This research uses archival sources and oral history to explore the motives and actions of behind the Franklin Book Programs.

If you tune into National Public Radio (NPR) these days, you might hear a short essay written and read by a prominent person—or a not-so-prominent person—in a series called “This I Believe.” The original 1950s “This I Believe” was a project of famed radio and television broadcaster Edward R. Murrow at a time when the United States was, as the NPR home page for the project says, about as divided as it is today. When Murrow’s
broadcasts aired—and when many of the essays later found their way into print—the tensions at home reflected the struggles abroad. The United States was in a cold war against the Soviet Union, and extreme anticommunism at home created an atmosphere of suspicion. Murrow’s “This I Believe,” which he intended “to point to the common meeting grounds of beliefs, which is the essence of brotherhood and the floor of our civilization” (National Public Radio, n.d.), would become a weapon in a war “for the hearts and minds” of people, fought then, as now, chiefly in the Muslim world, especially the Middle East. In fact, an edition of This I Believe sprinkled with essays written by prominent Arabs would become a best-selling title of a little known American publishing venture called Franklin Publications, selling 30,000 copies in Arabic in six months’ time (Franklin Book Program Papers, 2001).

This I Believe was only one of some 3,000 titles published in a number of languages by Franklin Publications, later known as Franklin Book Programs. But book translation was only one of its activities. In 1969, when Carroll G. Bowen relinquished his position as publisher of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press and addressed the Annual Membership Meeting as Franklin’s new president, he described the purpose of the nonprofit corporation: “to help strengthen and, where necessary, to help create local book publishing industries in the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America; and to facilitate and increase the international flow of educational and cultural materials.”

He enumerated activities that were far more expansive than those originally envisioned when a group of librarians from the American Library Association’s International Relations Committee and publishers from the American Book Publishers Council’s Foreign Trade Committee met in 1951 at the Library of Congress to discuss how to meet the “need for books in developing countries” (Smith, 1983). They decided that books by American authors would be much more likely to reach their intended audience if they were translated into the languages of potential readers. The organization they established with the U.S. government’s help in 1952 persisted until 1978. In addition to translations, Franklin published textbooks and weekly new readers’ magazines; developed dictionaries and encyclopedias; helped to train illustrators, publishers, textbook writers, and book sellers; and even helped to establish school libraries in some countries. Franklin’s program originally focused on the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East, of which Iraq is one, quickly moving into other Middle Eastern languages, such as Persian or Farsi, spoken in Iran and Afghanistan. Franklin entered these countries at a time during which they were a central arena in the contests of the Cold War and departed from them during a time of revolutionary upheaval. The effectiveness of the Franklin Book Programs in particular and cultural diplomacy in general are especially pertinent today as we wage a new kind of war in the Middle East.
An October 2001 editorial cartoon by Jim Borgman of the Cincinnati Enquirer, captioned “How to Terrorize the Taliban,” included a panel depicting a horrified Taliban being bombarded by tomes from above, including Chicken Soup for the Taliban Soul; it bears the label “Bomb them with books” (Borgman, 2001). While the organization, Franklin Publications, was a product of a cold, rather than a shooting, war, it was born not only of a belief that developing countries had both a need and a desire for American books but that the interests of the United States and even of world peace could be served by the publication of quality American books in the wide variety of languages of the Muslim world. As one New York Times Book Review writer said in 1952 of the importance of Franklin Publications, “No one pretends that you can shoot books out of cannons, but there is a passionate hope that if you make ideas work for democracy you won’t have to shoot the cannons at all” (Dempsey, 1952).

Following World War II, there were high hopes for democracy in the Middle East as elsewhere. Old colonial powers gave way to new nationalist forces, and the newly independent nations became objects of concern for the opposing superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States, which had become aware of the importance of information campaigns during World War II, through the Fulbright (1946) and Smith-Mundt (1948) Acts assigned responsibility for the postwar information campaign to the State Department. It was charged with promoting a “better understanding of the United States in other countries” and increasing “mutual understanding” between the United States and its world neighbors. While the thrust of these two laws was to present a “full and fair picture” of the United States, President Harry Truman enlarged the program, as the Cold War intensified, into the “Campaign of Truth” (Jennison, 1956). The International Information Administration (IIA; later the United States Information Agency) of the State Department directed this multifaceted program.

In 1951, when Francis R. St. John of the Brooklyn Public Library; Verner Clapp and Luther Evans of the Library of Congress; Dan M. Lacy, on loan from the Library of Congress to the IIA, and Datus C. Smith Jr., Princeton University Press publisher, among others, first gathered to discuss and plan what became the Franklin Book Programs, both domestic politics and foreign policy were driven by Cold War concerns. As Americans fought the war within against alleged communist infiltration, the nation’s efforts abroad focused on preventing newly independent nations from falling under the influence of Soviet communism. The Middle East was especially in turmoil. Britain recognized Israel in 1950, and Palestinians became permanent refugees. In 1951 Mossadegh became prime minister of Iran and nationalized the oil industry; two years later, the Shah was returned to power with the assistance of the CIA (Kinzer, 2003). King Abdullah of Jordan was assassinated while visiting Egypt. In 1952, at about the time when Franklin
Publications filed its papers of incorporation, General Naguib seized power from Egypt’s King Farouk and shortly thereafter suspended the country’s constitution.

In order to mitigate the effects of Soviet influence, as part of its information campaign the IIA subsidized translations of American books it thought would help the American cause in the Middle East. IIA’s Dan Lacy was “very dissatisfied” with its program, however, for it depended on IIA people with no experience in publishing to work with “not very sophisticated or competent” local publishers. Lacy wanted to “establish a non-profit organization which would be run by American publishers” who would provide “professional training and advice” to the local overseas publishers with whom they worked.¹ For their part, the U.S. publishers, librarians, and others involved in Franklin’s founding believed that providing a system whereby American books could be translated into the local tongues of Middle Eastern peoples, published by local publishers, and sold at a low cost by local booksellers would not only provide a “better understanding of the United States” but would help to build a book publishing and selling infrastructure that would support the cause of education, literacy, and democracy in these developing countries. In addition, in the long run it would help to develop a market for American books.

Lacy arranged for the IIA to underwrite Franklin’s start-up costs to the tune of a half million dollars,² and on May 29, 1952, five notable publishers—Malcolm Johnson of Van Nostrand, Robert T. Crowell of Crowell, Robert F. deGraff of Pocket Books, Charles E. Griffith of Silver Burdett, and George P. Brett of Macmillan—filed the certificate of incorporation.³ Datus C. Smith took a leave of absence from Princeton University Press, where he had experience publishing in Arabic, to serve as president while the corporation was launched.⁴ The list of board members reads as a veritable who’s who of publishing, with other distinguished individuals, such as Librarian of Congress Luther Evans, librarian Francis St. John, and professor Harold Lasswell of Yale University also serving. Arthur S. Adams of the American Council on Education, responding to an invitation to join the board, certainly understood Franklin Publications as an instrument of U.S. policy. The venture, he said, “holds great promise of providing an effective means of reflecting clearly the essential features of democratic philosophy.” Providing American books to “the undeveloped countries of the world,” he concluded, “should be a potent force in combating the spread of Soviet ideology.”⁵

In September 1952 Datus Smith expanded on the mission of Franklin in a memorandum intended for internal use. Franklin’s constituency (defined as those “who put us in business and could put us out”) was a trio of concerns: those “in charge of U.S. foreign relations,” the publishing industry, and “humanitarian and general-welfare interests.” Presumably this last included librarians, although this last element was the least evident in
Franklin’s organization as it got under way, a factor that troubled Smith, for he felt that the interests of neither the U.S. government nor the book publishing industry could be effectively served if Franklin were not authentically interested in the general welfare of the people of the target countries. Major policies should be determined by their effect on all three elements. In light of this tri-part constituency, Smith suggested that Franklin should have three strategic objectives: The first was “to strengthen the position of the U.S. and the free world, and to preserve world peace.” The second was to “increase the foreign distribution of American Books,” and the third was “To help the peoples of the Middle East, and thus to further the welfare of mankind.” The tactical objectives were likewise three, all three intertwined to meet Franklin’s goals: “1. To help strengthen the economic, social, and political structure of the Middle Eastern Countries. 2. To provide information and points of view regarding America, democracy, and the idea of an open society so that, if the people of the Middle East wish this, they can judge fairly, and not with the field having been abandoned to the totalitarians. 3. To further international cultural exchange.”

The means by which all these tactical objectives were to be obtained was the translation and publication of books. The books, Smith felt, should include practical manuals and handbooks in such subjects as agriculture and building; educational tools, such as textbooks and reference books; and general interest books, including children’s books and literature. Smith—and all of Franklin’s members—were insistent that, although they intended to help the United States, they did not intend to be propagandists. If Franklin, by making Western know-how and literature available in the Middle East, could improve its economy or standard of living, that would be an “important contribution to American interest and world peace.” “Even from the point of view of a propagandist,” he continued, “it must be pointed out that if America becomes identified in the Arab mind with the symbols of abundant water, healthy sheep, fruitful fields, and literate children—in the Arab world, not in Ohio or Kansas—that in itself will be a propaganda achievement of the first magnitude.” Smith concluded that in the “long view, which is the only defensible view when the medium of communication is the book,” the interests of the Middle East and the interests of the United States were “mutually supporting.”

In order to have books make a difference, they must be books that Middle Easterners themselves want, Smith asserted. And the books that had been translated under U.S. State Department auspices had not been successful, partly because of their association with the U.S. government, “which is the target of resentment and distrust because of the Israel business,” but also because the titles were too obviously propagandistic or chosen without regard to what Middle Easterners might want to read. Franklin would ask the people of the Middle East what books they wanted translated and keep at an arms-length from the State Department. “Our hearts must be pure,”
Smith said. By taking the long view, and providing local control of book selection to the extent possible, Franklin would not only win the trust of the Middle East but would also “get closer to the Department’s strategic objective” of providing a positive view of the United States, while bolstering the opportunities for economic development and democratic change.  

The private, nongovernmental nature of Franklin Publications would enable it to do things the government could not do “in meeting the challenge of Communism on bookstands abroad.” Franklin chose to be quiet and urged discretion on the part of the IIA about Franklin’s source of funding. As the August 1952 IIA Newsletter said, it would be “inadvisable for the corporation to be publicly identified with the U.S. missions in any country in which it operates.” The corporation would lose credibility, the organization’s members believed, if the people with whom they worked in the Middle East saw Franklin, which was an autonomous corporation, as merely a mouthpiece for the U.S. government. Nevertheless, projects—which would begin with translations first in Arabic and then in the languages of other Islamic nations, including Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan—would be tailored to the needs of the United States Information Service.  

While the newsletter advertised that Franklin would meet the needs of the IIA, Smith and his colleagues insisted on autonomy in reality as well as appearance. They established several principles—reiterated and reasserted over the years—by which they conducted their work: First, titles for translation were to be selected by people in the local country, albeit from a list of suggested titles that had been screened by the IIA to make sure there were none judged inimical to the United States’ interest. Second, members of the local elite—educators, cabinet ministers, judges, even generals—were to be engaged to translate or edit the books. Third, actual publishing was to be done by a local publisher, who might receive additional training through Franklin, and local booksellers would sell the books. Last, but certainly not least, offices in each country were to be managed by nationals of that country, not by Americans. While Franklin acquired the rights to translate and publish the books on behalf of their publisher partners, they did not subsidize the publishing itself and required the publisher to pay a royalty on each title sold.  

These principles, particularly those on book selection, very quickly became a bone of contention between Franklin and the IIA and its successor, the United States Information Agency (USIA). In February 1953 Dan Lacy returned to the Library of Congress just days before Senator Joseph McCarthy launched an attack on the book selection policies of the overseas libraries of the Information Center Service (ICS), which Lacy had headed.  

State Department officials, trying to ward off further accusations by McCarthy, sent multiple contradictory messages to ICS libraries around the world concerning authors whose works were not deemed acceptable for the libraries. A demand for “hard-hitting propaganda” and the threat
that all Franklin projects cleared to begin would have to be cleared again under new McCarthy-inspired standards immediately complicated the new corporation’s work.

At the same time, anti-American sentiment was rising in the Middle East. St. John, Malcolm Johnson, and Smith, making a survey trip to Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Jordan in November 1952, reported that they arrived in Baghdad the day after riots occurred, and tanks were still in the streets. “Antagonism to the U.S. government policy [about Israel] is universal, and its intensity has to be experienced to be believed,” Smith reported in January 1953. From the outset Franklin found itself performing a balancing act that required both delicacy in the Middle East and persistence in adhering to its principles at home. As early as 1953 Smith was willing to consider returning the 1952 appropriation and shutting down Franklin rather than “slip into the old groove of crudely glorifying the American way.”

It would, in fact, be a combination of shifts in both domestic and international politics that would finally lead to Franklin’s demise, but in 1953 Smith was positively ebullient as he worked to establish the first office in Cairo and get the translations started. He was delighted with the selection of Hassan Aroussy as head of the office and with the number of prominent individuals who had agreed to translate or edit particular works. Among the books were two that reflected Franklin’s commitment to what Smith called “local values”: Sarah K. Bolton’s Lives of Poor Boys Who Became Famous and This I Believe. Each of these books was a collection—of short biographies in the former case and of statements of philosophy in the latter. Franklin used some of the original items in each collection but added others written about or by prominent Arabs, thus localizing the contents of the books. This I Believe, the most popular title in Arabic, sold out a printing of 30,000 within six months (Franklin Book Program Papers, 2001).

The pattern established in Cairo—a local office, books translated and edited by prominent citizens of the local country, the support of “local values,” the use of local publishers—was repeated in other countries, most notably in Iran, and the scope of the projects began to grow. In 1963 Don Cameron, secretary of the corporation, reported ecstatically about developments in the Tehran, Iran, office: “This is a great day for Franklin, a testament and a flowering of the Franklin ideal. . . . The thing to remember is that we are doing something that cannot be done by governments, and is being done by a handful of individuals who have zeal and zest and are pure in heart. And ‘Frankleen’ (as they pronounce it here) gives hope for change and development.” While other offices were not as wildly successful as Cairo and Tehran, both of which eventually became independent of Franklin, the pattern worked well from the outset, and by 1965 “A Checklist of Franklin Projects” listed programs in Cairo, Beirut, and Baghdad (in Arabic); Tehran and Tabriz, Iran (in Persian); Kabul (in Persian and Pushtu); Lahore, West Pakistan, now Pakistan (in Urdu); Dacca, East Paki-
stan, now Bangladesh (in Bengali); Kuala Lumpur (in Malay); Djakarta (in Indonesian); Lagos, Nigeria (in English and Yoruba); Enugu, eastern Nigeria (in English and Igbo); Kaduna, northern Nigeria (in English and Hausa); and Buenos Aires, Argentina (in Spanish). The largest programs remained those in Cairo and Tehran.\(^\text{17}\)

In Tehran, where Franklin secured additional funding from the family of the Shah (after the CIA-sponsored overthrow of Mossadegh), the program flourished. In addition to the Regular Program (the translations), they launched a New Literates Program that provided simple books for adult readers; the Village Library Project; the Encyclopedia Project, which provided a translation of the one-volume Columbia-Viking Encyclopedia with articles selected specifically for Iran;\(^\text{18}\) the Wirerack Project (a mass book distribution project designed to improve the distribution system); textbook production under the auspices of the ministry of education; a Model Bookshop Project; a technical assistance program in aid of Afghanistan; a Persian Dictionary Project (started by Franklin and turned over to the Persian Culture Foundation); and a Textbook Institute, Sazeman Ketab (also turned over to an autonomous body).\(^\text{19}\)

By 1956 new offices were opened in Dacca, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) as well as Djakarta, Indonesia (a Muslim though not a Middle Eastern country). Franklin had weathered a series of newspaper attacks in Egypt because one of their influential translators had come to their defense. The translations were selling briskly, including such unlikely sounding titles as *Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*, which sold out in a month and had to be reprinted. Urdu books were being published in West Pakistan (now Pakistan). Afghanistan had ordered a thousand or more copies of several of the books, and the Iranian manager, Hamayoun Sanati, had arranged to have them airlifted free of charge to Kabul. “I feel that to carry American cultural influences into Afghanistan, which heretofore has had few non-Soviet cultural contacts,” wrote Datus Smith to the board of directors, “would almost serve as justification by itself for our whole Persian program.”\(^\text{20}\)

Later that same year, Smith attributed Franklin success thus far to holding to its commitment to local values and participation. He described the company, just four years old, as being “most unusual.” Its personnel consisted of seven Americans, nine Egyptians, eight Iranians, six West Pakistanis, six East Pakistanis, and five Indonesians who ran the religious gamut from thirty-two Muslims to five Protestants, two Catholics (one of whom was Egyptian), and two Jews (one American, one Iranian). He held to an optimistic forecast in spite of the Suez crisis, food riots in Pakistan, and communist-led upheaval in Indonesia. Only in Iran, where there was a police state, were things “relatively quiet.” Smith concluded that a “time of political troubles, when other sorts of contact between the U.S. and the local population are difficult or impossible, seems to us to be precisely the time when Franklin can make its greatest contribution.”\(^\text{21}\)
Although political troubles seemed to be the order of nearly every year, so did a variety of publishing ventures. USIA money was gradually replaced with Agency for International Development (AID) funds, as publishing began to be viewed as economic development as well as cultural diplomacy. A small assortment of foundations also contributed funds. Major funding came from the national governments of the countries in which Franklin worked and from money owed to the U.S. government through the Food for Peace (P.L. 480) program, which allowed payment for food commodities in the local currency. This local currency, which frequently was not easily exchanged, could be expended for projects to enhance economic development.

P.L. 480 payments were used to support Franklin’s efforts in textbook publishing. This was especially true of the countries in which large textbook projects—especially Iran, Afghanistan (where Franklin had a ten-year contract to publish texts), and Pakistan—were carried out. These projects often involved training of local publishers in textbook design, graphics, and publishing techniques. In several countries school libraries were started with small sets of books. A children’s magazine called PAIK, similar to *Weekly Reader*, was supported in Tehran in the 1970s; this little magazine enjoyed a circulation of 7.5 million every two weeks in a country of thirty million, according to then president John Kyle.22

By that time, as successful as Franklin felt it had been in providing translations, stimulating book production, and establishing a positive American presence in Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East, it was floundering financially. As early as 1968 it experienced difficulties, but the problems only grew worse. By 1976 Franklin was prepared to spin the largest and most successful office, Tehran-Franklin, off into an independent organization. The board recognized that times had changed, both internationally and domestically, and it decided that Franklin should try to “leave a capability behind” rather than simply perpetuating itself.23 By 1977 Franklin had decided to ask Datus Smith to resume the role of president in order to take charge of its transition to another phase or to provide an orderly dissolution.

In November 1977, in response to a letter from Smith about the future of Franklin, founding board member George Brett, then eighty-four years of age, wrote sadly, “Alas! our, shall I say, hidden fight against Communism has not produced the effects that we all wanted.” He worried that the country was going “soft on Communism” and that the world was in “greater danger today than it was when many of us started fighting against the creeping paralysis.”24 In May 1978, pushed by world affairs and the realization that the goals established in 1952 for the corporation were no longer appropriate, Franklin Book Programs voted to dissolve itself.25

In the course of its life, Franklin Book Programs translated and produced more than 3,000 titles in many millions of copies (Benjamin, 1984,
It published virtually all the school textbooks for grades 1–4 in Iran and great numbers more in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By providing books suitable for school libraries, it stimulated their development. Its most complicated project, according to Smith (1983, p. 263), was its adaptation and publication of the single-volume *Columbia-Viking Encyclopedia* in Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, and Indonesian. Franklin Book programs ultimately believed that stimulating the publishing infrastructure—which included training graphic artists; providing technical assistance to publishers; developing printing plants, bookstores, and libraries; and even supporting education and literacy efforts—were among its core activities. One of its major contributions, according to Curtis G. Benjamin (1984, p. 27), president of McGraw-Hill Publishing, was its “spirit and basic ideas,” the model of cooperation through insistence on “local values” in book selection, translation, publishing, and management.

What long-term effect did the Franklin Book Programs have? It is impossible to tell at this time from this vantage point whether it had an effect on the individual, personal level. Certainly sentiment toward the United States in the Middle East as a whole today seems more like than unlike the Middle East of fifty years ago, when Franklin entered the area. Publishing has certainly increased, and education has improved. When Franklin began its work, for example, Jordan had neither any library nor any institution of higher learning. Franklin’s contributions in technical training for publishing and textbook creation may have helped.

As hints of the impact it might have had, to date I have discovered only a few traces of Tehran-Franklin, the strongest office, in online postings on *NetIran*, an Iranian publication; on *The Iranian*, a Web site for the Iranian community in North America; and on the Society for Iranian Studies Web site. The first is a news clipping dated 1995 that announces a Farsi “talking book” produced by the “Persian section of the Franklin-Jahanbin publication company.” At the same site, in a 1994 journal article on the Children’s Book Committee of Iran, one of its founders, Tooran Mirhadi, spoke of Franklin’s publication of an eighteen-volume children’s encyclopedia. “That translation affected us bitterly for it was mainly designed for American children at primary school levels,” she said, citing its coverage of animals and plants indigenous to North America and its emphasis on American history, “not suitable for the children of this land.” Two more recent posts are biographical in content and respectful in tone, as might be expected of U.S.-based Web publications. One is an October 2005 obituary of a prominent Iranian translator who was “chief editor” for Franklin books and was credited with publishing books of quality and of training a “generation of writers and editors.” The second is an introduction to the works of Zaman Zamani, who, as art director for Franklin Tehran in the 1960s and 1970s, illustrated “numerous children’s books including an extensive collection of textbooks for the elementary schools in Iran.”
Without more extensive reading of the current literature of the target countries, and without interviewing people who live—or perhaps lived—in Iran and other target countries, any realistic estimate of Franklin Book Program’s impact will be virtually impossible. In 1956 Edward Laroque Tinker of the *New York Times Book Review* praised Franklin Publications for “bringing the mountain to Mohammed” by providing books that provided a “miniature of the aspirations, character, mode of living and manner of thought” of America, as well as a record of its “know-how” to the peoples of the Middle East so that they could learn “how decent, kindly and likeable” the inhabitants of the rest of the globe are. The Franklin Book Programs may have “brought the mountain to Mohammed” by providing books that told the people of the Middle East “what they want to know about us and what they can best apply to their needs” (Tinker, 1956), but from today’s vantage point it is apparent that “bombing” the Middle East with books did not alter attitudes toward American policies, even though it might have created some friends in the Muslim world and a market for American books. Nor, unfortunately, did it replace bombing with bombs.

**Notes**

1. This phrase has been spoken almost endlessly on the national media since the United States entered Afghanistan and Iraq and has been used frequently to talk about cultural diplomacy since at least the Cold War.
7. As events transpired, Smith would remain president until 1967 and remain on the board, returning to the active management of the organization in 1977 to preside over its dissolution.
11. These guidelines appear repeatedly in reports, minutes, and letters. They are summarized in Smith (1983, pp. 257–58).
12. For an extended discussion of this episode see Louise S. Robbins (2001).
15. Datus C. Smith Jr., “Progress Report from Cairo (Under Date of April 19, 1953),” FBPA.
18. This project was carried out in several of the countries.
19. See “Checklist of Franklin Programs.”
22. John H. Kyle, June 27, 1973, President’s Comments at Board of Directors Meeting, FBPA, Box 1, Folder 3.
23. Executive Committee Minutes, July 16, 1976, FBPA, Box 1, Folder 8.

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ner of the Eliza Atkins Gleason Book Award from the American Library Association’s Library History Round Table and the Willa Award from Women Writing the West, is *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown: Civil Rights, Censorship, and the American Library* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000). She is also author of a number of articles and *Censorship and the American Library: The American Library Association’s Response to Threats to Intellectual Freedom, 1939–1969* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996). Robbins has lectured widely in the United States and overseas, most recently in China, Korea, Japan, and Kyrgyzstan. She teaches in the areas of management and intellectual freedom, as well as in government information sources and services. She recently completed a two-year term as president of the Association for Library and Information Science Education.
Abstract
Before World War II the Prussian State Library, with its three million volumes, was one of the most important German libraries. It was operational until mid-1943, but the ever-increasing number of air raids over Berlin led to a large-scale evacuation of its collections to the east in late 1943 and early 1944. Among the most prized collections removed for safekeeping were hundreds of autograph scores and music manuscripts by Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach. As the result of postwar border changes some of these collections ended up in the Jagiellonian University Library in Kraków, where they remain. Since the unification of Germany consecutive German governments have been trying to negotiate the return of the Prussian music collection from Kraków to Berlin. However, negotiations have been extremely difficult as the broader question of German compensations for losses inflicted on Polish libraries by the Nazis is being raised. This article discusses the Prussian music collection in the context of cultural heritage and war reparations.

Introduction
The story of the music collection of the Prussian state library in the aftermath of World War II exemplifies an ongoing debate about cultural loss, war reparations and restitution, and trophy collections. At the very center of this debate lies the question of Poland’s right to the former Prussian State Library collection and Germany’s accountability for cultural losses inflicted on Poland during World War II.

According to the November 2004 final report of a commission set up by Warsaw mayor Lech Kaczyński to estimate losses inflicted on Poland’s capital...
by Nazi Germany, Germany should pay Poland 45.3 billion dollars for the destruction of historic, private, and state buildings as well as elements of the city’s infrastructure such as roads, bridges, sewer lines, and so on (Kraj, 2004). Regardless of how accurate these estimates and claims are and how likely they are to be successfully realized, the question of war reparations is very much alive almost sixty years after the end of World War II.

Since the unification of Germany, consecutive German governments have been trying to negotiate the return of the Prussian music collection from Kraków to Berlin. However, negotiations have been difficult as the broader question of German compensations for losses inflicted on Polish libraries surfaces every time the issue of possible return of the music collection is raised. This article discusses the history of the music collection of the Prussian State Library in the final years of World War II and its postwar years in Poland, including the latest developments after the fall of communism.

**The War Years, 1939–45**

Before World War II the Prussian State Library and the Bavarian State Library were the most prominent universal libraries in Nazi Germany (Olson, 1996, p. 62). The Prussian State Library had about three million volumes, including numerous rare books and manuscripts. One of the most important parts of its collection were musical manuscripts of great composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Amadeus Mozart. The library held 80 percent of Bach’s manuscripts, more than 50 percent of Beethoven’s manuscripts, and more than one-third of all Mozart’s manuscripts. Although one of the first air raids by the British Royal Air Force to hit the Prussian State Library occurred as early as August 1940, the library remained operational until mid-1943 (Olson, 1996, p. 63). However, the evacuation of materials began in 1941 and continued until March 1945 (Jammers, 1997a, p. 113; Olson, 1996, p. 63). Among materials evacuated from Berlin were over 70,000 medieval and Eastern manuscripts, over 300,000 maps, and over 500,000 modern autographs (Jammers, 1997a, p. 113). These materials were taken to 30 safe storage depots scattered all over Germany. At first, book transports were carefully documented, but toward the end of the war materials were shipped, often unpacked, to “increasingly indeterminate locations” (Olson, 1996, p. 65). Of the ultimate 30 storage depots, 4 ended up in the American occupation zone, 1 in the French occupation zone, and 13 in the Soviet occupation zone. Five depots located in Pomerania and 6 in Silesia were first occupied by the Soviet Red Army and eventually fell under Polish jurisdiction, and 1 depot in northern Bohemia became Czechoslovak territory after the war (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 1995, pp. 7–8). The whole prewar collection, including the music collection, was now scattered all over Central and Eastern Europe.
The Postwar Years, 1945–2000

Many collections evacuated from Berlin were hidden in mines, monasteries, and castles. Music manuscripts from the Prussian State Library, for example, were first hidden in the castle of Fürstenstein (Książ) and later transferred to the Benedictine abbey with its two churches located in Grüssau (Krzeszów) in Silesia. As a storage depot for rare materials the abbey served its purpose very well. It was not bombed by the Allied powers during the war nor was it destroyed by the Red Army advancing from the east. In addition to 505 boxes of materials from the Prussian State Library, there were an additional 500 boxes that contained the most valuable books from the Breslau (Wrocław) University and the Breslau (Wrocław) Public Libraries. The boxes were hidden in the attics of the two churches (Kalicki, 1994).

At the Potsdam Conference, held after Germany’s surrender in 1945, the Allied powers placed Upper and Lower Silesia, Danzig, and parts of Brandenburg, Pomerania, and East Prussia under Polish administration. The decision to shift the Polish prewar boundary to the west was to compensate for Poland’s territorial losses in the east. Stalin demanded that a large amount of Polish prewar territory in the east be annexed to the Soviet Union. Subsequently, millions of Poles were expelled from what was now the USSR and resettled in the areas obtained from Germany. A German-Polish border was now set along a line formed by the Odra (Oder) and Nysa (Neisse) rivers. Millions of ethnic Germans were forced to relocate to Germany, joining hundreds of thousands who had already fled the advancing Soviet Red Army. Grüssau became Krzeszów and all its inhabitants and property now belonged to Poland.

By mid-1946 only three Benedictines remained in Krzeszów (Grüssau). They were allowed to stay only after they had renounced their German citizenship and “reclaimed” Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Italy as their native countries (Kalicki, 1994). Sometime in 1946 Polish authorities discovered the existence of the hidden boxes and immediately decided to move them out of the abbey. The remaining monks were warned not to mention anything about the boxes to the Soviet soldiers stationed nearby. The Russians had already been shipping entire factories, construction materials, furniture, as well as art objects and precious archival and book collections (for example, the Berlin Sing-Akademie collection with over 5,100 predominantly manuscript music scores) from Germany and Silesia to the Soviet Union (Grimsted, 2001, pp. 249, 270). Since Warsaw was in ruins, many government agencies were temporarily operating out of Kraków, and that is where over 1,000 of the boxes were taken. In Kraków the collection from the Prussian State Library was kept in at least four different locations, including the Nowodworski-Collegium, before it was finally deposited in the Jagiellonian University Library (Biblioteka Jagiellonska) in December 1948 (Jammers, 1997a, 131).
THE MUSIC COLLECTION

The music collection from the Prussian State Library included, among other things, over 100 Mozart autographs, including a whole manuscript of *Die Zauberflöte*, (The Magic Flute), the last two acts of *Le Nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro), and one act of *Cosi fan tutte*, and 11 symphonies (including the *Jupiter* Symphony); 22 Beethoven autographs (including the Symphony No. 9 in D minor op. 125 without the choral finale), 25 autographs from the Bach collection, 112 autographs from the Cherubini collection, and almost all of Mendelssohn including his concertos for violin and the oratorio *Elijah* (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 1995, p. 20; Kalicki, 1994). In addition to autographs, the collection included 145 musical manuscripts from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, 133 librettos from the seventeenth century, and over 2,500 early music prints published between 1501 and 1700 (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 1995, p. 20). The latter collection included early German hymnbooks, anthologies, works by anonymous composers, and numerous works by German and Italian composers (including 26 works by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina) (Patalas, 1999, pp. 258–61). This important music collection was almost immediately designated as officially secret by the authorities, and its existence would not be revealed for several decades (Zamorski, 1997a; Pirożyński, 1992).

THE POLITICS OF SECRECY

The legal situation of the goods located in Poland’s newly acquired northern and western territories was resolved by two government decrees of March 2, 1945, and March 8, 1946. The decrees specified that “all property of the former German Reich and Free City of Danzig, German and Danzig’s natural and legal persons, as well as persons who fled to the enemy” had been taken over by the Polish State treasury (Nahlik, 1958, p. 296; Kowalski, 1998, pp. 67–68; Kowalski, 1997). Cultural objects were not singled out in these decrees, but they definitely fell under the definition of “all property of the former German Reich” (Rzeczypospolita Polska, 1945a; Rzeczypospolita Polska, 1946).

The nationalization of German cultural items did not make them more accessible to the public than before. On the contrary, some collections, like the music collection from the Prussian State Library, were kept in secret and few knew of their existence. There may have been several reasons why the Polish authorities decided to keep silent about the music collection. First, there was the concern that news about the collection being kept in Kraków might undermine negotiations with the Soviet Union and later with East Germany about the return of Polish cultural items appropriated by the Nazis. Contrary to official slogans about friendship between socialist countries, there was quiet disapproval and unease, even amongst some government officials, about how the Soviet Union was handling the issue of cultural reparations. Under the Polish-Soviet agreement on compensa-
tion for war losses inflicted by Nazi Germany, signed on August 16, 1945, the Soviet Union agreed that “15 percent of all reparations from the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany” would be delivered to Poland (Kowalski, 1994, p. 81). All Polish reparations (as a percentage of those received by the Soviet Union) could only be drawn from the Soviet-occupied zone in the east of Germany. Thus, German territory in the west, over twice the size of the Soviet-occupied zone, was excluded, along with the area that constituted American, British, and French occupation zones in the south, northwest, and southwest of Germany respectively.

The Bureau of War Restitution and Reparations in Warsaw compiled a list of objects from the Dresden Gallery, which shortly after the war had been taken to the Soviet Union as war booty, and demanded their delivery to Poland as compensation for cultural war losses. The list was ignored by the Soviet authorities who decided in 1953 to drop any further reparations claims against East Germany and two years later returned the whole Dresden Gallery to East Germany. The Polish government had to follow the same policy and issued on August 23, 1953, a declaration that “considering the fact that Germany has already fulfilled to a large degree its obligations in the area of reparations . . . the government of the People’s Republic of Poland has decided to renounce the pursuit of [German] reparations for Poland” (Oświadczenie rządu, 1953). Any future negotiations about the “exchange” (a term more politically neutral than “return”) of cultural items had to be conducted directly between Polish and East German governments. In 1954 Poland handed over 117 paintings by various German artists to East Germany, but the East Germans balked at returning the original architectural drawings of Warsaw’s buildings and instead presented Poland with an electron microscope (Kowalski, 1998, p. 68). Secret negotiations about the return of the music collection from the Prussian State Library to the German Democratic Republic were mostly unsuccessful and resulted in unusual political gestures by Polish authorities (see below).

Another reason for keeping silent about the music collection may be attributed to a general sense of historical justice. The Prussian State Library collection was considered by many, including librarians, to be small compensation for the extensive losses inflicted by the Nazis on Poland’s museums, libraries, archives, and private art collections and for the Nazis’ destruction of numerous historic buildings. There was also a widespread feeling of resignation that the return of Polish cultural objects from the eastern territories taken over by the Soviet Union would be of limited success, if not entirely impossible to carry out. Many probably thought that, in an uncertain international political climate and in a country with limited political sovereignty, the best way to make sure that the collection would stay in Poland was to keep silent about its existence and location. The collection thus remained off limits to Polish and international scholars, who could not study its precious manuscripts. It took decades to change this situation.
Unsuccessful Returns: Secret Negotiations and Political Gestures

Despite the official policy of secrecy and denial, on several occasions Polish authorities contemplated the return of the Prussian State Library collection to East Germany. For example, in 1949 the Department of Libraries of the Ministry of Higher Education considered the exchange of archival materials, including the Prussian State Library collection, between Poland and Germany as a prelude to a peace conference. The conference did not happen and the exchange idea was abandoned (Kalicki, 2002, p. 380). In 1957 the Ministry of Higher Education was again making preparations to return, this time, “the whole collection of the former Prussian State Library” to East Germany. However, it remains unclear why at the last moment the whole operation was called off and the collection was never returned (Kalicki, 2002, pp. 380–81). In 1963 the Ministry of Higher Education ordered the director of the Jagiellonian Library to divide the collection of the Prussian State Library into those parts that should be kept in Kraków and those that should be sent to other Polish libraries. Eventually the ministry decided to send the part of the collection intended for the University of Łódź Library to East Germany, but again, for unknown reasons, this plan was abandoned (Kalicki, 2002, p. 384). Finally, in 1965 the Ministry of Higher Education informed the rector of the Jagiellonian University that an agreement had been made with East German authorities to return “part of the collection of the former Prussian State Library” to East Germany and since “the collection was the property of the Polish State” it would be sent as a gift commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Polish People’s Republic and the 15th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic (Kalicki, 2002, p. 385). Altogether 92,000 volumes of materials from the collection of the former Prussian State Library were returned to East Germany. A large part of the returned collection included newspapers and periodicals coming not only from Kraków but also from Warsaw, Łódź, and Lublin, where parts of the collection had been kept after the war (Kalicki, 2002, p. 386). It was the first time since the end of World War II that Polish authorities surrendered any part of the Prussian State Library collection to East Germany. However, these materials did not include a single item from the music collection. This stayed in Kraków.

East German librarians discovered the whereabouts of the Prussian State Library music collection in the late 1960s. In 1966 Zofia Lissa, a University of Warsaw musicology professor, received a list of missing Grüssau manuscripts from Dr. Karl-Heinz Köhler of the Music Department of the German State Library in East Berlin (Lewis, 1981, p. 156). The following year Professor Lissa assured Professor Horst Kunze, the director of the German State Library in East Berlin, that “finally I have a full confidence that everything is there [in Kraków], and in good condition, well preserved” (Kalicki, 2002, p. 388). In 1970 Professor Kunze asked Otto Winzer, the
East German Foreign Minister, to propose to the Polish government that the Beethoven and Mozart manuscripts be returned to East Germany to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth. The minister, however, refused to investigate this matter. Next, Kunze tried to get the attention of the East German prime minister, but this too failed. However, 1970 was not the right time to negotiate the return of cultural objects. Poland and the Soviet Union were negotiating a treaty with West Germany that would finally recognize formally the German-Polish border along the Odra (Oder) and Nysa (Neisse) rivers. East German claims to its musical heritage had to be put on hold in the face of West German reconciliatory Ostpolitik and the priorities of Soviet foreign policy.

In addition to attempts to exert political pressure by East Germany, some Polish musicologists began to question the official policy of secrecy about the music collection. In the mid-1970s Jan Stęszewski, a music professor and chairman of the Polish Composers’ Association, consulted several prominent Polish musicologists who supported his idea that the Minister of Culture, Józef Tejchma, should be persuaded that the Prussian State Library music collection should no longer be kept secret. For Stęszewski it was “a matter of honor” that something be done about it (Kalicki, 2002, pp. 394–95). In 1976 he met with Tejchma and presented the position of the Polish Composers’ Association that, “from the political, moral, scholarly, and artistic points of view, the existence of the collection of such significance must not be kept in secret” and “inaccessible to the rest of the world” (Kalicki, 2002, p. 397). The minister agreed to take the issue to his superiors as he was not in a position to make any decision about the collection.

Stęszewski, in his conversation with Tejchma, also mentioned some publications in the Western press openly accusing Polish authorities of hiding the Prussian State Library music from the rest of the world. Some Polish musicologists, through contacts with their Western colleagues, continued to try to stay informed as much as they could about what was being published about the music collection. In the late 1960s and early 1970s several articles had appeared dealing with the lost collections in journals and newspapers such as the Book Collector, Notes, the New York Herald Tribune, and Kölnische Rundschau. Western musicologists were also aware of the activities of the American Carleton Smith, the British biologist Peter Whitehead, and the British journalist Nigel Lewis, all of whom were trying to resolve the mystery of missing collections from the former Prussian State Library. Lewis even devoted a book to this topic entitled Paperchase: Mozart, Beethoven, Bach . . . The Search for their lost Music (Lewis, 1981), though it was not published until 1981.

It is hard to say what kind of influence such publications had on the Polish political establishment, but it was not significant. Given their political and cultural isolation, even ignorance, most of Poland’s governing elite was probably unaware of such articles published in the West. In 1976 the first secretary of the East German Communist Party, Erich Honecker,
asked his counterpart in Poland, Edward Gierek, to find and return the collections from the former Prussian State Library to East Berlin. At the beginning of 1977 Honecker was invited on a hunting trip to Poland during which Gierek informed him that “a team of our scholars has begun an intensive search and just uncovered the tracks of these precious [collections]” (Kalicki, 2002, p. 400). On April 26, 1977, the Polish government announced in a press release issued by the Polish Press Agency (PAP) that “a systematic and scrupulous search has recently been rewarded with successful results” that had led to “a precious discovery” of collections belonging to the former Prussian State Library. It was the first public announcement of the existence of such collections in Poland, though it did not say anything about the music collection in particular (Lewis, 1981, p. 227). The decision to reveal what was by then a thirty-two-year state secret about the Prussian State Library collections may have been influenced by three factors: Polish–East German strained relations and possible Soviet pressure to ease the tension, quiet but persistent dissent of some Polish musicologists at continuing to keep the music collections officially secret, and finally, to a lesser degree, publications in the Western press about possible whereabouts of the music collection.

Though the April 26, 1977, press release had not mentioned the music collection, the following day information about it and the Jagiellonian Library appeared in the German edition of the Warsaw newspaper *żyście Warszawy*. It looked like the government was still not ready to reveal where the music collection was located. Finally, in May 1977, as an important part of ceremonies arising from the signing of a treaty of friendship and cooperation between Poland and East Germany, seven original scores from the Prussian State Library music collection were returned to East Germany. These included Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and Third Piano Concerto; Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, the Mass in C-minor, and the *Jupiter* Symphony; and Bach’s Concerto for Two Harpsichords and sonata No. 3 in A-flat for Flute and Harpsichord (Lewis, 1981, pp. 228–29). These manuscripts were described as “gifts of friendship” from socialist Poland to socialist East Germany and were presented to the Germans by the first secretary of the Polish United Workers Party, Edward Gierek, during his visit to East Berlin on May 29, 1977. The selection of the Ninth Symphony and *The Magic Flute* indicated either genuine commitment of the Polish authorities to return works of “the most intense significance nationally and the widest internationally” or belated reparations forced on Poland by East Germany (Lewis, 1981, p. 228). Regardless of the true reason behind the return of these seven scores, it was a one-time gesture that would not be repeated, though communist propagandists of both countries portrayed the gesture of the Polish authorities as a symbol of everlasting friendship between two nations. The return of the seven scores to East Germany confirmed indirectly for the first time the existence of the Prussian State Library music
collection in Poland (the press release in April 1977 as mentioned above spoke only of “precious collections”). Gierek’s visit to East Berlin in 1977 and Nigel Lewis’s publication of *Paperchase* in 1981 broke the secret of the Prussian State Library music collection once and for all.

**Impasse of the 1980s: The Postcommunist Years**

The imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981 caused an impasse in Polish–East German relations. Polish authorities bent on dismantling the “Solidarity” movement did not want to be concerned with issues of cultural restitution. Nevertheless, the East German government kept pressure on Poland, demanding the return of the remaining Prussian State Library collections to East Berlin. In 1985 the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected East German claims to the collections as groundless (Kalicki, 2002, p. 427). In 1987 Poland’s leader, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, asked two Polish scholars of international law to prepare a legal report on the question of ownership of the collections. According to Professor Marian Wojciechowski and Professor Krzysztof Skubiszewski’s analysis, issued on April 8, 1987, “the collections of the former Prussian State Library became the property of the Polish State through its legal authority over the Regained Territories. This legal authority was given to Poland by the four Allied powers . . . and included the right to appropriate and confiscate German property” (Kalicki, 2002, pp. 427–28). With the end of communism in Eastern Europe, neither Poland nor East Germany changed their negotiating positions, though there were some who continued to hope that the fall of communism would bring an acceptable solution to both sides.

The fall of communism and the unification of Germany did indeed change the character of negotiations. Poland was no longer negotiating with one of two German states that were often in competition with each other. Moreover, the Polish government no longer had to be concerned that its foreign policy follow the dictates of the Soviet Union as it had for the previous fifty years. Paradoxically, this may have made future negotiations more challenging as Poland and East Germany (now the Federal Republic of Germany) were conducting their foreign policy as sovereign states for the first time since the end of World War II.

It seemed that the new era carried promises of reconciliation and better understanding between Poland and Germany. On June 17, 1991, for example, both countries signed a treaty on good neighborly relations and friendly cooperation. This included article 28.3 stipulating that “the contracting parties shall, in the spirit of understanding and reconciliation, strive to resolve problems of cultural property and archives, starting with individual cases” (*Traktat między*, 1992; Czubek & Kosiewski, 2004, p. 129). This provision became the basis for bilateral negotiations that began in February 1992 and resulted in returning one considerable archeological collection back to Poland. This collection included some Bronze Age
gold jewelry and over 1,700 silver and gold coins that had been taken by
the Nazis from archeological museums in Warsaw and Poznań at the end
of the war. The Germans now demanded the return of all the collections
of the former Prussian State Library. The Polish authorities in their turn
made any return of the collections contingent upon the restoration of all
cultural objects removed from Poland by Nazi Germany (Kalicki, 2002, pp.
433–34). The talks were suspended as both sides became more and more
frustrated at the lack of progress.

In March 1997, to commemorate the 170th anniversary of the death of
Beethoven, the Jagiellonian Library held an exhibition of his autographs
(Zwiercan, 1997). For the first time since the end of World War II, his
Symphony No. 8 in F major, op. 93 was displayed in one piece, part 3
from the Jagiellonian Library and parts 1, 2, and 4 borrowed from the
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz. During the opening
ceremony Antonius Jammers, the director of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin,
thanked his Polish colleagues for preserving the collections of the former
Prussian State Library and made clear his understanding that they had not
been plundered by Poland but rather the Polish authorities had “saved
these important cultural and historical documents from the Soviet grip,
and [possibly] from insecure transfer to Moscow or some other location”
(Jammers, 1997b). He also said that out of 45,000 pages comprising the
prewar collection of Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart autographs, about 20
percent were located in the Jagiellonian Library, including 3 percent of
all of Bach’s pages, 43 percent of all of Mozart’s pages, and 12 percent of
all of Beethoven’s pages. Referring to Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony, he
called it “a small example of an unnatural division of the Prussian treasure
between Berlin and Kraków” (Jammers, 1997b). Finally, he offered finan-
cial help with the expansion of the Jagiellonian Library and expressed
the hope that by 2002 the collection of Beethoven autographs would be
returned to Berlin, promising the Jagiellonian Library a complete set of
microfilms of all of this material (Jammers, 1997b). Speaking on the same
occasion, Laurdis Hoelscher, Consul General of Germany in Kraków, em-
phasized the importance of the former Prussian State Library collections
for Germany’s cultural identity and heritage. He stated that various parts
of the music collection, though “separated by the war, complement each
other and should be taken back in one piece to the place of their origin—
Berlin” (Hoelscher, 1997). These remarks were not received favorably by
the Poles. In an interview with a local newspaper in Kraków, for example,
Krzysztof Zamorski, director of the Jagiellonian Library, rejected Germany’s
offer of financial help, stating that “we are not trading the Berlinka (Berlin
Library) [collection] off” and reiterated that “the Berlinka (Berlin Library)
collection found itself in Poland as the result of the war, which had not
been started by Poland” (Zamorski, 1997b). It seemed obvious that Polish-
German negotiations had reached another impasse.
In December 2000 Polish prime minister Jerzy Buzek made a spectacular gesture by returning the 1522 German edition of the Bible that had been translated by Martin Luther and that had been owned by the Prussian State Library to German chancellor Gerhard Schröder (Czubek & Kowiewski, 2004, p. 130). Buzek’s action reminded many of Gierek’s decision to return a few items from the music collection of the Prussian State Library to East Germany in the late 1970s. Like Gierek’s gesture, it did not break the impasse surrounding the negotiations to return the whole of the Prussian State Library collections to Germany.

**Conclusions**

Sixty years after the end of World War II and almost sixteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Poland and Germany are still negotiating the return of cultural objects. The German government would like to see the return of all collections of the former Prussian State Library to Berlin. The Polish government has raised the broader question of German compensations for cultural losses inflicted on Poland as well as the return of any remaining art objects plundered by the Nazis that may still be in Germany. According to Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, there are no cultural objects taken from Poland to Germany that would be equal in value to the collections from the Prussian State Library (Lehmann, 2003). This may be true of some 100 objects identified in public collections (for example, museums or libraries) as having been taken from Poland during World War II. However, some art experts believe that there are still many Polish art objects, some of them extremely valuable, that ended up in private collections in Germany or had been taken out of Germany, thus making their successful recovery almost impossible (Lehman, 2003; Cieslińska, 2003). The Polish government demands the return of objects of equal value to the Prussian State Library collections, and the German government insists that most objects appropriated by the Nazis have already been returned and is either unwilling or in no position to deal with private collectors who may have obtained plundered Polish art objects (Nicholas, 1994, pp. 78, 80). Thus, the situation is a stalemate.

In addition to government talks, there have been informal contacts between Polish and German scholars aimed at breaking the impasse of the official negotiations. In 2000 a group of Polish and German intellectuals calling themselves the Copernicus Group (Grupa Kopernika or Kopernikus Gruppe) published in the German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung a list of proposals, one of the most important of which was that Poland have representatives assigned to the board of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Czubek & Kowiewski, 2004, p. 131). The argument was that with Polish board members, Poland would in effect become co-owner of the music collection from the former Prussian State Library. The Copernicus Group also called on the German government to disclose all the informa-
tion it had about plundered art objects and to return them to Poland. They also demanded that Poland return the collections from the former Prussian State Library, with the exception of the music collection, to Berlin. The music collection, they suggested, should stay in the Jagiellonian Library as a permanent deposit of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation. The Copernicus Group’s proposals aroused some interest in both the Polish and German media but had no impact on further negotiations partly because the demand to change the nature of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation was unrealistic. It was, however, an interesting and open-minded initiative aimed at breaking an almost decade-long deadlock that shows every sign of continuing.6

Notes
1. The term *autograph* is defined as “a manuscript of a musical work written in its composer’s hand, as opposed to music in the hand of a copyist or printed music” (Randel, 2003, p. 66). The entirety of Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* has been spared, even though today Acts I and II are divided geographically from Acts III and IV, the first two being in Berlin and the last two in Kraków. See Alan Tyson (1987).
2. For the history of Polish-German reparations, including some declassified archival documents, see Góralski (2004).
3. See also *Rzeczypospolitej Polska* (1945b).
5. The term *Ziemie Odzyskane* (Regained Territories) refers to Upper and Lower Silesia, Danzig (Gdańsk), and parts of Brandenburg, Pomerania (Pomorze), and East Prussia given to Poland at the Potsdam Conference, held after Germany’s surrender in 1945.

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Unannounced and Unexpected: The Desegregation of Houston Public Library in the Early 1950s

CHERYL KNOTT MALONE

ABSTRACT
Houston Public Library operated as a racially segregated system until 1953, when it quietly changed its policy to one of token integration. Occurring some seven years before the Houston Independent School District began to desegregate, the public library’s policy change depended on a few key individuals. Drawing on the library’s records of discussions and events, this article traces the history of a major shift in philosophy and practice at a large urban public library in the U.S. South.

Historian William Henry Kellar’s book, Make Haste Slowly: Moderates, Conservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston (1999), examines how it was possible for the largest segregated public school system in the nation to desegregate peacefully in the fall of 1960. In 1954 the federal Supreme Court had declared unconstitutional the separate but equal policy in public schools in its Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision. In response, some Deep South states declared they would organize massive resistance against court-ordered desegregation. In September of 1957 Arkansas governor Orval Faubus ordered state troops to prevent nine black students from attending the all-white Central High School. President Eisenhower responded by sending federal troops and the National Guard to escort the Little Rock Nine as they entered the school amidst a crowd of threatening, cursing, spitting whites. In June of 1963, Alabama governor George Wallace personally, physically blocked two black students from entering the University of Alabama, giving his infamous “schoolhouse door” speech proclaiming that the federal government had no right to tell the state how to run its public school system. President Kennedy sent the
National Guard to the campus and Wallace left, but his term as governor was marked by state-supported violence against blacks, most notably in Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham.

But between Little Rock in 1957 and Tuscaloosa in 1963, Houston desegregated its public schools. Kellar does a very good job of telling the story of the civil rights movement in Houston, a city largely overlooked in the huge body of literature on the civil rights era, despite the fact that several key court cases originated in Texas. He finds that the combination of an educated, motivated, and well-established black elite and middle class, with effective community organizations and three black-owned newspapers, along with a white business elite intent on avoiding the economic disaster that befell Arkansas as a result of the bad press around Little Rock, led to peaceful integration of the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Kellar notes that by the fall of 1960, when twelve black students were quietly admitted to elementary schools and thus token integration was achieved, the city’s golf courses and buses had already integrated and the local Catholic schools were already admitting black students.

What Kellar does not mention is that Houston Public Library also had already desegregated, and it had done so in August of 1953, several months before the Brown decision. Houston Public Library in fact appears to have established the pattern of quiet token integration that HISD would follow seven years later. The same combination of black activism and white business leaders’ desire for expediency was also at work.

In 1904 the Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library had opened downtown in a newly constructed edifice funded by steel baron Andrew Carnegie. In 1913 the Colored Carnegie Library opened its new building nearby, again funded by the patron who had made millions in steel. The Colored Carnegie Library operated independently until 1921, when it became a branch of the newly renamed Houston Public Library (Malone, 1999).

By 1953 the system included the main library downtown, six branches, a few small deposit stations, and two bookmobiles, all for the exclusive use of whites, and the Colored Carnegie Branch and three deposit stations in a high school, an elementary school, and a park for African Americans (Houston Public Library, 1958, p. 2).

So the library system did provide collections and services to blacks as well as whites, but in a segregated arrangement that blacks were no longer willing to accept forty years after its instigation. Desegregation of public transportation, accommodations, and institutions in Houston took place in waves set in motion by two significant civil rights victories in Texas. The first of these was Smith v. Allwright (1944), which outlawed the state’s whites-only primary elections (Hine, 1979). The second case was Sweatt v. Painter (1950), which ruled that black students must be allowed to attend the University of Texas Law School since the existing separate law school for blacks was not the equal of it (Pitre, 1999).
Soon after the Supreme Court rendered its decision in the *Sweatt* case, influential blacks in Houston turned their attention to the central library. In a letter to the library board quoted by the *Houston Informer*, five African American leaders and activists, including Lonnie Smith of the *Smith v. Allwright* case, noted that they could probably win a lawsuit against the library if they chose to file, but they preferred “a voluntary solution” because such an approach “would go a long way toward establishing a better understanding and feeling between white and colored people of Houston.”1 The writer, and apparently other leading black citizens, thus saw the effort to desegregate the public library as historically significant, a logical next step in their long fight to secure citizenship rights and educational opportunities.

Working with them was attorney Herman Wright. He and his partner, Arthur J. Mandell, had represented the Congress of Industrial Organizations in Texas in the 1930s and 1940s. Both had become members of the Houston branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1947 (Pitre, 1999, p. 72). Wright, as a member of the NAACP’s Legal Redress Committee, followed up on the group’s first approach after library board members failed to respond. Early in October of 1950 he talked by phone with board president Mrs. Roy L. Arterbury regarding the possibility of arranging a meeting between the board and the NAACP’s Legal Redress Committee. She apparently was noncommittal because Wright followed up again, this time with a letter on November 17. He stated that if the board had not arranged a meeting by November 27, the committee would consider filing suit. Library director Harriett Dickson Reynolds promptly wrote back, saying that Arterbury and other board members were out of town and that a quorum could not be reached. She assured Wright that Arterbury would call him when she returned, although she did not say when that would be.2 It was a classic case of “don’t call us, we’ll call you.”

Harriett Reynolds was stalling. She sent Wright’s letter and her reply to assistant city attorney Herman W. Mead. At the end of January 1951, Arterbury and another long-time board member, Mrs. R. L. Young, met with Mayor Oscar Holcombe to discuss ways to increase the library’s budget. During their visit, Holcombe instructed them not to meet with the NAACP committee and not to entertain the possibility of desegregating the library.3 Holcombe had been mayor throughout the 1920s and off and on through the next three decades, and after a very brief membership in Houston’s Ku Klux Klan chapter, had decided neither to participate in nor interfere with that organization during its heyday in the 1920s (Kellar, 1999, p. 15).

Another year passed and another group took up the project of pressing for access to the library. In February 1952 board president Arterbury and librarian Reynolds met with a white woman, Mrs. Newton Rayzor, and a black man, Charles Shaw, representing the Church Alliance Council. In a memo written after the meeting, Reynolds noted that “Mr. Shaw pounded on the
point of political equality. Mrs. Rayzor talked of Christian brotherhood.” Rayzor and Shaw asked for two things: that Houston’s black residents be allowed to use any and all of the city’s libraries and that they be given representation on the library board. Reynolds and Arterbury tried to appease them by pointing out that blacks could use the central library for reference work and they could request that books from the central collection be sent to the (Colored) Carnegie Library for their use. Reynolds also suggested that the Carnegie Library needed a Friends of the Library group to help increase the use of and donor support for the branch.4

With the election of Roy M. Hofheinz as mayor, the city’s official treatment of African American residents began to change. Soon after taking office early in 1953, Hofheinz appointed Gould Beech, his executive assistant, to advise the library board. Beech went to the board’s meeting in February, where the board talked with him about strategies for increasing the library’s budget. He then broached the subject of desegregation, asking board members what they thought about the possibility. Present were board members Arterbury, Mrs. A. T. Carleton, and Carl F. Stuebing and librarian Reynolds, but their responses are not recorded in the minutes of the meeting.5

Then, in May, Mayor Hofheinz himself attended the library board’s meeting. He told the board members that he thought it was time to desegregate the library. He noted that Houston’s black residents were taxpayers who should have access to the municipal services their taxes supported. He alluded to a court case to desegregate the city golf course, acknowledging that the city expected to lose and would not appeal. He reassured the board that Houstonians were ready to accept blacks in the library, especially since those who would take advantage of the opportunity would be “serious minded and with good demeanor” and would follow the same rules as whites who used the library. He told the board to desegregate quietly, making no announcements to the news media or to the NAACP.6 Neither long-time board members Arterbury or Young were present. Arterbury, who had served on the board since her appointment in 1931 by Mayor Walter Monteith, resigned in March.7 Replacing her as board president was Carl F. Stuebing. Young, a strong supporter of Mayor Holcombe, died in late April.8 In June Mayor Hofheinz appointed Jack Valenti as her replacement. A native Houstonian, Valenti had distinguished himself as a pilot during World War II and had earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Houston before completing his M.B.A. at Harvard in 1952. He had returned to Houston and was a partner in the political consulting and advertising firm of Weekley and Valenti at the time of his appointment to the library board.9

At Valenti’s first library board meeting on July 21, 1953, library services to African Americans appeared on the agenda in two different but telling ways. Billy B. Goldberg, chair of the library board’s expansion program
committee, suggested that the library hire a consultant or work with staff in the city’s planning department to create a coherent expansion program. The board agreed that he should work with the planning department on a study that would inform such a program. Goldberg also raised the idea of selling both the Colored Carnegie Branch on Frederick Street and the Carnegie Branch on Henry Street, since circulation statistics were decreasing at both locations. In the context of a proposed program of expanding library collections and services, the board members’ interest in freeing themselves from the burden of upkeep on declining properties made sense. They had approved more than $1,000 in roof repairs at the Colored Branch in the past couple of years. Although it did not come up at the July board meeting, they also probably recognized that the demographics of the neighborhood around the branch had changed after World War II. The location that had seemed convenient to many black Houstonians when the Colored Branch opened no longer did. And because other library buildings were off-limits to African Americans, the consequences were more pronounced than would otherwise have been the case. In the context of increased civil rights activism, the decreasing level of library availability rankled.

At their July 1953 meeting, the board also discussed the matter of implementing the mayor’s desegregation policy.10 Library Director Reynolds outlined the library’s policies and practices regarding African Americans. Only the Colored Carnegie Branch and three deposit stations allowed black readers to borrow books. If a black person asked for service at another location, the staff would refer that person to the Colored Branch. A black patron who needed to use reference materials or the card catalog not available at the Colored Branch would be served at the central library, under certain conditions. The patron was not allowed in the front door but had to use a side entrance. The patron was not allowed to use the reading rooms or the card catalog but had to sit in a designated area of the mezzanine and wait for staff to bring the requested reference works or catalog drawers.11

Reynolds told the board that she was concerned about desegregating children’s services. She pointed out that library service to children involved far more than the reference and circulation functions typically used by adults. The library offered children story hours, sponsored clubs, and fostered other group activities that could be construed as having a social component. Some white parents would object to such activities if black children participated, Reynolds said. Therefore, she recommended, the library should take an incremental approach to desegregated service by expanding access to adults. Black adults would be allowed to use the central library’s adult collection and reading rooms. The discussion that followed touched on what the board members saw as related issues, such as whether whites and blacks would be allowed to use the same toilets, water fountains, and club rooms. Board members considered the definition of “adult.” The board also talked about the administrative problems that might arise as
library staff attempted to deal with restrictions that applied to some of their clientele but not others. Board member Waldo Bernard moved that they approve Reynolds’s recommendation to desegregate adult services. But no one seconded the motion. Valenti moved that the issue be considered at a subsequent meeting, and everyone agreed.12

Back in June, soon after Mayor Hofheinz told the board to desegregate the library, Reynolds had written to the city attorney for guidance. She asked whether the library board could act alone or whether the city council would have to approve its decisions. She asked whether there were laws requiring segregation, either of the library itself or of facilities such as toilets and drinking fountains within the library. The reply from the city attorney is dated July 21, the day of the board’s meeting, and the minutes do not refer to it, so it seems unlikely that Reynolds had seen it before the meeting took place. What City Attorney Sears told her was that the board had full authority and responsibility for governing and managing the library, according to the City Code. He also noted that constitutional law required that any segregated facilities or services the library might offer would have to be “substantially equal.”13

At the board’s next meeting in August, Valenti moved “That all adult facilities at the central library be opened to Negroes; and, that for this purpose, an adult is defined as anyone of senior high school age and up.” Waldo Bernard seconded the motion and all seven board members approved. Mrs. Roland Ring, board secretary, recorded in the minutes that Valenti, Bernard, and Billy Goldberg agreed that the board’s decision represented progress. Board members agreed that they would monitor developments and consider expanding access later. Ring also noted for the record that adult reading rooms, adult collections, and adult clubrooms were open for use by African Africans as of August 21, 1953. In keeping with the mayor’s wishes, the library would not announce the policy change to the public.14

On paper, the change made some 200,000 library books and the central and branch libraries available to Houston’s black adults. But without a public announcement, black adults learned of their availability only slowly. The first to register did so on August 28, only a week after the official decision. A Texas Southern University for Negroes (TSUN) student, he apparently expected to be turned away when he asked to borrow books. Library staff reported that the library’s willingness to issue him a borrower’s card took him by surprise. By the end of the year, fewer than fifty blacks had registered as borrowers at the central library; most were TSUN students. The library’s annual report for 1953 noted that they returned the borrowed books on time, with only one exception.15 That the librarian thought this noteworthy suggests that some white staff members may have assumed that black readers would be irresponsible. But this small piece of data may have been offered in support of Mayor Hofheinz’s expressed belief that because only serious and courteous blacks would take advantage of their
new library privileges and would follow the rules, whites had nothing to fear from opening the library to them.

Even the partial desegregation of Houston’s main library put that agency ahead of many other institutions in the city. It was not until March 4, 1960, that black students in Houston, following the lead established at the first lunch counter sit-in a month earlier in Greensboro, North Carolina, began to stage sit-ins and take other forms of direct action that resulted in restaurants, train stations, buses, hotels, and other private businesses and public accommodations beginning to desegregate (Cole, 1997). It was not until September of 1960 that public schools in the city began incremental integration, six years after the Brown decision and one month after a federal district judge ordered desegregation of all first-grade classes (Hurley, 1966).

Despite the changed policy at the central library, the Colored Carnegie Branch continued its activities, with emphasis on services for children and young adults. The branch librarian, Anita Sterling, visited four elementary schools and one senior high in her efforts to interest young people in using the library. She organized a reading club for teens, held story hours for children, and hosted a variety of activities in observance of Book Week. She also submitted columns and information to local newspapers to publicize the branch. As at the central library, TSUN students were relatively heavy users of the branch’s collections and services.16

The branch would continue to operate for a few more years, but by the late 1950s it had outlived its usefulness, and not just because it was a relic of Jim Crow. The forty-year-old structure needed constant repairs, circulation was dwindling, and the outdated collection suffered from neglect and abuse. The branch ultimately did not die because it was an offensive physical reminder of segregation days, nor was its demise caused by lack of use. In the nation’s sixteenth largest city, the branch simply sat in the path of a major street extension. It was Houston’s traffic problem that led the board to sell the building and the buyer to tear it down. Mayor Lewis Cutrer’s office informed librarian Reynolds in the summer of 1959 that the Clay Avenue Extension project would begin in December. The extension of one of downtown Houston’s main arteries would pass through the site of the library. The building would need to be moved or demolished in the fall. The board wanted to sell the building and property, but they were unsure of their legal authority to do so. An attorney in the city’s legal department thought that if the building were no longer used as a library, it would have to revert to the ownership of the trustees of the Colored Carnegie Library Association. Reynolds checked the city directory and found that only two of the original trustees, W. L. D. Johnson and L. H. Spivey, were listed. She also checked the deed and found no reversion clause but merely the stipulation that the property was “for the use and benefit of colored people of Houston.” Reynolds asked the board to consider the issue of how to serve black readers once the branch closed. Alice Stewart, supervisor of exten-
sion services, reported that the worn bookmobile, known as the Traveling Branch for Negroes, needed to be replaced.17

A few days after the meeting, Reynolds followed up with a letter to Charles Easterling in the city’s legal department. She relayed some two dozen questions from the board’s discussion regarding the fate of the Colored Carnegie Branch. Among their key concerns were how the library would be compensated for the loss of the property, and how that compensation might be applied to other library services. The trustees wondered how broadly they could interpret the phrase “for the use and benefit of colored people.” They wondered, for instance, whether they could build a new branch elsewhere for use by whites and blacks and still adhere to the spirit of a stipulation written when the end of residential segregation was nowhere in sight. They also questioned how they would offer equivalent service to blacks once the branch designated for their use was gone. They expressed a desire to build another branch in a predominantly black neighborhood in exchange for the loss of the Colored Carnegie Branch, but because funding for such a project was not in the library’s budget, they wondered about the possibility of providing additional bookmobile service or of renting space for the collections. Finally, they asked, “Will loss of major branch for Negroes affect de-segregation of library?”18 Six years after token integration of the central library, the board understood the implication of closing the black branch. It would no longer serve as a way to siphon off black library users in an attempt to keep them out of the system’s other buildings.

A month later three board members met and heard the city attorney’s confirmation that there was no reversionary clause in the deed but that the library had to comply with the “for the use and benefit of the colored people” covenant. Easterling urged them to ask the mayor and city council for full compensation for the loss of the building and property and full authority to use that compensation as they saw fit, within the bounds of the covenant. The three members present passed a motion to implement Easterling’s recommendations, and the four members not present assented by telephone. They were determined to realize the full value of the real estate under their authority and to retain control over expending it.19 By August board members had begun discussing in which predominately black neighborhood they should situate a new branch. They included the proposed branch along with other branches, work on existing buildings, and construction of a storage facility in a five-year capital improvement plan.20 A bond election for library expansion passed in September. In October Reynolds reported to the board the availability of $312,000 in library bonds and another potential $550,000 when all of the library bonds had sold. She also reported that the city would grant the library $52,335 to compensate for the Colored Branch.21
At its meeting in July of 1961, the board voted unanimously to close the Colored Carnegie Branch as of July 31, with no public announcement. Reynolds sent a memorandum to Mayor Lewis Cutrer informing him of the fact and noting that the branch circulated a mere ten books daily. She assured the mayor that a bookmobile would continue to visit predominately black neighborhoods on a regular schedule. And then she acknowledged the significance of the board’s act. “With the closing of the Colored Carnegie Branch,” Reynolds wrote, “the library system is for all practical purposes integrated.”

Several months before the branch closed in mid-1961, the library had launched its capital improvement program, which would involve the construction of branches all over the city through the 1960s. The city auctioned off the original Colored Carnegie Library building in February 1962. The highest bidder demolished it immediately, saving only the cornerstone. The library that was considered a replacement for the Colored Branch opened at 3511 Reed Road, in a predominately black neighborhood. City and library officials dedicated the new facility, named the W. L. D. Johnson Sr. Branch in honor of one of the founders of the original Colored Carnegie Library, on June 16, 1964 (Houston Public Library, 1966, p. 17).

Notes
1. Quoted in “The Houston Library Fight,” *Houston Informer*, March 25, 1953, clipping in the HMRC.
11. Ibid., 2.
12. Ibid., 2–3.
22. Regular meeting of Board Members minutes, July 14, 1961, HPL Minutes, v. 15, 1961–1962.

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A CONDA and ANA CON DA: Social Change, Social Responsibility, and Librarianship

DOUGLAS RABER

A BSTRACT
In the context of the declining legitimacy of the war in Vietnam and widespread challenges to the authority of established institutions and cultural norms, the American Library Association (ALA) was the target of criticism by a diverse coalition of librarians who asserted two broad demands; first, that the ALA expand the scope of its activities to include consideration of social and political issues that had not, to that point, been regarded as “library” issues by the established leadership of the ALA; second, that the ALA democratize its structure of decision making. This challenge led to the creation of the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT), which is still active as a component of the ALA. It also prompted the formation of two committees in response to the above demands: the Activities Committee on New Directions (ACONDA) and the Ad Hoc Activities Committee on New Directions (ANACONDA). A central concept at play in the politics of these events is the notion of “social responsibility” and its meaning in time of war and social change. This article focuses on the discourse of the challengers to the ALA and the ALA’s response through the work of ACONDA and ANACONDA to examine the contesting and contested meanings of the “social responsibility” of libraries, librarianship, and the ALA. These events and this discursive struggle established an explicit professional concern for and continuing conflict over the meaning and role of libraries and librarianship in the creation of culture that before these events had been merely implicit in professional discourse.
INTRODUCTION

While not explicitly employing the term *social responsibility*, the July 1852 Report of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston made clear that the library had two primary social obligations. One was to provide the means of equalizing and maximizing individual opportunity to participate in civic society while combating divisive cultural, social and political influences. The second was to provide the public with a means of developing a uniquely American culture, founded on a notion of engaged citizenship. The report states: “the means of general information should be so diffused that the largest possible number of persons should be induced to read and understand questions going down to the very foundation of social order” (City of Boston, 1852, p. 281). This language reveals a set of mutual responsibilities. The public library is to provide the knowledge required by citizens for them to make rational decisions regarding the essential nature of the social order. Citizens are to use the library for this purpose. The notion of *social responsibility* has long been at the center of the professional ideology that grounds thought and justifies practice in librarianship. And it is an essentially contested concept (Connolly, 1993). Its meaning is central to professional identity, yet that meaning is historically and politically contingent, like the notion of professionalism itself (Larson, 1977).

During times of “normal practice” professional ideology can remain peacefully embedded within practice, going unrevealed and unexamined. However, given librarianship’s close ties with the terms of discourse that generally articulate the legitimacy of American democratic culture, when the latter experiences a crisis of meaning, so does the former. Just after World War II, America confronted self-imposed questions regarding its surprising ascendance to the role of world leader at the same moment mutual assured destruction was about to become military doctrine. The Cold War caused problems for the meaning of peace. The peace of 1945 assured a victory for democracy on a global scale over its fascist challengers but left a sense that democracy, at home as well as abroad, was not as secure as we might like. These conditions triggered a professional crisis leading to the Public Library Inquiry (Raber, 1997).

The inquiry was organized by the American Library Association (ALA) and was conducted under the direction of Robert Leigh of the Social Science Research Council at the University of Michigan. The Carnegie Corporation provided about $200,000 to fund the study. Its goal was to determine the status of the public library and, based on that empirical assessment, define an appropriate and legitimate purpose for the library in American culture. The inquiry repeatedly and explicitly links library services and the essential values and requirements of a democratic culture in a way not unlike that of the Report to the Trustees of the Boston Public Library. In both, the library is broadly identified as an institution whose services are necessary for the existence of a vital public sphere (Habermas, 1991).
A generation later, a new crisis associated with a new war and new questions regarding the meaning of democracy arose from perceived and experienced contradictions between idealized and practiced democracy. Social problems associated with race, gender, and class raised questions regarding whether or not the public sphere admitted genuinely democratic participation. These questions were accompanied by political unrest and cultural division that also posed questions for librarianship. If librarianship’s fundamental moral commitment is to the progress of democracy and democracy is threatened by social problems, including a war whose legitimacy is questionable, then does not librarianship have a moral responsibility to address these problems? Is not this responsibility especially acute when the source of the social problems is the denial of equal opportunity to participate in the public sphere? But even if the answer to both of these questions is yes, what is librarianship to do?

**Librarianship and Social Responsibilities**

Questions of this kind gave rise to a professional discourse within librarianship that explicitly addressed the political nature of library service and the meaning of professional social responsibility. In the early 1960s the specter of social responsibility haunted librarianship. The term was not to make its debut in *Library Literature* until 1968 and then only as a subheading (Curley, 1974, p. 81). But the troubling relationship between racial discrimination and the exclusion of African Americans from access to libraries bothered enough librarians at the 1961 American Library Association annual conference in Cleveland that an “Access to Libraries” study was commissioned. The final report by International Research Associates surprised and shocked the ALA members at the 1963 Chicago conference where the report was presented. The report revealed that the problem of racial discrimination with regard to library service was hardly unique to the South. At the 1964 ALA conference in St. Louis during what at first promised to be an otherwise typically uneventful membership meeting E. J. Josey of the New York State Division of Library Development rose to remind the ALA of its 1962 action in Miami Beach that barred chapter status to state library associations whose constitutions denied membership to African Americans. Several state associations had withdrawn from ALA membership as a result of that action. Josey noted that black librarians were still not allowed to attend the meetings of these associations, and he protested the continued participation of ALA officers and staff. Arthur Curley, director of the Montclair, N.J., public library, caught the moment well when he wrote: “From that moment on, ALA membership meetings would never be the same. The auditorium came to life” (Curley, 1974, p. 85). Josey was asking if librarianship’s or at least the ALA’s response to racism in library practice as well as in society at large was morally adequate.

The ALA’s reluctance to engage the issue of racism was not necessarily a
sign of a general stance toward the political implications of library service arising from questions of its role in the solution of social problems. Through its Washington office, the ALA had actively lobbied for federal support of libraries. Beginning in the late 1940s library advocates argued that rural Americans were deprived of the opportunity for full social participation because they were deprived of access to information and knowledge. The Library Services Act of 1956 established federal funding for rural library development. In the context of the Johnson administration’s War on Poverty, the Washington office pressed the case for an extension of federal support to the cities, and the Library Services and Construction Act was signed into law in 1964. In both cases, the ALA’s argument was based on the claim that library services, if appropriately funded, could empower the socially and economically disadvantaged and contribute to the realization of genuine equal opportunity to participate fully in civic life (Raber, 1995).

By the mid-1960s, however, political meanings that once might have been taken for granted had come unhinged from their assumptions. Looking back, Arthur Curley observed that many library programs designed to provide meaningful service to marginal populations were both well-conceived and effective. Programs at the New Haven and Brooklyn public libraries were exemplary. But he is insightful when he writes: “Persistent doubts about the sincerity of librarians concern for the ‘disadvantaged’ are hard to dispel. The very choice of the term suggests a lack of the basic human empathy for which social responsibilitarians have called” (Curley, 1974, p. 87). Library outreach efforts sometimes unfortunately suggested opportunism and perhaps also an implicit encoding linking “disadvantaged” and “urban black” as signifier and signified. Admittedly for a different purpose, in the 1968 presidential election campaign other political interests deployed a code that linked the need for “law and order” with “violent urban ghettos.” In either case, real people were given a role to play as tokens in someone else’s discursive formation. It is still difficult to sort out the various effects of race, class, neglect, despair, and raised hopes that fueled outbreaks of social violence in Harlem and Brooklyn in 1964, Watts in 1965, and Newark and Detroit in 1967 (Graham & Gurr, 1969, p. 34). A number of questions arose for librarianship. What should we have done? What could we have done? Is it our role to do anything? Curley’s remarks reveal librarianship’s uncertainty regarding its own role and motives in the context of political uncertainty. On the other hand, there were voices, among them Ervin Gaines, director of the Minneapolis public library, who later argued that racism and urban social violence, although serious problems, were not public library problems and must be left to other agencies because those agencies and libraries have their own but different moral imperatives (Gaines, 1980).

By 1968 the legitimacy of the war in Vietnam began to collapse. President Johnson’s pursuit of guns abroad and butter at home began to raise
questions about the coherency of his political agenda, let alone his policies, especially as neither effort seemed to be achieving its desired end. In retrospect, and to be fair to the “Establishment,” American political culture was struggling with moral questions as well as the realization that politics were not as usual. Essential meanings of democracy and its ends were at stake. By the time the ALA met in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1968, the confluence of discontent, contradiction, and ambiguity of meaning that lead historian David Caute to call it the “Year of the Barricades” was in full evidence (Caute, 1988).

**The Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries**

Social responsibility was on the table in 1968 in the form of a movement to create within the ALA a Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries.1 Samek traces the beginnings of the Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries to ten ALA members who met in 1968 to discuss “an alternative library agenda” (Samek, 2001, p. 49). These ten people came from a wide variety of libraries and represented a growing discourse on the implications of the Library Bill of Rights. Rather than neutrality toward social and political issues, this discourse argued that the Library Bill of Rights implies an activist political agenda. The group included Dorothy Bendix of the Graduate School of Library Science at the Drexel Institute of Technology and Kenneth Duchac from the Division of Library Extension at the Maryland State Department of Education, both of whom became organizers of the Round Table. From its discussions, the group concluded that for its voice to be heard throughout the profession it needed a formal organization within the ALA.

In May of 1968 Bendix initiated the Organizing Committee for the ALA Round Table on Social Responsibilities. Duchac spearheaded the drive to gather the fifty signatures required for a petition to the Council to form a new round table. By mid-June he had seventy-eight signatures, and he submitted the petition to the ALA Committee on Organization, whose task was to gather opinion from various ALA Divisions and issue a report of recommendations to the Council and the Executive Board. The cover letter from the Organizing Committee expressed concern “that the American Library Association does not provide in its structure a place to focus attention on the major issues of the day.” The committee recognized that given the size and diversity of ALA membership, the ALA was not in a position to speak in one voice for librarianship but argued “that within the Association it all too often appears that there is no voice at all.” The petition identified the function and responsibility of the proposed round table as follows:

To provide a forum on the major issues of our times—war and peace, race, inequality of opportunity and justice, civil rights, violence—and the responsibilities of libraries in relation to these issues;
To examine current library programs on these issues;
To propose activities which will increase understanding of these issues;
To promote action toward resolution of attendant critical problems.²

Although the positions on critical issues of many of those who supported the establishment of the Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries might be guessed without difficulty, it is important to note that the petition only called for a formal mechanism within the ALA to discuss these issues and to propose the ameliorative action the ALA might take toward their resolution. The committee never called on the ALA to take particular positions on issues. Its purpose was to gain the association’s acknowledgment that issues of war and peace, race, inequality of opportunity and justice, civil rights, and violence were library issues.

Some in the social responsibilities movement suspected that the Committee on Organization would use the ALA bureaucracy to delay considering the petition to avoid confronting its substance (Thomison, 1978, p. 224–25; Samek, 2001, p. 51). When Duchac presented the petition to establish the Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries to the membership meeting in Kansas City in 1968, he also called for quick action by the Committee on Organization Council and the Executive Board to approve the establishment of the round table before the end of the conference. Duchac’s motion found widespread support and was passed with meager resistance (Samek, 2001, pp. 51–52). Explicit opposition to the petition was not based on a principled stance against considering social responsibilities but rather on issues of procedure. This was especially evident at the special session of the Council called to consider Duchac’s resolution the day after the membership meeting. Points of opposition arising in that session included the claims that the resolution was a matter of pressure tactics to force change; that the normal machinery of the ALA was appropriate to consider such a resolution and there was no need for haste; that the establishment of an additional round table might place a financial strain on the association; and that the political activism implied by the presence of a Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries might threaten the association’s tax-exempt status. The Council was curiously unwilling to engage in the substantive matter Duchac’s motion put before it, but it finally voted to approve the formation of the round table. Formal establishment of the round table, however, was to be delayed until the ALA midwinter conference of 1969 (Samek, 2001, p. 53).

The Activities Committee on New Directions (ACONDA)

At the ALA Atlantic City conference of 1969, the spontaneously organized Congress for Change brought a number of specific demands to the table, among them that ALA take particular stands on critical social issues; that there should be a structural reorganization of the ALA to allow for
greater member participation; that, given the behavior of Chicago’s political machine during the 1968 Democratic Party convention, the city be reconsidered as a site for conferences; and that the war in Vietnam be condemned (Samek, 2001, pp. 62–63). The Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries actively embraced the Congress for Social Change’s agenda for an activist librarianship that would address issues of war, peace, and social injustice. While the round table did not always agree with the congress’s positions and consensus on the meaning of social responsibility remained elusive, the concept had found its full voice in Atlantic City (Samek, 2001, pp. 63–66). A ten-hour membership meeting addressed the issues raised by the Congress for Social Change as well as motions for the active and funded support of intellectual freedom defenses and the formation of a high-level activities committee to review the purpose and structure of the ALA. Problems related to defining the scope and meaning of social responsibility surfaced, but despite the chaos of the membership meeting, there was a consensus that it was time for the ALA to examine its goals and determine if its structure could support their achievement. The idea for a committee to study these issues and recommend change arose from both the membership and the leadership of the association, and a resolution establishing the Activities Committee on New Directions for the ALA (ACONDA) was easily passed on June 25, 1969, with the enthusiastic support of incoming ALA president William Dix, from Princeton University (Samek, 2001, p. 61).

Dix called the Atlantic City conference disorganized, brilliant, and stimulating. He praised those who challenged ALA authority for bringing a new awareness of “broader issues” to the profession’s attention. He went on to say that the ALA had not been prepared for Atlantic City “because we as an association had not considered in the light of 1969 just what sort of organization we want to be” (Dix, 1969, pp. 900–901). Dix was a centrist and a pragmatist. He knew that change was coming but believed that the “good qualities” of the ALA were worth preserving. In a letter to Frederick Wagman, director of libraries at the University of Michigan and the first chair of ACONDA, Dix lamented the confrontational nature of the membership meeting that had produced the ACONDA resolution. Referring to statements made at the meeting, however, he said that “these statements, with all their idealism, incoherence and plain wrong headedness, are worth pondering carefully.” On June 25, 1969, the ALA membership passed a resolution specifying that six persons would be nominated for the new committee by the Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries and six by the Junior Members Round Table (JMRT). The president of the ALA was to select three people from each group. In addition, twelve members were nominated by the Executive Board and the president was to select six. The idea was to create a mix of the ancient regime and its challengers, but Dix put his stamp on the committee in a way that soon led to be known as “the Dix Mix.”
Dix was concerned that ACONDA’s actions might be approved by narrow majorities that would leave questions about its legitimacy, but “the Mix” took seriously its charge to prepare a report and recommendations for council review by midwinter of the 1970. The committee was a remarkably hard-working and like-minded group, and its decisions were usually a matter of consensus that votes merely formalized. ACONDA’s charges included the following:

- Reinterpreting “the philosophy of the ALA in order to provide a meaningful foundation for the organization”
- Determining priorities for action that reflected the needs and desires of the members
- Re-examining “the organizational structure of the ALA”

Based on the discussions at Atlantic City, feedback from the ALA staff and the membership, and their own inclinations, ACONDA worked quickly, and by its meeting of September 26–27, 1969, it had approved priorities for action. When the priorities were agreed upon, the committee established a subcommittee (often referred to as a panel) to study each priority. As early as that fall, the committee realized that the issues presented by ALA’s organizational structure merited special attention. The name of the Panel on Democratization of the Association and Alternative Patterns of Organization for the ALA reflected ACONDA’s interpretation of its charge to re-examine the structure of the ALA. Chaired by Katherine Laich, assistant city librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library, the panel reported in November to Frederick Wagman, chair of ACONDA. The report held little back. It observed that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the ALA among its membership on a number of points, including the accusation that the association was wrongly directed toward libraries rather than librarians and issues related to their working conditions; that the ALA was undemocratic; and that its machinery was ponderous and sluggish. The panel expressed doubt that these dissatisfactions could be addressed by structural change but nevertheless proposed three broad alternatives and then sought ALA staff input regarding them. The issue of democratization and alternative ALA organization structures was to take a great deal of ACONDA’s time and the ALA’s attention. While the issues of democratization and social responsibility are intimately related, and ACONDA engaged them as related issues, the following examination of ACONDA’s Final Report will focus primarily on the issue of social responsibility. The story of ACONDA’s recommendations on democratization and ALA response deserves a separate analysis that available space here will not permit, but it should be kept in mind that democratization of the ALA was regarded by ACONDA as a social responsibility.
THE FINAL REPORT

ACONDA’s Final Report to the ALA is a fascinating document. It articulates a vision of an activist association engaged in support of librarianship to use the power of libraries to solve critical social problems. It is a plan and a call for action, identifying specific steps the association must take to realize the articulated vision. Finally, it is an invitation to discourse—to explore the moral responsibility of the profession to society and to discover ways to put principle into practice through service. Despite its remarkable coherence and thoroughness, the report also reveals internal tensions and signs of compromise that may have contributed to its fate. In September of 1969, before ACONDA’s meeting later that month, Arthur Curley wrote to William DeJohn of the Missouri State Library, “It will be a major miracle if the Committee on New Directions for ALA accomplishes anything, but I’ll be in there trying.”

At the midwinter conference in Chicago in January of 1970, ACONDA presented its Interim Report to the membership. Lively and informal discussions regarding the report and its recommendations lasted three days, and the committee left with work to do (Samek, 2001, pp. 76–77). However, the Final Report was ready by the Detroit conference in June 1970. From the beginning, ACONDA worked with the assumption that the ALA was and “should continue to be an organization for both librarians and libraries.” In that context, the report notes that the ALA needed to strengthen its focus on librarians, but it also reminded its audience that “librarianship is not an end in itself but . . . it finds its justification in the service it renders to society. As the needs of society change, so must the service priorities of the library profession.” In light of its second charge, ACONDA proposed six program priorities for the ALA, accompanied by recommendations for further action. For each program priority, the report of the subcommittee that addressed that priority was included to provide context and justification for the committee’s proposals. The recommended ALA program priorities were as follows:

- Social Responsibilities: ALA action was to be directed at “ameliorating or even solving the critical problems of society.”
- Manpower: The ALA was to take greater responsibility for the welfare of librarians, particularly with regard to wages and working conditions, and to develop recruitment programs for a new generation of librarians.
- Intellectual Freedom: ACONDA called upon the ALA to provide both organizational and financial support for a nation-wide program to oppose censorship and defend librarians whose livelihood was threatened by censorship efforts.
- Legislation: The ALA was to recognize its status as an interest group and actively engage in promoting national legislation for the support of libraries.
• Planning, Research, and Development: The ALA was to serve as both a source and clearinghouse for information and research related to improving professional practice and library management.

• Democratization and Reorganization of the ALA: ACONDA envisioned this goal as necessarily requiring both immediate action and a long-range plan. It took on the task of developing alternatives rather than mandating a particular structure.12

The first and third charges are addressed through the program priorities. New ideas about the philosophy and direction of the ALA are addressed explicitly in priorities one through four, but especially in priority one. Reorganization was the focus of priority six, and the proposals associated with priority five—planning, research, and development—applied to all of the recommendations.

The first priority the Final Report addresses is social responsibilities. Essentially, ACONDA asserted that libraries can and should contribute to the solution of critical social problems. Libraries have the opportunity to do this directly by providing services relevant to the needs of the “underprivileged and semi-literate.” Beyond this immediate imperative, libraries can indirectly contribute by providing the knowledge required for informed citizenship and thoughtful public resolution of critical problems. In this view, libraries have a vital role to play in the sphere of open public discourse and decision making that is necessary to a democratic society, yet they must also do what they can to ensure equal access to that sphere. To achieve these ends, ACONDA called for the creation of an ALA Office of Social Responsibility.13

The January 1970 report from the Subcommittee on Social Responsibilities is more expansive.14 The subcommittee first identifies a traditional form of professional social responsibility defined in terms of libraries as neutral sources of information rather than a promoter of ideas. They wait to meet the manifest information needs of their users. The subcommittee rejects this definition and cites the alternative offered by the Committee on Organization: “Social responsibilities can be defined as the relationships that librarians and libraries have to non-library problems that relate to the social welfare of our society.” Although the reasoning is not entirely transparent, the subcommittee’s text uses the Committee on Organization definition for a jumping off point to argue that libraries cannot avoid being involved in nonlibrary issues. Using services to the disadvantaged as the exemplar, the subcommittee makes the point that libraries have an obligation to focus efforts on those who are excluded from full social participation by virtue of class, race, gender, or any other characteristic that unjustly disenfranchises them. From this perspective, if libraries exist to promote the progress of meaningful democracy, then the apparently nonlibrary problems of the disadvantaged, and more acutely the problems that cause disadvantage, are library problems. They have an
information component. Libraries have a role to play in helping communities reach “a state of political effectiveness where they can demand proper, self-tailored library services and be sure of getting it.”

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the subcommittee’s report is its stance on the political “neutrality” of librarians, particularly with regard to nonlibrary issues. It notes that the claim to neutrality is “rather dubious,” adding that librarians have always supported democratic aims and taken liberal positions on social issues beyond intellectual freedom. It criticizes the association for too often erring on the side of caution when confronted by a need to engage social problems. The following passage nicely captures the feel of the subcommittee’s report:

The cry is that we are an association of libraries, not librarians and should only exist to promote library services. Yet our institutions (libraries) are surrounded by pollution and violence and under threat of nuclear extinction. Racial tension and social unrest upset their daily routines constantly. For a national association to ignore these threats, seems the height of folly. Yet we are daily advised by some of our members to eschew involvement with these dangers, lest we render ourselves subject to reprisals and tarnish our golden neutrality.\(^{15}\)

The subcommittee report closes with the observation that librarianship is already involved “at every level” with such issues, and the next step for the ALA was to determine the action to take rather than to debate whether to take action.

This language resonates with earlier Congress for Social Change’s demands that the ALA take political positions on a wide variety of issues, but the Final Report avoids stating this explicitly. ACONDA recognizes a wide variety of nonlibrary problems that librarians as librarians might take an interest in, but it maintains political neutrality in its assertion that “our position should be support for all efforts to help inform and educate the people of the United States to the gravity of these problems.” On the other hand, and in the same sentence, ACONDA emphasizes that libraries must do this so that the people “in the exercise of their democratic prerogatives . . . will not be guided solely by the relatively restricted number of points of view represented in the mass media or by prejudice, passion or ignorance.” In the political context of 1970, this statement might not have been regarded as politically neutral by a variety of interests. It also raises an interesting problem of intellectual freedom that went unaddressed. To what extent do libraries have a responsibility to actively redress the public sphere’s failure to represent alternative political positions that are routinely and systematically excluded from its agenda?

Differences in understanding of social responsibility and intellectual freedom between the Final Report and the subcommittee disappear in the subcommittee’s second report in June of 1970,\(^{16}\) and it seems clear that ACONDA’s members agreed that clarifying their meaning was a priority
for the ALA and that responsibility for doing so belonged to the members themselves. ACONDA’s final recommendation on social responsibilities (4a) reads as follows:

(1) Define the broad social responsibilities of ALA in terms of (a) the contribution that librarianship can make in ameliorating or even solving the critical problems of society, (b) support all efforts to help inform and educate the people of the United States on these problems and to encourage them to read the many views on, and the facts regarding, each problem, and (c) the willingness of ALA to take a position for the guidance and support of its members on current critical issues.

The Final Report’s section on intellectual freedom is curiously instrumental, however, and it contributes to our sense that ACONDA could not quite come to grips with how to identify and frame the tensions between social responsibility and intellectual freedom. It also reveals these tensions in the differences between the recommendations of the full committee and the report of the Subcommittee on Intellectual Freedom, chaired by George Alfred of the Walden Branch Library in San Francisco. After affirming the need for the ALA to remain firm and pursue strategic action in defense of intellectual freedom in the context of “increasing incidents and increasing threats of censorship,” the Final Report primarily addresses the debate regarding the purposes and organization of the Freedom to Read Foundation (FRF). The Freedom to Read Foundation was created by the ALA Executive Board in 1969 and was incorporated as an independent not-for-profit organization whose “purposes were patterned on the ACLU Foundation and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, but oriented to the support of librarians and the freedom to read” (Samek, 2001, p. 69). ACONDA’s report cites the purposes of the FRF with evident approval. These were to “promote and protect freedom of speech” and libraries as “repositories” of knowledge to which the public has a right to access; to support unfettered library selection choice; and to provide for legal counsel for librarians suffering “injustices by reason of their defense of freedom of speech.”

The subcommittee did not challenge the purposes of the Freedom to Read Foundation but questioned its adequacy. It proposed that the functions of the foundation be brought into the ALA formally and become the responsibility of a strengthened Office of Intellectual Freedom. This was important, the subcommittee claimed, because reliance on voluntary contributions for financial support of the Freedom to Read Foundation was insufficient. The subcommittee report states that “[i]ntellectual freedom is so fundamental to library service and so crucial to every practicing librarian, that the national association itself must assume responsibility for its defense.” The subcommittee drove home its point by declaring that the ALA should not fear political intimidation “Fear of possible loss of tax-exempt status cannot be allowed to determine the policies and practices of the American Library Association, just as a practicing librarian should
certainly never succumb to the censor for fear that his own salary or budget will suffer. If we believe in the importance of intellectual freedom, we must be willing to take risks in order to defend it.” If intellectual freedom is to be perceived as a partisan cause, then so be it. From the perspective of the subcommittee, the protection and enhancement of intellectual freedom is a professional social responsibility, and this responsibility extends to the provision of material support for librarians who attempt “to provide public access to materials of a controversial or unconventional nature” and who are “frequently weakened in [their] defense of this freedom by the widespread failure of neighborhood libraries to provide such materials.”

The Final Report gives full recognition to the subcommittee’s concerns and agrees that the Freedom to Read Foundation was an inadequate response to the challenges to intellectual freedom. Nevertheless, it also notes that the majority of the committee did not “fully share the conclusions of the Subcommittee.” Instead, ACONDA recommended that the Freedom to Read Foundation be given more time to show what it could do and that the ALA should closely evaluate it while it did so. The cautious activism of the committee is revealed in its statement that should the FRF come up wanting, “and if there is evidence to indicate that performance would be improved by bringing the functions of the Foundation within the Association, then action should be taken toward that end.” ACONDA wanted to hold at arm’s length any activity, including the defense of intellectual freedom, that might be construed as explicitly political and partisan. In the spirit of intellectual freedom, and its presumed benefits, ACONDA recognized that the ALA had to engage issues that by strict interpretations were not library issues. It recognized that the defense of intellectual freedom was not uniquely a library issue. On the other hand, it was reluctant to declare political positions the ALA ought to take and preferred to avoid the appearance of self-interest by keeping the ALA at a distance from the legal and political implications of a partisan defense of intellectual freedom in specific cases.

Regarding active political advocacy for legislative interests, however, ACONDA and its Subcommittee on Legislation were more or less on the same page. The Final Report stresses that “[t]he ALA Washington Office must provide all branches of the Federal Government with authoritative, comprehensive, and non-partisan information on all aspects of library services,” and it urges an increase in financial support for the Washington office. Once again, a subcommittee report is more explicit. It recognizes that the ALA does have a legislative agenda that extends beyond libraries to include issues of “postal rates, taxation, copyright, social security, and international programs,” and it concludes that “[m]uch more needs to be done at every level of government, from the grass roots to the highest level to show decision makers and government leaders that good library services are indeed basic and essential to educational, social, economic and cultural
This language is used, slightly modified, in ACONDA’s recommendation to the ALA. This kind of nonpartisanship, however, extended only as far as remaining neutral with regard to which political party might best serve the interests of librarianship and library users. Regarding those interests themselves, there was no doubt among the members of ACONDA that the ALA should be an assertive political voice.

The second (Manpower) and fifth (Planning, Research, and Development) of ACONDA’s recommended ALA program priorities carried less ideological weight than those examined so far, but both were perceived by ACONDA to be crucial for a strong and well-organized profession. Priority five is quite straightforward. ACONDA pointed out that research and planning will be needed to accomplish the objects it proposes and that research “on the problems of effective library service” was needed, particularly for planning for library service on a national scale. It recommended that the ALA, through a strengthened Office of Research and Development, take the lead on addressing these problems. The most interesting aspect of the Final Report’s section on manpower is ACONDA’s assertion “that ALA’s activities on behalf of its members may in the past have been under-stressed or even somewhat neglected.” In light of its recommendation that the ALA be an organization for both librarians and libraries, ACONDA provided a number of specific proposals for ALA action regarding the issues of salary, status, and welfare of librarians, library education, and recruitment. The committee’s proposals were accompanied by a lengthy subcommittee report that filled in the details of ACONDA’s recommendations. There are references to social responsibilities issues in the Manpower section, particularly the need to address gender and racial discrimination within the profession by means of policy and active recruitment of minorities, but this section is primarily concerned with the welfare and status of librarians as professionals. An interesting statement in the introduction to this section, however, highlights the ideological tension already identified in other sections. The report asserts that the “ALA should be neither purely an educational organization nor an organization designed exclusively to benefit its members personally,” though it is not clear from the context what ACONDA meant by “educational.” It seems clear, however, that ACONDA believed that the ALA must simultaneously work as a politically disinterested organization with the objective of improving the quality of library personnel and of educating the public regarding the value of library service as well as a politically self-interested organization with the objective of improving the status and welfare of librarians.

Priority six, Democratization and Reorganization, deserves special attention because both ACONDA and the ALA gave it special attention. After the ALA midwinter meeting in 1969, ACONDA concluded that “organizational concerns were so vital that it should become, in effect, a committee of the whole on these matters.” Instead of a subcommittee report, the Final
Report was accompanied by a long working paper prepared by ACONDA’s Panel on Democratization of the Association and Alternative Patterns of Organization for the ALA. It was the longest appendix of the Final Report and included a detailed diagnosis of the ALA’s organizational problems, comparisons to other professional associations, a summary of a Committee on Organization Report on the pros and cons of reorganization, and comments from a number of ALA staff. The Final Report provided three sets of recommendations based on the time frame of their likely completion and three relatively detailed alternative reorganization plans. This section also prompted the only minority report. A. P. Marshall of Eastern Michigan University Libraries argued that ACONDA had overstepped its charge by proposing a reduction in the size of the council and the elimination of state chapter representation on the council. One of the primary expectations of the Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries as well as the ALA’s Congress for Social Change was that the ALA would become more responsive to the membership and its actions more relevant to social issues understood as library issues. ACONDA acknowledged these expectations. The Final Report states: “In reaching conclusions on organizational matters, the Committee was animated by two objectives: to discover ways in which the Association could become more responsive to the interests and desires of the membership, and to suggest organizational changes which would achieve early implementation of the ALA’s current priorities.” Given the context provided for this statement by the Final Report as a whole, it seems safe to conclude that the members of ACONDA believed that without reorganization, and specifically without democratization, the ALA would not likely achieve even its most modest goals, let alone meet the obligations of the moderate social responsibilities that ACONDA had identified as appropriate for the ALA. Arguably, between 1970 and 1972, the issue of democratization and reorganization dominated and marginalized the discussion of the issue of social responsibility in the ALA even if social responsibility was still the driving underlying force of that discussion.

**Reaction to ACONDA’s Final Report**

In Detroit at the 1970 ALA conference, ACONDA presented its Final Report for ALA action. The membership meeting that considered the report ran between fourteen and fifteen hours long. Motions were made to table the report; refer it to a membership mail vote; and accept it as an interim report only. Substitute motions and amendments were offered. Signs of resistance to the report’s call for social responsibility began to appear prior to the conference. A typical response is revealed in a letter from Betsy Burson, educational projects coordinator at the Phoenix Public Library, to Richard Waters at the Dallas Public Library. Ms. Burson, while agreeing that librarians must lobby for measures to improve library services, states bluntly that a “professional association is on the wrong foot when it begins
to take political stands.” She was in favor of social responsibility that involves helping people to improve themselves, but opposed to interpreting that responsibility as “political responsibility.”  

Some hours after the start of the membership meeting, ACONDA’s first three recommendations were passed. The first recommendation called for the ALA to be an organization for librarians and libraries whose “overarching” objective was the promotion and improvement of library service. The second asked that the six program priorities identified by ACONDA be adopted as ALA priorities, and the third called for “substantially increased” budgets for the implementation of these priorities. Recommendation four, addressing the six specific program priorities and actions to be implemented, caused things to bog down as process finally took precedent over product. Recommendations (4a) on Social Responsibilities, (4c) on Intellectual Freedom, and (4d) on Legislation were at the heart of the debate.  

Bob McClarren, treasurer of the ALA, claimed that ACONDA’s legislative and social responsibilities priorities “could cause the ALA to lose its tax exempt status” (Shields, Burke, & McCormick, 1970, p. 672). David Berninghausen, chair of the ALA Committee on Intellectual Freedom, was more direct when he rose to argue that the ALA should take positions on issues that only directly affected “the professional activities of librarians and libraries.” ACONDA’s recommendation on social responsibilities, (4a)(1)(c) called on the ALA to define its responsibilities in terms of “the willingness of ALA to take a position for the guidance and support of its members on current critical issues.” When this recommendation came to the floor, Berninghausen moved that the words “of direct and demonstrable relevance to librarianship” be inserted after the word “issues.” After much debate, which ALA Bulletin observers described as procedural rather than substantive, the amendment was defeated (Shields, Burke, & McCormick, 1970, p. 673). In a letter to Publishers Weekly after the Detroit conference, Berninghausen complained that the vote took place at an unscheduled meeting, effectively depriving the membership of a meaningful vote, that the Council is the elected representative of the ALA and it had voted “overwhelmingly” in favor of a motion that ALA position statements clearly indicate their relevance to professional issues, and that the ACONDA report “advocates the rejection of the central and fundamental concept in the Library Bill of Rights, the neutral stance on substantive issues.” Although defeated on the floor, Berninghausen had identified the tension between social responsibility and intellectual freedom that ACONDA’s report left unresolved.  

By the end of the marathon membership meeting, ACONDA’s recommendations regarding social responsibilities remained intact and were finally passed. The Council, however, had its own ideas about ACONDA’s recommendations and made two telling changes. The original language of ACONDA’s recommendation on social responsibilities, (4a)(1)(c),
again came under attack. Margaret Monroe of the University of Wisconsin, echoing if not exactly repeating Berninghausen’s motion at the membership meeting, moved to change this language to read that the broad social responsibilities of the ALA will be defined in terms of “(c) the willingness of ALA to take a position on current critical issues with the relationship to libraries and library service clearly set forth in the position statement.”

The original language of ACONDA’s recommendation (4a)(2) read “Establish an ALA Office for Social Responsibility to carry out programs for (a) library service to the disadvantaged, (b) international relations, (c) communication with the membership.” The Council had the final word by changing this statement to read: “Establish an ALA Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged and Unserved.”

These relatively simple changes narrowed considerably the intent of ACONDA as evidenced in its Final Report and turned the association back toward the focus it held on the confluence of professional and political issues prior to the 1968 Kansas City and 1969 Atlantic City conferences. ALA Bulletin observers are worth quoting at length not only because they capture the reality of the moment but also because of the way they reveal an attitude of resignation regarding the actions of the Council that likely characterized the attitude of many social responsibilitarians:

Call it weariness. Call it ennui or maybe that old feeling that captures Council from time to time. Whatever it was they didn’t like the idea of an office devoted to social responsibilities although a few hours before they had named that as one of the Association’s priorities. Instead they created an Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged and Unserved. There was no charge given to the office or even an indication of just how it was to be created. (Shields, Burke, & McCormick, 1970, p. 680)

The Council made minor changes to the recommendations on intellectual freedom, and no action was taken on the recommendations regarding manpower, legislation, planning, research, and development. The recommendations for democratization and reorganization were also deferred. To cope with this rather large number of unresolved issues, the council established its own committee: the Ad Hoc Committee on New Directions (ANAConDA) (Shield, Burke, & McCormick, 1970, p. 681). It also voted to extend the life of ACONDA and charged the two committees to work together to address the items of the ACONDA report that were “not discussed or acted upon by Membership and/or Council” at the Detroit conference. They were to prepare a report so that the ALA might arrive at its Dallas conference the following year “ready for action.”

Reaction to events in Detroit went both ways. The Association of State Libraries issued a statement asserting that the Council’s action on social responsibilities was still ambiguous. It was supportive of the ALA’s effort to develop service to the disadvantaged and unserved but was not certain
whether the establishment of an ALA office was the best means to this end. It recommended further study. Members of ACONDA, however, were clear and direct about their feelings. Maurice Travillian, director of the Marshalltown Iowa Public Library, and Bill Hinchliff, in media services at the Federal City College, both wrote to Katherine Laich, now the chair of ACONDA. Travillian, in what he identified as a frank afterthought, said that “the essence of our social responsibility recommendation was emasculated” and that a “slight majority of the librarians present were not yet ready for a great deal of social activism.” Hinchliff was depressed about a wide variety of things, including the “disemboweling [of] ACONDA’s commitment to Social Responsibility ‘particularly in the crucial area of human survival and uncontrolled militarism’” in order to win acceptance by the Council.

ANACONDA AND ACONDA
Following the Council’s charge, at their first joint meeting in Chicago in October 1970 the two committees sorted out their various responsibilities. ACONDA was to address issues of democratization and reorganization of ALA, and ANACONDA was to address everything else left undone in Detroit. In a discussion of personal impressions of the State Library Association’s reaction to ACONDA’s Final Report, David Kaser, the director of libraries at Cornell University, noted “a misunderstanding about social responsibilities.” Arthur Curley agreed and added, “[w]e aren’t suggesting that librarians take a stand on outside issues, but about how these issues relate to us.” Nevertheless, the focus of the meeting was on the restructuring of ALA and its activities in the areas of manpower, legislation, and planning, research, and development. ANACONDA later reported to the Executive Board that “It is our interpretation that those items in ACONDA’s report which were acted on by Council are properly outside of our purview.” Having been voted on by the Council in Detroit, the committees were compelled to regard the work on social responsibilities as finished.

This was unfortunate because the idea of social responsibility was far from clearly articulated. It was rather assumed that everyone knew what it meant. This lack of clarity, as Curley noted, served the purpose of allowing a wide range of voices to be heard and facilitated the formation of a social responsibilities coalition within the ALA. By 1970, however, while the ALA prepared for the midwinter meeting in Los Angeles, this same lack of clarity allowed for a bureaucratic resolution of a philosophical issue that was never fully confronted. The Council’s action on ACONDA’s recommendations (4a)(1)(c) and (4a)(2) also allowed the ALA to continue to rely on an ambiguous status quo meaning of social responsibility without sorting out its different implications for libraries, librarians, and librarianship, a condition that still troubles the profession.

Looking back on its work, ACONDA saw that its work appeared “to have had a dual focus: philosophical (determination of objectives and priority
interests) and practical (determination of a structure most likely to facilitate achievement of those objectives and to implement those priorities).” The committee admitted that the distinction between the philosophical and practical aspects of their work had not always been clear, adding that “[t]he organizational recommendations were a quagmire.” The effort to engage the idea of social responsibility and the democratization of the ALA, the sources of ACONDA’s mission, had become a lengthy, detailed, ambiguous, and ambivalent debate over the structure of the ALA. ANACONDA admitted that the task was one to which the membership and Council had brought “unrealistic expectations of what ACONDA should accomplish, for the time provided was inadequate.” Philosophical issues sank into the quagmire of the difficult and complex task of reorganizing the ALA.

Social responsibility movement concerns did not disappear entirely, and the legacy of the movement was apparent in the package of documents received by registrants at the 1971 annual conference. Providing these documents represented an extraordinary effort to inform and engage ALA membership in the reform discourse. ANACONDA supported ACONDA’s original recommendations with only slight modifications. For example, regarding manpower, ANACONDA stressed the principle of equal opportunity and urged that ALA take a strong leadership role. ANACONDA did not shy away from explicit political activity in the interest of library development and service and noted that whatever the ALA’s goal and programs might be, their implementation required “an adequately supported Washington Office.” Most of the ACONDA-ANACONDA recommendations were passed by the membership and Council with little change at the 1971 conference with the exception of a “one-man, one-vote” process to elect the Council. Finally, the Council approved the establishment and funding of an Office for Library Services to the Disadvantaged (Eshelman & Plotnik, 1971, pp. 20–22). Upon recommendation of the ALA Coordinating Committee on Library Service to the Disadvantaged that was established in 1968, the term “unserved” was dropped from the name of the office and its purpose. This committee feared that a charge to serve the unserved was unrealistic in scope and properly belonged to the type of library divisions and to the Public Relations Section of the Library Administration Division.

**Conclusion**

In one of the few efforts to re-examine the events described here, Boris Raymond argues that by 1972 “[t]he goals of the ALA, verbally at least, had been expanded to include most, if not all, of the pressing demands by various interest groups within its membership . . . the basic reasons for the confrontation had been removed.” He adds that many of the original challengers of the ALA’s direction and structure had become the new leaders of the association and found themselves confronted by the realities of governing such a large and diverse organization. Despite the “oligar-
chial tendencies . . . inherent in all large-scale organizations irrespective of
democratic constitutions, bye-laws, and free elections,” Raymond’s essential
conclusion is that the inherent liberalism of the ALA allowed it to broker
effective compromises regarding both direction and democratization (Ray-
mond, 1979, pp. 358–59).

Despite change instituted as an outcome of ACONDA and ANACONDA
recommendations, however, including a somewhat sharper focus on intel-
lectual freedom issues, and the active institutional presence of the SRRT,
by the 1972 Chicago conference the ALA was generally back to business
as usual. Social responsibility, as introduced in Atlantic City in 1969, was
fading from mainstream association concern. In his history of the ALA,
Dennis Thomison nicely captures the final results of ACONDA’s work when
he writes, “The successes of ACONDA and ANACONDA were not conspicu-
ous. New offices for the disadvantaged and unserved as well as research
were established, but funding remained limited.” He adds, “In retrospect,
the accomplishments seem short-lived in relation to the problems they
were meant to deal with,” resulting in “rather minor changes in view of the
demands, the promises and the amount of time devoted to ACONDA and
ANACONDA” (Thomison, 1978, p. 231).

Two observations are worth making here. Throughout the discussion of
the ACONDA recommendations, the idea of social responsibility remained
unclear. No one precisely articulated what it meant. This condition allowed
a diverse set of interests and people to come together as an effective political
coalition and successfully challenge the established ALA leadership. On the
other hand, it can be read as a sign that librarianship lacked a theoretical
understanding of social responsibility on which to ground the development
of a meaningful discourse concerning its implications. As Curley notes, the
movement never came to grips with the fact that the context and meaning
of social responsibility would likely depend on whether one was speaking
of libraries, librarians, or librarianship (Curley, 1974, p. 80). Each might
need to approach critical issues from a different perspective.

Once again, Arthur Curley is worth quoting at length:

By 1970, the country had already begun to show clear-cut signs of
exasperation with proponents of radical change. Finally having to ac-
cept the notion that something is basically wrong with the country, the
“middle-Americans” and the self-styled silent majority, and the hard
hats found it a short jump to the conclusion that what was wrong with
America is those who keep saying something is wrong. So, just as the
social revolution of the sixties had spurred on the social responsibility
movement within the library field, so the decisive swing of the national
pendulum to the right at the start of the seventies produced a parallel
backlash among librarians. (Curley, 1974, p. 97)

By 1971 words associated with and describing change were easily ac-
cepted in the discursive economy of librarianship even as their original
meaning and intent was slipping away. A kind of change fatigue had overtaken the country, librarianship, and the ALA. Challengers to a dominant mode of thought usually have only a brief window of time through which to overturn that mode or make a substantive difference in it. By 1972 the window of change was closing.

The Final Report of the Activities Committee on New Directions for the ALA and its subcommittee reports are still worth reading. Most of what is found there is relevant to the current situation of librarianship. The social responsibilities movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s represents a negotiation within librarianship and between librarians to articulate their professional obligation to their clients and to society; to identify the good the profession ought to do for both, and to clarify the terms of librarianship’s social contract with its patrons, regardless of their status as library users. It also represents a negotiation over the extent and way it should lead or follow. This is not an easy question and it deserves constant attention.

NOTES
1. The change of name of the Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries (RTSRL) to its current name, Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT), was approved by the Council at the Dallas ALA conference in June 1971.
2. Organizing Committee for ALA Round Table on Social Responsibilities to Colleagues, June 11, 1968, ALA Archives.
5. ACOND A Revised Recommendations, January 1971, ALA Archives.
25. Final Report, p. 16.
41. Statement of the ASL Board on the Report of the Activities Committee on New Directions for the ALA, DRAFT, attached to a letter [President, ASL] to Lillian M. Bradshaw, September 29, 1970, ALA Archives.
42. J. Maurice Travillian to Katherine Laich, September 23, 1970, ALA Archives.
43. Bill Hinchliff to Katherine Laich, October 30, 1970, ALA Archives.
44. Memorandum Report on the Joint Meeting of the Activity Committees on New Directions for the ALA and the Ad Hoc Council Committee to work with ACONDA, October 17–19, 1970, ALA Archives.
45. Report to the Executive Board, Ad Hoc Committee on ACONDA, October 22, 1970, ALA Archives.
49. Recommendations from ANACONDA. A Report by the ALA Ad Hoc Committee on ACONDA for Consideration of Council, Midwinter Meeting, January 1971, ALA Archives.
50. Proposal for the Establishment of an ALA Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged and Unserved. Prepared by the ALA Coordinating Committee on Library Service to the Disadvantaged at the Request of the Executive Board of the American Library Association, June, 1971, ALA Archives.

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“The books were just the props”: Public Libraries and Contested Space in the Cape Flats Townships in the 1980s

Archie L. Dick

Abstract
This article examines the relationship between public libraries and social change in South Africa during the 1980s. It focuses on libraries in selected townships on the Cape Flats. It concludes that debates about the public library’s success or failure as an instrument of social change cannot overlook the idea of contested space in which the live discussion, debate, and circulation of ideas precludes and includes the use of books and libraries.

Introduction
The relationship between public libraries and social change is still unclear. There is Jesse Shera’s (1949, p. 248) early view that public libraries tend to follow rather than create social change, and then there are more ambitious views found in journals like Information for Social Change. In this article, this relationship is examined in an analysis of public libraries in South Africa during a period of dramatic social change. Much like the 1940s that ended in a surprising election victory for the National Party and apartheid in spite of alternative political futures, the 1980s also ended with unforeseen events that led to the first democratic elections in 1994.

There were several imagined possibilities for a future South Africa in that decade. Nothing was inevitable at the time, but the hardening of attitudes and lines of division in the 1980s make the anti-apartheid narrative compelling. The United Democratic Front coordinated hundreds of autonomous organizations and thousands of activists who opposed state reforms and resisted the institutions and policies of the apartheid regime. It also promoted the profile and underground structures of the African National Congress. As the liberation struggle intensified, the primary antagonists consolidated
their ideological positions and escalated actions against each other. The result was states of emergency, detentions without trial, sustained township violence, and deaths throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Importantly, 14,000 lives were lost in the four years immediately preceding the elections of April 26–27, 1994 (Coleman, 1998, p. 243).

These developments attracted national and international attention, while less striking events involving the daily responses of ordinary South Africans went unnoticed. Moreover, the prominence of the African National Congress–led liberation movement during the period overshadowed the roles played by other liberation forces that advocated different methods and goals in the struggle to overthrow the apartheid regime. Organizations such as youth groups, civic associations, and trade unions that responded to community grievances and workplace oppression, in fact, conceded this principal role to the African National Congress. “The masses, in other words, chose the African National Congress rather than the other way around” (Legassick, 1998, p. 452). Struggles around local social grievances as well as national political demands yielded a complex situation.

**Public Libraries and Social Space**

Events and experiences in the 1980s involving a number of public libraries in the strife-torn coloured townships on the Cape Flats are examined against this background. The Group Areas Act of 1950 legislated that areas were set aside for exclusive occupation by a particular “race” group as officially divided by the Population Registration Act of 1950 into “whites, coloureds, Asians and Natives” (Saunders, 1989, p. 488). This led to the forced removal of thousands of Coloureds in Cape Town (Western, 1996; Bohlin, 2001; Field, 2001). Coloured refers to South Africans of mixed descent, and their identity remains a topic of ongoing controversy (Erasmus, 2001).

In 1985, a significant year for this article, the demographics for Cape Town in terms of the apartheid classification were 57 percent Coloured, 27 percent White, 15 percent African, and 1 percent Indian. The population statistics in South Africa for that year were 73.8 percent African, 14.8 percent White, 8.7 percent Coloured, and 2.7 percent Indian (Survey of Race Relations, 1985, p. 185). So while they are a South African minority, Coloureds are in the majority in Cape Town. Analyses of township struggles focus either on structural or material conditions within which action or organization occurs, or on conspiratorial or agitating roles played by national political organizations like the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front (Seekings, 1992). These approaches neglect the reactions of township residents themselves and the ways in which township agencies such as libraries and librarians responded to social change out of a sense of facing together political and material struggles.

What is common to the debate on public libraries and social change are commitment to the institutions of literacy, conviction about the posi-
tive influences of reading and the recorded word, and consensus on their transforming effects. From that perspective, public libraries in apartheid South Africa, especially in the 1980s, were perceived as mainstream, passive, inadequate, out of touch with the information needs of their communities, and indifferent to social change. Alternative information centers, such as peoples’ libraries and community resource centers (CRCs), that emerged at that time enjoyed “struggle” legitimacy. Closer cooperation between public libraries and these alternative information agencies was recommended, but the prevailing view of public libraries was unflattering (van Zijl, 1989, p. 4; Siegruhn, 1990, p. 5; Nassimbeni, 1991, pp. 45–49; Karlese, 1991, p. 14). Official library and information services were associated with the propagation of apartheid as the ideology of the dominant social grouping (Karlese & Nassimbeni, 1997, p. 36).

This verdict, however, obscures ways in which some public librarians responded to actual situations in their townships. In the case of the Cape Flats, which had low levels of literacy, such a verdict ahistorically overlooks a tradition of library service in which the live discussion, debate, and circulation of ideas precluded and included the use of books and libraries. Illiteracy among Coloureds, for example, rose by almost 19 percent between 1960 and 1980 (Ellis, 1987, pp. 9–11). Such a negative judgment about public libraries also misunderstands some of the ways in which libraries, books, and information were used by participants in the liberation struggle. I draw on personal experience, interviews with librarians, and primary and secondary sources to grasp the contradictions that characterized some of the Coloured township libraries on the Cape Flats during the 1980s. The public libraries selected for analysis are located in Lentegeur, Hanover Park, and Bonteheuwel townships.

One of the criticisms leveled against public libraries was that they were sites of conflict and struggle and that they should therefore not be neutral. In a militarized South Africa, libraries were certainly sites of conflict, as in the case in 1988 of a fourteen-year-old boy that shot indiscriminately at users in the children’s section of a library and explained that he always wanted to be a policeman so that he could shoot people. And public libraries were regular targets for destruction or damage during periods of unrest throughout the apartheid era. But more fundamentally, their involvement in urban racial zoning and the forced removals of thousands of people meant that township libraries could never be neutral. The township library was always contested social space—geographically, racially, ideologically, and professionally.

Ideas about social space are prominent in the literature of social theory and in disciplines such as geography and urban sociology (Castells, 1983; Soja, 1985; Lefebvre, 1991; Bachelard, 1994). Their local application in South Africa, however, is guided by perspectives about the control of social space exerted by the South African state and “the reactions it provoked
among recipients and opponents of government policy” (Hart, 1990, p. 285). Space in this view is not just a passive geographical milieu that is simply assigned and manipulated by the South African state; rather it is a “lived space” of continual meaning making and conflict among various social groups. It is constantly made and unmade, claimed and disclaimed by people. The “spatial patterning” of Cape Town stretches back to the seventeenth century, and social identities and the reclamation of its urban space are still closely intertwined today (Bank & Minkley, 1998/99; Jackson, 2003). But the library as space involves, importantly, librarians as agents both inside and outside of the library building itself and relates to wider views of library service and their social purposes. In her convocation address on why the library as physical space matters, Abigail Van Slyck (2001) underestimates her own recognition of these social dynamics. She tells the impressive story of the early-twentieth-century work of Lillian Gunter in Gainesville, Texas, and how her library career was an outgrowth of her memberships in social and literary clubs. By her efforts to become a library professional, to get involved in the activities of library associations, and to convince officials to apply for a Carnegie grant, Gainesville’s first purpose-built public library was erected in 1914. Gunter’s progressive philosophy of library service for that historical period translated into how she used the library space creatively and highlighted interactions between the library and its wider social context.

In Cape Town’s townships, similar early examples of book collecting and distribution by self-made intellectuals illustrate a native library tradition that did not always culminate in formal library services. The social space for these activities sometimes, but not necessarily always, involved actual public libraries. In the 1930s and 1940s, when libraries in Cape Town were already racially segregated, politicians like Cissy Gool and writers like James La Guma and Christian Ziervogel introduced young men and women from the townships to books and music at social events (Soudien, 2000, p. 36). Ziervogel, who collected about 15,000 volumes, became the first librarian at the Hyman Liberman Institute in District Six in 1933. By the time he was told to stop supplementing the library collection, he had already added 3,000 of his own books (Clark, 2002, p. 25). The personal libraries and family collections of prominent local Islamic scholars attest also to this library tradition. The Islamic Library in Cape Town, for example, which grew to several thousand items and a membership of 8,700 by 1997, started out as a lending library of 300 items in the home of Ahmed Khan in the residential area of Primrose Park (Haron, 2001).

A central idea in this Cape library tradition was that “the books were just the props,” implying that debate and discussion of South Africa’s political and cultural conditions was of primary concern, especially for young people. Several debating societies and discussion groups established in Cape
Town during the 1930s and 1940s provided fertile ground for developing an emphasis on oral discourse and the verbal distribution of information. People became aware of political and economic ideas not so much from reading them in books but because they heard them in discussions and arguments inside and outside of the library.

The Lenin Club, the Spartacus Club, the New Era Fellowship, and several other Trotskyist groups were connected in different ways with the influential Non-European Unity Movement, which was formed in December 1943, and with the Teachers’ League of South Africa, which was established in June 1913. The Lenin Club, for example, ran a socialist Sunday school for children and held a study group in District Six, as well as open-air meetings. The rival Spartacus Club had its own study class, as did the non-Trotskyist October Club. And many of these political factions taught reading and writing and distributed the books of the Left Book Club (Drew, 2002, pp. 142–43, 186).

This library tradition operated both inside and outside of the library itself and included the production and consumption of reading materials, as well as a wider community involvement. Ziervogel exemplified this tradition best. He belonged to a radical discussion group called the Fifteen Group (Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen, & Worden, 1999, p. 84), acted as secretary for the Social Welfare Group in Cape Town, and authored several books and newspaper articles. The Non-European Unity Movement, which provided the early political milieu for this library tradition, advocated a policy of non-collaboration with the apartheid state and employed the boycott as “a kind of formula for all seasons” (Alexander, 1989, p. 189). This distinguished it from other influential adversarial political groups in the Western Cape such as the African National Congress, the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), and the Pan-Africanist Congress (Pan African Congress).

Alongside this informal library tradition there was a movement for the systematic provision of library services to the African and Coloured sections of Cape Town under the guidance of the South African Library Association (SALA). Several institutions cooperated throughout the 1930s and 1940s to offer library services to the “poorer members of the community.” They included the Cape Coloured Carnegie Committee, the Society for Book Distribution, and the Cape Libraries Extension Association. According to Patricia Clark, these institutions were characterized by an “ambivalent liberalism” that developed “separate library services for Whites and Blacks even before the advent of apartheid legislation in 1948” (Clark, 2002, p. 27).

The otherwise excellent work of these institutions and the SALA was sullied by their concessions to apartheid in library services. When, therefore, the Cape Provincial Council passed the Provincial Library Ordinance in 1949 that proclaimed Cape Town as an urban library area and introduced a municipal rate-supported public library service, this provided separate services for blacks and whites. This ordinance for free libraries would not
have been passed without this condition. The highly regarded Douglas Varley, who was praised as the prime mover and “leading light in getting the City Municipal Library System off the ground” (Quinton, 1988, p. 31), lamented his own role in compromising with library apartheid. On the eve of his departure from South Africa in 1961, he said, “In doing so I trod the moral morass in which so many of us in South Africa are struggling.”

It is in this context that the Cape library tradition was handed down to a new generation of librarians employed in the Cape Town City Library Service when it was launched in April 1952. Teachers affiliated with the Teachers’ League of South Africa who resigned in protest from the Coloured Affairs Department were included in this group, and they educated young library workers in Non-European Unity Movement politics. Some of them ended up managing township libraries in the 1980s. And by that time the primary opposition political forces in Cape Town’s townships were still the African National Congress–led Congress movement, which had a mass appeal through the United Democratic Front, and the smaller Non-European Unity Movement and the Pan African Congress (Davies, 1987).

**Cape Town’s Townships in the 1980s**

Political parties that participated in the apartheid tricameral election in August 1984 and that had a meager following in the Coloured townships included the People’s Congress Party and the Labour Party. The library as space was contested against this background. Township librarians cooperated and sometimes came into conflict with young political activists, but they also had to contend with the library authorities, state security police, and sometimes with librarians who held different ideological and professional views. In other words, while some librarians cooperated with library authorities and security police, those sympathetic to the Cape library tradition refused to do so. But this tradition was itself contested and adapted in the 1980s.

At most of Cape Town’s township schools, teachers and learners who organized themselves under the banner of the African National Congress/United Democratic Front advocated a “liberation before education” policy, while some schools in middle-class Coloured areas adhered to the Non-European Unity Movement/Teachers’ League of South Africa “education for liberation” perspective. As a result, schools and libraries were impacted differently depending on their political allegiance and their physical location. At schools where “liberation before education” held sway, teachers combined classroom academic work with becoming informed about changes that were happening in the country (Wildschut, 2003, p. 112).

This kind of alternative education used classrooms as “zones of liberation” (Bundy, 1989, p. 213). In cooperation with school learners, teachers developed “Awareness Programs,” organized plays and poetry readings, and attended film festivals. These activists participated in demonstrations.
and marches and were often the victims of police brutality, detention, and torture. They regarded teachers affiliated with the Teachers’ League of South Africa as the “Old Guard” (Carelse, 2003, pp. 120–21). For many of them, the local public library became a place to meet and use to plan programs and political strategy.

At schools where Non-European Unity Movement/Teachers’ League of South Africa members were dominant, school learners were encouraged to stay in classes and were taught that marches and demonstrations were quick fixes that would not work. Middle-class or elite high schools such as Livingstone, Harold Cressy, and South Peninsula kept their pupils at school and conducted their own workshops. They were seen as conservative and were watched to see if they were carrying out the instructions of the committees that organized marches (Kies, 2003, p. 23). The Non-European Unity Movement/Teachers’ League of South Africa teachers were regarded as “armchair politicians.” They encouraged school learners to view what was happening as part of “a total political struggle” and not “to lose the momentum of their studies” (Dudley, 2003, p. 40). Learners were provided with study guides that they used at school, but some Unity Movement teachers also gathered at libraries with school learners to discuss political topics, leadership, and how to conduct themselves “in a revolutionary situation” (Bam, 2003, p. 167).

A contest for space commonly faced by township librarians, one that became more complex during the turbulent 1980s, was with gangsters. The several gangs fought each other for “turf” and often confronted librarians about their loyalties and intimidated library users. The Group Areas Act that displaced thousands of people to the Cape Flats townships accelerated gang formation (Schärf, 1990). The gangs staked out geographical areas, which often included or surrounded the library, to establish roots in these communities. Municipal library planners simply ignored this problem by not consulting community leaders about the location of the library. Successive states of emergency in the 1980s contributed to the marginalization of youth and increased gang membership, and by 1990 gangs remained the most powerful organized social force in the country’s Coloured townships.

Between 1984 and 1987, townships were beset further by the deployment of South African Defence Force troops in an attempt to quell political resistance. In 1985 there were 35,372 troops in 96 townships around the country (Nathan, 1989, p. 70). The South African Defence Force claimed that the troops were used to protect township residents from “radicals” and “criminals.” Soldiers raiding the homes of residents often stuck stickers on furniture that said “Trust me, I am your friend.” But their presence was viewed as a threat and as an occupying enemy force. Township space was defended against troops, often in physical battle.

Militant youths dug trenches across roads to trap military vehicles and “lured army patrols into backstreet ambushes, and fired rivets and spark-
plugs from home-made catapults” (Nathan, 1989, p. 72). Military vehicles were often stationed opposite schools and shopping centers and near the libraries, where they knew activists could be found. Their presence provoked intense opposition, and libraries in the Cape Flats “unrest” areas had to be closed on September 11, 1985, May 1, 1986, and June 16, 1986, and on other occasions to protect the “lives of Council employees and Council property.” Several librarians joined the call for the removal of troops from the townships.

Another contest confronting township librarians related to unequal services and facilities and the unfair allocation of physical space. The application of standards for physical space was race-sensitive, in spite of the claim of a standard floor area of 700–900 square meters for branch libraries that served 30,000 to 50,000 people (Vermeulen, 1986, p. 5). In this way, a report in 1977 revealed that the size of Sea Point branch library in a white area with a projected population of 33,430 was 1,022 square meters, or 30.6 square meters per 1,000 people. Camps Bay branch library, also in a white area with a projected population of 6,500, was 372 square meters, or 57.3 square meters per 1,000 people. But Hanover Park branch library, which had a projected population of 60,000 was 840 square meters, or 14.0 square meters per 1,000 people; and Bonteheuwel branch library with a projected population of 45,000 was 361 square meters, or 8.0 square meters per 1,000 people (Weichel, 1978, p. 43).

Some of the township librarians and their libraries both accommodated and resisted these political, social, and professional forces in ways that reveal the complexity of conflicts and struggles of the library as contested yet shared space.

**Lentegeur Public Library**

Lentegeur Public Library was opened in 1979 and was one of three libraries serving Mitchell’s Plain in the 1980s. Mitchell’s Plain was developed in 1974 on a large tract of land that was a wilderness of shrub-covered dunes; it was intended to become a self-contained area with a full range of community facilities. It was better off than most townships in respect to its cultural and recreational amenities. But these were still inadequate for a population that had already reached 173,659 and that had 42 primary schools and 13 high schools by 1985 (South African Township Annual, 1988, pp. 14–16). The suburb of Lentegeur was affected by the violence that plagued Mitchell’s Plain during the 1980s.

The Lentegeur Public Library staff, according to former librarian the Reverend Clarence Cheemee, used the resources to reach out to the community despite difficult circumstances. The library’s membership grew from 4,408 to 11,752 during the 1980s, and it had a book stock of 33,842 items by June 1990. Its space was both offered to and claimed by community groups to serve a range of purposes—political and nonpolitical.
The United Democratic Front–aligned Mitchell’s Plain Youth Movement, for example, used the library hall.\textsuperscript{19}

A rapport that developed initially as a result of visits to the library by teachers with groups of school learners provided a platform on which to build a relationship of trust when the security situation worsened during the 1980s. One example is the Maryland Retreat Centre Adult Literacy Program. It started when a child informed the librarian during a story-telling session that her father could not read or write. The Catholic Church of the Cape Town Diocese, the library staff, and other community members cooperated in this literacy initiative. Many adults from Lentegeur and later from other areas of Mitchell’s Plain learned to read and write through this program and registered as library members.\textsuperscript{20} Persistent efforts by the librarians convinced senior library management of the value of this program and led to the establishment of a special fund to purchase suitable literacy materials.

Another successful library project in the 1980s was an attempt to recover memories and memorabilia from former District Six residents who had been displaced to Lentegeur by the Group Areas Act. Library staff members appealed to the community for photographs and other District Six remnants and constructed an impressive exhibition. Videos and artwork added variety to the exhibition, which was displayed at the Lentegeur library before it was transferred to other libraries in Mitchell’s Plain and a number of Cape Town’s township libraries.

Happy reunions of former District Six residents at these exhibitions fostered a new sense of space and community. Local Lentegeur businessmen, like the Parkers, regularly sponsored refreshments for these events, and some extended their community involvement by using the library facilities. Pharmacist Dr. Iqbal Salwary, for example, often used the library hall for talks on public health issues like sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancy, rape, drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS.\textsuperscript{21}

The library space was also used by organizations such as Mosaic for assertiveness training for women, by support groups like Headway for victims of head injuries, and for special Poetry Days where local poets read their work. It was therefore in a climate of community ownership and credibility that young African National Congress/United Democratic Front activists trusted the Lentegeur library staff to provide safe refuge for them from apartheid security police during times of extreme township violence. The situation was highly volatile in Mitchell’s Plain, where residents supported either the tricameral parliament political parties or the African National Congress/United Democratic Front liberation movement. United Democratic Front political activists often hid themselves in libraries in Mitchell’s Plain, which were usually surrounded by security police in armored vehicles for several weeks at a time during the states of emergency. But there was seldom any direct threat of violence to the Lentegeur Public Library and its staff by the political activists, local gangs, or the community.
Several prominent United Democratic Front members were also Lentegeur Public Library members and were voracious readers. Theresa Solo-
mons, who became mayor of Cape Town after South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994, and her husband Marcus often used the library resources for their political education and for meetings. And senior United Demo-
cratic Front leader and former Minister of Transport, Dullah Omar (who passed away in March 2004), used the Lentegeur library hall to address the community in the mid-1980s.

There was constructive cooperation with the nearby Woodlands Com-
munity Resource Centre, which was set up with independently sponsored funds. The Lentegeur library staff, for example, helped to organize the center’s library materials. At that time, the Woodlands Community Resource Centre had a more prominent news profile than the library as a result of its political alignment. But while the Lentegeur Public Library’s response to extraordinary township circumstances went unheralded, it won the trust of a politically divided community and established the credibility of the library as contested but shared public space.

Hanover Park Public Library

A permanent public library was opened in Hanover Park in 1976, after an old farmhouse had been used since 1972.\footnote{22} Hanover Park was established in 1969 to accommodate Coloured families resettled in terms of the provisions of the Group Areas Act. In the 1980s it was still a flat, undeveloped sandy area with many open spaces that were untidy, unhygienic, and unsafe. By 1978 the population was about 50,000 with few social, cultural, and shopping facilities. These were centrally located, and this meant limited access to residents living in peripheral areas (Weichel, 1978, p. 1). The library’s membership dropped dramatically from 15,946 in 1980 to 5,418 in 1990, and the book stock shrank from 31,105 to 24,259 items.\footnote{23}

John Jacobs, who was the librarian at Hanover Park in the 1980s, was sensitive to the library tradition associated with Ziervogel and the political views of the Non-European Unity Movement and the Cape Action League (CAL).\footnote{24} The CAL was part of the National Forum, a national-level Black Consciousness organization that emerged as an idea in Cape Town in November 1982.\footnote{25} The National Forum was inaugurated in Pretoria in June 1983, two months before the United Democratic Front was launched, and it opposed the United Democratic Front and the Charterist view of national liberation. It advocated a socialist solution to South Africa’s problems and the restructuring of society “by overthrowing the established ‘racist/capi-
talist’ order” (Saunders, 1989, p. 472). For this reason, Hanover Park and other libraries where Jacobs worked, such as the Bishop Lavis Public Li-
brary and the library of the South African Council for Higher Education (SÁCHED), were sympathetic environments to groups linked with worker’s organizations and left wing groups. The Bishop Lavis Action Committee
(BLAC), which was aligned with the Cape Action League, was one such organization, and its members regularly met in the Bishop Lavis Public Library to exchange materials and produce newsletters.

But Hanover Park’s library hall was also made available for other political groups. Under the guise of a chess club, for example, a youth cell of the Pan African Congress–aligned Muslim political strand called Qibla met under the leadership of the activist Ahmed Cassim. Qibla, which drew on “an uncompromisingly revolutionary interpretation of the Quran,” also opposed the United Democratic Front’s strategy and maintained sympathetic relationships with the Non-European Unity Movement and the Black Consciousness movement (Meer, 1989, p. 83).

Jacobs also participated in the wider political education of young activists through the provision of film shows at the library. The British Council expedited this process by putting pressure on the management of Cape Town City Libraries to allow the screening of films at Hanover Park Public Library. Jacobs successfully purchased banned books and smuggled them into the country via the neighboring “homelands” such as Ciskei and Transkei and then distributed them to local activists.26

The library was often targeted by gangsters and sometimes by young political activists during the 1980s. There was a fire following a burglary in September 1981 that caused R40,000 damage, and an alarm system was only installed in 1988.27 On May 23, 1989, the library was closed because of gang warfare in the area, and there was another attempt to burgle and set fire to the library.28 The security situation at Hanover Park Public Library worsened when it had to close five times in the second half of 1989, and emergency arrangements had to be made to use security guards and to install an electronic book detection system. The Cape Town City Library management introduced regular foot patrols by the South African police to deter criminal activities, but the surveillance of political activists in the library and the protection of council property were probably the real reasons for the patrols. Librarians were encouraged to liaise with the local police and to develop emergency security plans to deal with, among other things, bomb threats (Fletcher, 1988, pp. 6–8). The space that Hanover Park Public Library occupied in the 1980s exposed it to several kinds of conflict, and the librarian’s response exemplified aspects of the early Cape library tradition.

**Bonteheuwel Public Library**

The Bonteheuwel Public Library was opened in 1967 after being housed in a private home since 1964.29 Most of the Bonteheuwel residents were forcibly moved there from District Six and Diep River areas on June 25, 1965 under the Group Areas Act. Bonteheuwel was a farm originally and “is historically characterized by environmental degradation.”30 By 1991 Bonteheuwel had a population of 47,364 (Central Statistical Service, 1991). The
library’s membership dropped dramatically from 21,531 in 1980 to 6,206 in 1990, and the book stock declined from 20,750 to 15,769 items.\textsuperscript{31}

Vincent Kolbe, who worked at several libraries on the Cape Flats during the 1980s, represents most fully the Cape library tradition. He had worked at the Hyman Liberman Library during the early part of his career, and recalls the influence of Ziervogel on its collection and ethos. He views the Ziervogel era as the roots of a kind of working-class librarianship in which trade union leaders such as James La Guma and John Gomas, Non-European Unity Movement members, and other organic intellectuals used the library as a marketplace for ideas.\textsuperscript{32} The oral tradition had been a significant source of education in this space, and semiliterate people learned all kinds of ideas not from the books but from the debates and discussions in the library. The books were often incidental to the use of the library as space for meetings by any groups in the community.

When Kolbe started working at the Bonteheuwel Public Library, he was familiar with many of the District Six residents who had been resettled there, and it was not difficult for him to continue this tradition. A library community spirit allowed teachers, for example, to instruct learners on their prescribed English literature in the library on Sundays. The quality of library service was affected adversely, however, by a book supply manipulated in favor of white areas. This was achieved by fiddling library standards. The allocation rate per head of the population, for example, was qualified by the phrase “except in areas of known illiteracy” and resulted in smaller supplies of books to township libraries.

By the 1980s the Non-European Unity Movement had lost its appeal and was regarded by Bonteheuwel activists as too much of a “talk shop.” Instead, the Black Consciousness movement and the United Democratic Front were popular, especially among the younger library members. The Bonteheuwel Youth Movement (BYO), the Bonteheuwel Interim Students Congress (BISCO), and the Bonteheuwel Military Wing (BMW), which had close links with the African National Congress’s military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe–MK (Spear of the Nation), were active in the township. BISCO used the library regularly for its liaison committee meetings.\textsuperscript{33}

Kolbe became a source for banned literature such as trade union material; books by Antonio Gramsci and others that dealt with the Nicaraguan, Chilean, and Cuban revolutions; works by authors such as African American political activist Angela Davis; and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) audio recordings and videocassettes. At Kensington Public Library, where Kolbe worked for a while, activists were also assisted with the printing of political leaflets. A sports equipment bag that contained the banned materials was kept under the lending desk and used secretly by activists. Several librarians were involved in this larger network of sympathetic professionals, intellectuals, and activists.

Kolbe and the activists who met in the library were aware of surveillance
by security police. On several occasions, activist library members were arrested and dragged out of the Bonteheuwel library. Kolbe learned from a staff member that security personnel stationed at his library by senior library management to “protect the staff and council property” actually intended to use the library as a vantage point for snipers. He fiercely objected to this subterfuge by security police to harm young activists and forbade the presence of police in the library. Constant exposure to tear gassing and violence that resulted in the deaths of some library users eventually led to a breakdown in Kolbe’s health. He left Bonteheuwel library in the mid-1980s; he retired from the Cape Town City Library Service in 1991 and became involved in the development of local museums, most notably the District Six museum.

With the help of his staff, Kolbe had tried to keep the Bonteheuwel Public Library open during the “unrest” in order to challenge the strategies of political activists and to engage them intellectually. But Bonteheuwel Public Library and Kewtown Public Library, where Kolbe had worked earlier, were also cultural centers. This variation of the Cape library tradition derived from Kolbe’s contacts in the 1950s with working-class poets such as James Matthews, Peter Clarke, and George Hallett, who often recited their poetry at the library. Kolbe remembers them as a “Bohemian set, unlike those at the Liberman [Institute, in District Six] where the discourse was very political” (Soudien, 2000, p. 36). He carried this variation of the Cape library tradition into the Kewtown, Bonteheuwel, and other township libraries where he worked during the 1980s. In other words, the library space was not just about political debate. Library users also learned about Kolbe’s love and wide appreciation of music that accommodated both local minstrel music and “boeremusiek” (Afrikaans music). His subsequent work with local museums continued the early Cape library tradition of using artifacts and audiovisual material to transcend barriers of language, literacy, and books.

Conclusion

Commentary that public libraries were inadequate, passive, and politically indifferent to social change in South Africa in the 1980s is not entirely correct. Complexity and differentiation, for example, better describe the responses of township libraries on the Cape Flats. They were not simple agencies of government propaganda. Some were marketplaces for ideas and debate, spaces in working-class areas with low levels of literacy where the books, as props, supported oral discourse. In these cases, librarians continued and sometimes adapted a library tradition deeply rooted in Cape Town’s townships.

Township residents occupied the space of public libraries and invested them with meaning and identity to cope with memories of forced removals, to confront state-imposed violence, and to foster a sense of community.
In this process, public libraries became contested but shared space. Some librarians also resisted libraries being seen as apartheid space and used the library as a site of struggle. In addition, therefore, to fulfilling traditional library functions, public libraries became venues for political education and for political meetings, places of safety for activists, and instruments of personal and community empowerment. The Cape library tradition blended well with the ways in which political activists communicated and kept each informed. Mass meetings, clandestine operations, personally transporting banned literature and making secret arrangements for their exchange, and sourcing materials both inside and outside of the library all resonated with this tradition and with an emphasis on orality.

The public library’s success or failure as an instrument of social change cannot be judged only by narrow information-based criteria, especially information in print. The Cape library tradition, which was also an oral tradition, emphasized live discussion, performance, and the circulation of ideas. When asked, some people said that they learned about certain political concepts from debates held in the library. Therefore, according to a perspective where public libraries occupy a space that extends into the life of the community and beyond books and the institutions of literacy, they certainly imbricate social change. The events documented here show that township librarians and libraries on the Cape Flats, albeit briefly and perhaps in spite of themselves, actually participated in social change in South Africa. And they deserve a place in the history of the liberation struggle.

Notes
1. The National Party was formed in 1914 and came to power in 1948. It introduced “apartheid” as an official government policy of racial separation at all levels (Saunders, 1989, pp. 486, 490). In February 1990 National Party president F. W. de Klerk unbanned the African National Congress (ANC) and other political organizations and freed political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, who was released on February 11, 1990. This paved the way for negotiations and the first democratic elections on April 26–27, 1994.
2. The United Democratic Front was established on August 20, 1983 and was an extra-parliamentary, nonracial political alliance of various organizations striving for a democratic South Africa. The African National Congress, the ruling political party today, was founded in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress. It started as a moderate, even conservative, organization, but opted for an armed struggle against the National Party regime after being banned in 1960 (Saunders, 1989, pp. 492, 486).
3. The Cape Flats are the low plain, which was once under the sea but now connects the Cape Peninsula to the mainland of Africa. It was originally covered by a light growth of low bushes, which was stripped by generations of slaves in search of firewood, until the flats became a desert of shifting sand dunes (Potgieter, du Plessis, & Hiemstra, 1971, vol. 3, p. 31). The Cape Flats was the area to which people were forced to move and “became understood as a space associated with displacement, hardship and suffering” (Bohlin, 2001, p. 276).
5. The Langa Public Library was burned down during the riots in Cape Town in 1960; see D. Varley, “Little Done for Bantu Library Service, He Says,” Argus, September 28, 1961. The Winifred Holtby Memorial Library in Soweto was destroyed in the unrest of 1976 (Berry & Bishop, 1985, p. 23), and libraries were included in fifteen incidents of dam-
age to civic halls and community centers in Cape Town from August to September 1976 (Western, 1996, p. 267). Libraries could also have been included in the 1,153 buildings belonging to the state damaged or destroyed in 1985 ("Police Losses in Riots, South African Digest, March 7, 1986, p. 189). Mini-limpet mines damaged the Rocklands Public Library in Mitchell’s Plain on October 20, 1988, and Randfontein Public Library on December 15, 1988 (Morris, 1989/1990, unnumbered).


7. The Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) opposed the proposal of a Coloured Affairs Department and advocated a program of noncollaboration and boycotts. It remained ideologically aloof from other liberation movements and adhered to strict Trotskyite principles (Saunders, 1989, pp. 396–97, 490); the NEUM became the New Unity Movement (NUM) in April 1985. The Teachers’ League of South Africa (TLSA) was affiliated with the NEUM and despised colleagues who cooperated with the government as “traitors” and “quislings” (Adhikari, 1993).


9. The Communist Party of South Africa was formed in 1921 in Cape Town to promote Marxist socialism. It was outlawed in 1950 under the Suppression of Communism Act and reformed as the South African Communist Party in 1953. The Pan-Africanist Congress was established in 1959 by breakaway Africanist members of the ANC under the presidency of Robert Sobukwe (Saunders, 1989, pp. 487, 490).


11. The tricameral system introduced Coloured and Indian voters into government at the expense of blacks without loosening white control (Saunders, 1989, p. 466).


26. “Homelands” were regions where members of particular African language groups like Zulu, Xhosa, and Tswana were offered self-government by the National Party. The “Homelands” system was the backbone of “grand apartheid” (Saunders, 1989, p. 489).


33. Colleen Williams, a library member associated with the Bonteheuwel Military Wing, was killed by a mini-limpet mine on July 23, 1989; Anton Fransch, who also used the Bonteheuwel library as a BISCO member, was killed by security police in a shootout on November 17, 1989 (Morris, 1989/1990).

References


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Abstract
The transition away from communism toward a more democratic society and the move to a market economy had profound effects on Russian libraries. Using the main public library in Bryansk, the Bryansk Region Scientific Library, as a case study, this article examines the changes in library service, including information access and the opening of previously closed collections, funding issues, the library’s relationship with the government, changes in the professional mindset of librarians, and the information needs of library users in this period of transition.

Introduction
The end of the twentieth century saw Russia moving from a highly controlled society to a more open and democratic one. Russia was also transitioning from a controlled economy to a market economy. Both the political and economic transitions have had profound effects on Russia’s libraries. Under the Soviets, the library was not free to collect and disseminate any information they wished. Partiinost, propagating the ideology of the party, was the order of the day, and collection decisions had to be approved by the government. Nonetheless, literacy was important to the Soviets, book publishing flourished, and it was an accepted ideal that no person should have to walk more than fifteen minutes to get to a library (Kuzmin, 1995).

After perestroika libraries were faced with drastic budget cuts and closures, but at the same time they had a new freedom to open access to information. The citizens of Russia were also faced with many changes that created more information needs. Writing in the mid-1990s, Evgeny Kuzmin noted:
“Russia is at a turning point, and needs information as never before to appraise its eventful present and future, and reappraise the past” (Kuzmin, 1995, p. 106). Many libraries created new programs and expanded access to information to meet these needs. In addition to internal pressures and change, Western institutions, including foundations, government agencies, and library associations, became increasingly involved in the Russian library environment.

The political and economic transitions that occurred in Russia affected every aspect of Russian librarianship from collection development to professional values and priorities, to funding, to the new information needs of library users, and necessarily it affected the relationship between libraries and the Russian government. Russian librarians were confronted with a new reality and new circumstances in which to do their work. In this article I will examine the effects of these transitions on Russian libraries in general but will provide examples from the Bryansk Region Research Library (BONUB) that highlight some of the ways this library addressed challenges and took advantage of opportunities created by the political and economic transitions.

Situated in western Russia on the border of Belarus and Ukraine, Bryansk is one of Russia’s eighty-eight regions, and it is divided into twenty-seven districts. In the Bryansk region, as in the other Russian regions, there is a main regional library that manages the region’s public libraries, including centralized district and city libraries and their branches. In the region itself there are 741 public libraries (BONUB, 2004). Although BONUB directly manages only the public libraries, it maintains good relationships—and projects—with all libraries in the Bryansk Region, including special libraries, school libraries, and academic libraries. A young library by Russian standards, BONUB was founded in 1943 during World War II at the same time the region itself was founded (BONUB, 2001a). It is the largest library in the region, serving over 44,000 unique readers during more than 244,000 visits in 2001 (BONUB, 2001b). BONUB has fifteen departments and currently employs sixty-nine librarians.

From Censorship to Openness

Although there were hundreds of thousands of libraries in the Soviet Union, they were all under the tight central planning authority and financial control of the government (Greening, 1995). Lenin and his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, a librarian by profession, instituted the Soviet library system (Raymond, 1979).

[Libraries] were to serve as instruments for eradicating illiteracy and for educating the population; an important element was moral education, one which would make for good Marxist/Leninist citizens. Thus, the role of the librarian was not to facilitate access to material which the reader demanded, but rather to guide the reader to material that
was considered appropriate and to keep away from the reader material which was considered inappropriate or harmful. (Thomas, 1999, pp. 114–15)

Three things that informed Soviet librarianship were partinost; the spetskhran, which were closed repositories of restricted material; and censorship. Partiinost, “party mindedness,” formed a foundation for Soviet censorship. “In the library, [partinost] was asserted through book purges, biased collection development, restrictions on access to disapproved information, ideologically manipulated catalogs, and bibliographical services such as ‘recommendatory bibliography’ and ‘reader guidance’” (Kimmage, 1992, p. 56). Only librarians had access to the complete library catalog, so readers could be kept from knowing what the complete holdings of the library were.

The spetskhran was made up of the writings of discredited political figures, dissident writers (even if they only authored a forward to an otherwise noncensored book), minority writers, and foreign materials. About 30–40 percent of the Lenin Library, for example, was in the spetskhran (Greening, 1995). The opening of the spetskhran following the fall of the Soviet system affected all Russian libraries. Not only did this make available new information, it “raised yet another serious concern. Library stocks appeared to be stuffed with myriad copies of ‘morally outdated’ and ‘ideological’ literature (Genieva, 2000, p. 7). While new acquisitions to overcome this situation became a priority, there was no funding from the state for them.

The relaxing of censorship meant that librarians could now criticize the state of libraries and librarianship in Russia. Previously the overall superiority of Soviet libraries could not be questioned. Joyce Martin Greening noted that under glasnost, foreign books and journals became increasingly available. This made it possible for Russian librarians to pursue interests in Western librarianship, “not just in its technical aspects, but in its approaches to reader service, freedom of information, and patrons’ right to choose what they read” (Greening, 1995).

**The Library-Government Relationship**

According to Ekaterina Genieva, director of the Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow, libraries are one of the forces propelling Russian society forward. In her lecture for the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois in 2000, she stated: “Libraries were among the first to become involved in construction of a new social and cultural environment, and continue doing so today. Thereby, they are implementing the right of every individual to free access to information, one of the basic human rights.” She went on to say:

Libraries are deeply rooted in social life. Readers, citizens and the society as a whole are being shaped by libraries, and this strongly depends on how libraries observe the principle of openness and accessibility. By
practicing various types of activities, libraries actively mediate the feedback between products of culture and their recipients. Readers, in turn, are live participants of historical processes, affecting life and libraries as a part of it. This intercalation is a prerequisite for ascent to an open society, a society open to changes and to the future. (Genieva, 2000, p. 16)

During the Soviet regime, the public library was a governmental organization that reported to the Ministry of Culture. Although the relationship with the government has changed, it remains an important one. While the new Russian government has yet to provide sufficient funds for the adequate support of libraries, the changes in the relationship between libraries and government go beyond funding. As Lahiri has observed:

> With the political change, the new Russian Federation adopted the principles of modern democratic government and recognized the value of culture in the society and its importance within the state. The new laws were framed for decentralized management of culture that sought to give more power at the local government level including financial responsibilities for providing non-ideological library services to the community (2001, p. 119).

In 1993 the Law on Culture was passed which, in part, decentralized funding from the federal government to the regional governments. This decentralization meant that many libraries at the regional level were involved with the formulation of cultural policies and that funding levels varied greatly from region to region. The government seemed to recognize the importance of libraries to the emergence of a more open society. At the end of 1993, for example, at a large congress of Russian librarians in the city of Tula, the Minister of Culture stated that the way to an informed society is through a library information network (Sidorov, 1994). In 1995 a Ministry of Culture resolution stated: “As a new Russian community is emerging, libraries are called upon to play a crucial role in the opening of citizens’ free and unlimited access to information and knowledge, the unification of Russia into one informational and cultural whole and its integration into the global community” (qtd. in Thomas, 1999, p. 121, resolution no. 532).

Though not without difficulties, BONUB has continued to work with the members of the local government administration both on the regional and district levels. One way in which the library cultivated its relationship with the government was by inviting heads of district administrations to visit the regional library to see the resources the library had. These visits were thought to have an impact on the attitudes of the local officials concerning the importance of the library. According to one Bryansk librarian, “there have been members of the administration who have taken more notice of the libraries in their district after visiting the regional library. Not only does the library benefit but the local communities also greatly benefit.”

Librarians have also worked with the regional administration to create library legislation. According to an assistant director, Bryansk was the second
region in Russia to secure a local library law. This law states that everything published in Bryansk must be deposited in the regional library.\(^6\)

**Funding in a Period of Economic Transition**

Entering a market economy and market-based relationships caused many difficulties for libraries. Guarantees previously made by the state no longer existed. In a 2001 interview with *Library Journal*, Vladimir Zaitsev, the director of the National Library of Russia, was asked: “What do you see as the top three challenges that Russian libraries face?” His answer: “Finances, finances and finances” (Rogers & Oder, 2001, p. 15). This sentiment was echoed at the regional level. In response to the question “Which of the significant changes were related to political changes?” on my questionnaire, one respondent wrote: “Practically all of the changes in the library were connected with economic changes and the transfer to a market economy. In the beginning of the process there was unstable financing so it was necessary to learn to manage the situation, to learn to earn additional funding sources, to create and improve new services.”

There are nine federal libraries governed by the Ministry of Culture of Russia that still receive their funding through the federal government. They are generally thought to be better funded than the regional libraries. During the most difficult economic times of the mid-1990s, even the federal libraries did not receive funds on time for important items of expenditure such as salaries. By the end of the 1990s, the federal libraries were generally receiving 100 percent of their salary budget on time from the state; however, other funds—for example, for utilities—were not always funded fully or on time. In the regional libraries funding issues were worse. Many library materials and activities had to be funded through whatever revenues libraries could generate themselves. Librarians turned toward fee-based services and other fundraising activities to cope with the difficulties of the poor economic situation (Kislovskaya, 1999).

In 2001 BONUB received less that 50 percent of its budget from the state. The majority of its budget was obtained through grants, fees for services (such as photocopies, document delivery, creating bibliographies, etc.) and from friends of the library and other sponsors (BONUB, 2001b). As the percentage of funding from nonstate sources indicates, BONUB has been very successful at receiving grants. One of the assistant directors recalled that it was not always the case that librarians were interested in writing grant proposals. “It was a difficult time, 1996, when I first tried to involve people in grant writing. They said ‘Oh no, who will give us money?’ It was important to have them write proposals and to make sure they would be successful. There were just a few people who believed me, but now there are many.”\(^7\)

The public library system in Bryansk has seen the number of member libraries decrease from 777 in 1995 to 741 in 2005, and slightly more than 42 percent of rural libraries are operating with reduced hours. In addition,
many rural and school libraries have been combined (BONUB, 2001b, 2004). This closing of libraries was a nationwide phenomena. The Federal Statistical Committee in Russia, Goskomstat, reports that the overall number of libraries has decreased from 62,700 in 1985 to 50,900 in 2003. This is due in large part to the decrease of state funding (Goskomstat Rossii, 2005).

**New Information Needs**

The political and economic changes in Russian society have created new information needs for people in areas such as law, economics, ecology, management, electronics and computer technologies, and language teaching, along with the need for more and better textbooks (Genieva, 2000). New needs are reflected in such comments to my questionnaire by Bryansk librarians as “[the library is] acquiring material on questions which were never studied before,” and “The interest of readers changed and new disciplines and new materials on the subjects have appeared.”

BONUB has responded to changes in information needs of its readers in sometimes creative ways. New departments have been created, such as the Law Information Center, the Local Studies Department, the Electronic Hall, which contains computers with Internet access, and the Promotions Department. Other departments have been revamped. The Lenin Hall, for example, became the Socio-Economic Literature Department. The Foreign Literature Department was able to create a German Reading Room as a result of a grant from the Goethe Institute, a German organization that promotes German cultural and educational policy abroad. The library also recently added an “American Corner” reading room, funded by the U.S. State Department. Nearly all of the librarians who answered my questionnaire mentioned the reorganization of the library and the creation of new departments as one of the most important changes undertaken by the library.

Many of the library departments also created new and different kinds of information resources. Responding to user requests, the Foreign Literature Department, for example, developed a special freely available service related to education abroad. The department, in addition to collecting print materials on the subject, mounts exhibitions and collates advertisements sent from study abroad programs. One of the librarians has the job of organizing the information by topic and keeping it current. The department also invites alumni of study abroad programs to present their experiences and discuss the necessary steps to apply and enroll in such programs. The head of the department commented that this kind of first-hand knowledge is valuable for their users. She also noted that “there is a commercial database [on study abroad programs] but it is too expensive so we have to do it ourselves.”

The Local Studies Department created electronic resources to highlight information about the Bryansk Region. One of these is an online database that contains an extensive bibliography of cultural heritage resources. It also
includes pictures of and scholarly essays about architecture, archeological sites, cultural monuments, and other sites of historic or cultural significance to the Bryansk Region. The department has also created an online centralized local studies catalog for the Bryansk Region. Staff at BONUB created original records for any publication or cultural heritage material created in the Bryansk Region since 1945 held at or by other libraries, archives, and museums within the region. As a result users visiting BONUB, or even just BONUB’s Web site, can locate materials about the region regardless of where it is held in the region.\(^9\)

An Ecological Information Center was created in response to the Chernobyl disaster of April 1986; it includes a number of environmental and ecological information resources, such as a booklet about the quality of drinking water and an annotated bibliography of articles on the topic.\(^10\) As the assistant director of the library noted, “We started to work very actively in this direction because the environmental situation was not, and is not, good.”\(^11\) The director discussed some of the library’s extraordinary environmental educational activities in this way:

> There are a lot of actions . . . deliberative public forums . . . individual consulting . . . The library is very open so anyone can come to get information about ecology and the state of the environment in the Bryansk Region. We carry out scientific conferences, where we raise current issues that are very urgent in our region. We also try to raise these issues on the Duma level of local government. We make the information available for mass media.\(^12\)

BONUB’s Law Information Center was created in January 1999 in response to a presidential order to disseminate law information to the population. It was the third library in the country to create such a center. A major service it provides is to make a lawyer available for two hours a day to discuss legal questions with patrons. The center has a good selection of electronic law resources and a well-developed system of training patrons to use them. Not only does the center help citizens to understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, but perhaps more importantly it helps them to navigate ordinary activities, such as renting apartments, that were never required of them during the Soviet period.

Like all regional and central libraries, BONUB has a Research Methods Office that is responsible for staff development and research on library methods. The “Library as a Community Center” project, headed by the Bryansk’s Research Methods Office, has as its centerpiece deliberative public forums. These forums bring members of the community together to discuss issues facing it, such as drug use, AIDS, ecology, and juvenile delinquency. An issue booklet that lays out possible policy choices is used to guide the discussions, which are moderated by librarians.

The librarian from BONUB who is a leader in promoting these deliberative public forums stated: “It is in our nature to discuss social and political
problems and to speak, but before, all discussions were not deliberative. Now it’s a new form.” She believes that the forums are popular because they are versatile in content and they bring together different groups of people, including local government officials, citizens, and journalists.

These innovations in service are designed to make BONUB truly a civic institution. One of the assistant directors elaborated on this changing interaction with their community:

In my library there are a lot of activities for the community, not just for people who read books or who participate in our clubs, but for other organizations. Usually our auditorium is very busy with different kinds of activities, and they are essentially civic activities. We try to be in the middle of these activities. We try to organize different meetings with different people. . . . Sometimes we push our community to discuss very important problems . . . To have open access to these problems many, many groups in our society must be involved.14

Collections and Access to Information

Intimately tied to funding are collection development and access to new technology. In a cruel irony, there is freedom to acquire books but no money to buy them. Like many libraries, BONUB is not able to buy all the materials it would like to make available for its users. The Ecological Information Center, for example, does not have enough material geared toward the nonscientific community. Staff in each library department have similar stories to tell about what they would like to purchase for their readers but cannot. Instead the librarians try to find creative ways to serve their readers. The head of the Ecological Information Center remembered how she started the center: “The year the center was founded I had a map and articles clipped from newspapers and magazines . . . that was the basis of the center.” This is only one example of how the librarians have not let the lack of funding discourage them from creating new programs and expanding the information available to their users.

Collection development throughout Russian libraries was also affected by the changes in book publishing, including the emergence of many new small publishers and a decrease in production of material by the large state-approved publishers because of a lack of state funds. “From a librarian’s point of view, the result of this proliferation has been utter confusion” (Greening, 1995, p. 123). There has been a sharp decrease in the publication of scholarly material and an increase in the publication of pulp fiction. The centrally managed distribution system crumbled, and legal deposit, which requires publishers to submit a certain number of copies to libraries, is no longer enforced.

Access to information technologies has become increasingly important for modern libraries, but funding for it in Russia has been as problematic as funding for acquisitions. BONUB has been successful in securing funding
for several projects designed to improve access to technology from organizations such as the Soros Foundation and Project Harmony, a nongovernmental organization that uses grassroots connections to build community and partnerships. And yet, in 2002 there was only one publicly available computer for the electronic catalog. The library did have a computer lab called the electronic information hall that had eight computers available to users, as well as two to four computers in each department for the use of the librarians. However, they all shared the same connection to the Internet, making the wait for a Web page to load or checking email an exercise in patience.

Most of the librarians responding to my questionnaire mentioned the introduction of new technology as one of the most significant changes they have witnessed. One librarian summed it up: “Electronic databases help a lot in our work. In the Public Service Department it became easier to answer patrons’ questions. Our opportunities are greater, our work became more effective.”

An example of the introduction of computers and other technology to the library is a project conducted in cooperation with the Unecha Central Library and BONUB. Unecha is a small town in the Bryansk Region. The project, called “Local Communities in the Modern Information Environment,” received funding from the Open Society Institute (OSI) as part of the Small Towns of Russia Program. According to BONUB’s Web site, the goal of this project was “to intensify the information role of the small town library by establishing and developing partnerships to unify the information resources of the region and provide new information services to the community.”

The Bryansk Region Scientific Library served as the consultant and methodological center for the project. During the project the Unecha Central Library instituted many new library services and trained more than 100 people to use information technologies. The new services helped the library provide access to information technologies directly to users, but they also involved providing what might be called business services, such as creating business cards and providing access to some types of graphic design. The business services were fee based, with the money collected used for the further development of the library. An equally important outcome of the project was that BONUB gained a methodological basis for teaching other libraries to work with their communities.

Professionalism

With the fall of communism, Russian public libraries had to become civic institutions responsible to their local communities. In other words, libraries needed to serve individuals, not political systems (Kapterov, 1995; Melenteva, 1995). This change necessitated a change in professional values and priorities. As a sign of this shift many of the major library journals changed their names in the early 1990s. For instance, Bibliotekar (Librarian) became Biblioteka (Library). The January 1992 issue of the newly re-
named Biblioteka proclaimed the change in name to signify the change in approach, defining the library not as an arm of any political party, but as a social and cultural institution, and the librarian as a creative personality, not as a bureaucrat. Additionally, a new library association was formed, the Russian Library Association (RLA), which is a member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and is beginning to harmonize Russian cataloging rules with those used in the West (Lahiri, 2001). As part of their new professional identity, librarians began to push for a restructuring of the priorities of Russian libraries to deal with these common problems: “1) the poor physical condition of the libraries, 2) the need to revamp library education courses, 3) the lowly status of the profession, 4) the lack of equipment and computer technology, 5) the breakdown and re-emergence of the book trade, and 6) the need for changes in societal attitudes” (Spain, 1996, p. 89).

The 2001 annual report of BONUB outlines changes to which libraries in the Bryansk region had to respond throughout the decade of the 1990s:

• The market economy changed the conditions of library management.
• The centralized library system disintegrated.
• New library laws were created
• Local self-management of individual libraries emerged.
• New technologies were introduced into libraries.
• International collaborations between Bryansk and Western libraries were developed.
• Bryansk librarians became very involved with Russian and international professional associations. (BONUB, 2001c)

Two additional changes that could be added to this list were reflected in the responses to my questionnaire. First, the mindset of library professionals changed, becoming more oriented toward notions of professional success, self-expression, and career advancement. Second, public relations activities were introduced to encourage the formation of a more positive image of libraries and to increase awareness of the provision of improved services.

The introduction of local management of individual libraries was one of the most significant changes in the post-Soviet library field. Library managers now have to make all the decisions for their libraries. Mandates no longer come from above. As a result, a variety of uncoordinated management plans and styles emerged across the country. Librarians had to choose how to react to their new circumstances. Some chose to take proactive steps to reinvent themselves and their libraries. However, various studies have shown a deep-seated conservatism within the ranks of Russian librarians. For instance, adapting to new technology was difficult for librarians who felt that person-to-person interaction and giving individual service to each patron was a point of pride (Genieva, 2000; Raymond, 1995).
Galina Kislovskaya, who was a head librarian at the Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow, divided Russian librarians into two “camps”—those who blame external forces, namely the state, for all the bad that has happened in their institutions, and those who think that their institutions can find the resources they need and that they have the creativity to address the problems they are facing. By the end of the 1990s the failing economy meant that most librarians could no longer wait for the state to solve their financial problems. Today the difference between the two “camps” is not whether or not they are trying to solve problems with the means at hand within their own institutions but rather in their ability to find the resources they need not just to keep their libraries open but to develop and extend their services (Kislovskaya, 1999).

Although there always were laws and government policies in Russia designed to support libraries, they were not always enforced. The accomplishments of Russian libraries throughout the 1990s is the result of the work of exceptional top- and middle-level managers of individual libraries. Kuzmin noted that “enviable results are being obtained in places that have one clever and dynamic manager plus several clever and dynamic officials who know the importance of good libraries in their town or district and see them as a sources of local prestige” (Kuzmin, 1993, p. 570). BONUB is one example of such a place.

The BONUB assistant director for research and automation, for example, took a proactive approach in dealing with the challenges her library faced. She had the opportunity to travel to the United States in the early 1990s to study library practices, and she returned to Bryansk with many new ideas to implement in her library system. She said that initially she met with some resistance from her colleagues because they were depressed about library closures and believed that libraries and librarians would not survive the political and economic transition. She described to me her annual reports to the librarians during that time: “I tried to push them and to say ‘No! You should not cry! We need to understand that we are in a new position and live a new condition. It’s just a new country and a new reality.’” Now the library is forward looking and has met many of the challenges it continues to face positively, creatively, and with considerable success.

**Conclusion**

Although the economic and political changes made librarians uncertain of their future, the Russian library system remains an important institution in Russia. The opportunities now open to Russian libraries are encapsulated in this quote from Zaitsev, the director of the National Library of Russia: “In the past, library work was based on ideology, because all of life in Russia was based on ideology. Now, a variety of opinions can be expressed; there are fewer restrictions on free speech” (Rogers & Oder, 2001, p. 15). The fall of communism has afforded citizens in Russia new freedoms and
new responsibilities. BONUB provides a good example of how a library in post-Soviet Russia can adapt and grow. There are still challenges to be met, and questions remain about the future of the political and economic environment of Russia, but BONUB is in a strong position to meet any future challenges. And as Genieva (2000) argued, libraries are in a unique position to help move society forward.

The public library system itself still has a hierarchical structure that defines the communication and authority relationships among the libraries that are part of the BONUB network. BONUB draws on this structure to disseminate new information and new methods. Strengthening the network is the Research Methods Office, another preexisting organizational arrangement that allows for the transfer of information and training. Thus, the library did not and does not have to find new mechanisms for training. In an ironic twist, the structure of the Soviet library system has become, in this instance, a conduit for innovation and change.

NOTES
1. The information in this article about the Bryansk Region Scientific Library was gathered from interviews and observations conducted in the beginning of February 2002 when I traveled to Bryansk, Russia, on a research trip supported by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio. This research trip was to gather data for my master’s thesis (see Knutson, 2002). During this two-week period I met with partners of the library, including three schools, three nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and four other libraries in the region, as well as friends of BONUB. At the end of the two weeks I had conducted eighteen interviews with thirteen people. The interviews ranged in length from 15 minutes to over an hour; however, the majority lasted 30–50 minutes. Interviews cited in this article use the speakers initials only.

In addition to my observation and interview notes, I also reviewed papers and reports written by the librarians at BONUB. In April of 2003 I sent a follow-up questionnaire to a librarian at BONUB with instructions to distribute it to as many staff members as possible. This questionnaire specifically addressed changes librarians had witnessed in the library and how the changes had affected their day-to-day work. Twelve questionnaires were returned. The length of time that the respondents had been working in the library ranged from three to twenty-five years. Half of the respondents were working at the library before the break-up of the Soviet Union (1991), and each respondent represented different departments in the library.

2. As of December 2006 Russia’s 88 administrative divisions are 21 republics, 7 krays, 2 federal cities, 48 oblasts, 1 autonomous oblast, and 9 autonomous okrugs. Bryansk is an oblast. For clarification sake I should note that the city of Bryansk is located in the Bryansk district of the Bryansk region.

3. In 2004 BONUB served 17,400 users; however, due to renovations it was only open half of the year. See BONUB (2004).

4. In Russia all employees of a library are called *bibliotekar* (librarian). However, here I have counted only those staff members who have some education in librarianship. The total number of employees at BONUB is 127.


7. O. K., personal interview, February 19, 2002. See http://www.scilib.debryansk.ru/5program/index.html (in Russian) for a listing of BONUB projects from 2000 to 2004. Over half of the projects, many of which are mentioned in this article, were funded by the Soros Foundation through the Open Society Institute (OSI) Russia. It will be interesting to see how these projects are sustained and new projects started now that Soros has closed down OSI Russia and spun off the projects to other independent organizations.
8. L. IA., personal interview, February 8, 2002.
9. These two resources along with the other digital resources created by the Local Studies Department can be found at http://www.scilib.debryansk.ru/3kraeved/index.html (in Russian).
10. For more information about their resources see http://www.eco.scilib.debryansk.ru/ (in Russian).
11. O. K., personal interview, February 9, 2002
17. Kislovskaya is currently deputy director of the Russian State Library.

REFERENCES


Ellen Knutson is a PhD candidate in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois. Her dissertation research explores the case of institutional change and development of the public library system and its relationship with the community in Bryansk, Russia, since the early 1990s. Prior to starting her graduate studies she was a researcher at the Charles F. Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio, where among other things she investigated the role institutions play in a democracy and their relationship with the public.
On March 20, 2003, military forces of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia invaded Iraq. In the course of this invasion and subsequent occupation, Iraq’s cultural infrastructure suffered a great deal of destruction. While international attention has focused primarily on the immense destruction done to the country’s pre-Islamic archaeological assets, domestic Iraqi attention has focused equally on the losses suffered by the country’s manuscript collections, archives, and document collections. This article provides a general overview of the latter category, including a brief discussion of the events involved, damages sustained, and current status of the collections in question. While in certain key cases the damage sustained by collections was not as severe as initially reported, there were significant losses and a great deal of work lies ahead to reconstitute the facilities involved.
Most of the events relevant to these collections began at least two days after the entry of U.S. troops into Baghdad on April 8, 2003, and continued for several days—until international media attention appears to have forced a policy change. Although several causes are frequently cited—and excuses offered—for the cultural destruction suffered during that period, primary liability appears to lie with occupation forces. Legally, the collections in question were covered under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Even though the United States and United Kingdom are not signatories to this convention, the protocols of this agreement are fully ensconced within customary international law. Ignorance of specific legal and material obligations was also not an excuse for nonintervention: Pentagon officials had been briefed by several experts about the requirements of the protocol, the potential for looting of cultural treasures, and specific facilities requiring protection.

Logistically, although the U.S. government had only recently become the occupying power, the situation on the ground remained in a certain degree of flux, and sufficient forces had not been committed to control the entire city. U.S. forces were capable of providing security to any site designated as deserving protection by senior U.S. officials, such as the Ministry of Oil, the Palestine Hotel, the Sheraton Hotel, the Saddam Hussein [now Baghdad] International Airport, the Republican Palace, and several other strategic locations. Some of the more important facilities covered in this article were concentrated in two small areas that had a sufficient U.S. troop presence (about two to three tank crews) in the area to prevent the events described below. However, when Iraqi staff members asked U.S. soldiers to protect the facilities in question, the invariable response was either that “we are soldiers not policemen” or “our orders do not extend to protecting this facility.” The former director of the Dar al-Makhtutat manuscript collection, Osama Naqshbandi, stated that after a tank crew had declined to protect the National Museum and Dar al-Makhtutat facilities when looting broke out on April 10, he and the National Museum director, Jabir Khalil Ibrahim, immediately appealed to a U.S. colonel at the Palestine Hotel for protection. Despite reassurances to the contrary, no protection was extended until April 14, after the looting had become an international scandal (Al-Tikriti, 2003).

Apologists for U.S. occupation policy have striven whenever possible to assign blame for the cultural destruction to Iraqi actors. One British television presenter, Dan Cruickshank, accused certain Iraqi staff members of being Ba’athist operatives who looted their own facilities. Apart from credible claims concerning insider vandalism at the National Library and Archives, none of the collections discussed here appear to have been intentionally damaged by staff. Indeed, most staff members continued to work in trying circumstances, initially without pay or assurance of future job security.
Certain apologists have also argued that occupation authorities were relieved of their legal obligation to protect certain facilities because they were being used for military purposes. Specifically, Cruikshank cited U.S. soldiers who stated that the National Museum had been used as a defensive military position during the April 8 fall of Baghdad (Cruikshank, 2003). However, while Iraqi soldiers may have attempted to defend parts of the city from invading forces on April 8, none of those soldiers were present when staff requested U.S. force protection from looting on April 10. Legally and militarily, the Iraqi resistance faced on April 8 in no way justified the absence of U.S. protection in the following days.\(^7\)

The impression emerges from such anecdotal evidence that those in command of U.S. forces may have knowingly neglected their legal duty under international humanitarian law to “restore and maintain law and order,” which includes preventing the looting and burning of public facilities.\(^8\) If this is the case, it can be argued that the U.S. government as a whole is legally liable for the events described below and may someday be obliged to compensate these facilities for their losses.\(^9\)

The discussion that follows is based on the situation report following my visit to Baghdad on May 25–31, 2003, subsequently updated and corrected as further information has become available. During this trip I visited several affected sites and interviewed a number of officials responsible for various manuscript collections, libraries, and academic research facilities. What follows is a general overview of the damages sustained and the current status of several important manuscript collections, archives, libraries, and other document collections. The focus here is on collections with unique holdings in the Baghdad area. General academically affiliated research collections, which also suffered a great deal of loss, should in time and with sufficient support be able to duplicate and expand their pre-invasion holdings. Although there have been several reports on the state of some or all of these collections, much of the information concerning the collections remains incomplete and open to future correction and clarification.\(^10\)

**National Library and Archives (Dar al-Kutub wa al-Watha’iq)**

This facility, located directly across from the Ministry of Defense, was initially reported to have been completely burned and looted.\(^11\) Subsequent accounts have been contradictory and complex, and solid figures concerning the initial holdings and the ultimate damage sustained by the library and archives remain lacking. As Iraq’s primary research facility and legal depository library, the National Library contained a particularly strong collection of Arabic periodicals, a collection of government documents dating back to Ottoman rule, and over a million books.

The burning and looting of the National Library appears to have taken place on two occasions: April 10 and April 12–13. The fires were set profes-
sionally with accelerants. According to Saad Eskander, the director-general of the National Library and Archives since December 2003, three days prior to the invasion staff members were instructed to destroy all archival material related to Ba’athist rule. In the event, Eskander stated that the burning and looting was carried out by a mix of poor people who were looking for a quick profit and regime loyalists intent on destroying evidence of atrocities. Although the fire damage seemed complete from outside the building, only the main reading room and lobby suffered major damage, mainly because an iron door leading to the stacks had been locked.

Immediately following the initial round of destruction, staff and volunteers associated with a cleric named ‘Abd al-Mun’im welded the door shut and began to remove as many books as they could transport to the cleric’s al-Haqq Mosque in Sadr (formerly Saddam) City. Roughly 40 percent of the book holdings was initially said to have been removed, but Saad Eskander later stated that the amount was closer to 5 percent. He also observed that many of the books suffered from both the move and the storage conditions at the mosque. Altogether, an estimated 25 percent of the library’s book holdings were destroyed. The newspaper and periodical collection, said to be one of the largest in the Arab world, appears to have emerged largely without damage.

Prior to the invasion, a collection consisting primarily of documents dating from Hashemite (pre-1958) and Ottoman (pre-World War I) periods was removed from the National Library and placed in the basement of the General Board of Tourism. This collection, perhaps the most valuable set of holdings in the facility, escaped the initial round of burning and looting in April. However, in August 2003 the basement was flooded in unknown circumstances. In October 2003 the collection was discovered and transferred to the warehouse of an Iraqi businessman associated with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Following a visit by a U.S. Library of Congress delegation, the documents were transferred in December 2003 to cool storage in the former Iraqi Officer’s Club complex. Since these documents have been stored in cool rather than frozen storage, with inconsistent electricity at the cooling facility, they have continued to deteriorate, albeit at a slower rate than when first discovered in the flooded basement. Saad Eskander has estimated that 60 percent of these Ottoman and Hashemite documents have been irretrievably lost. This collection should probably have the highest priority for textual preservation.

Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs
Central Library (Maktabat al-Awqaf al-Markaziyya)

Established in 1920, the Awqaf Library is the oldest public manuscript collection in Iraq. A modern two-story facility located near the Ministry of Health, the library held waqfiyya (religious endowment documents) and approximately 7,000 manuscripts, mostly concentrated in religious fields.
The library also held more than 45,000 printed books, including some 6,000 rare Ottoman Turkish publications. It was completed destroyed by fire on April 14 (or possibly on April 13). The staff stated that they had taken steps to protect the manuscript collection prior to this, placing roughly 5,250 of their total 7,000 manuscripts under armed protection in an undisclosed location—a location that still remains unknown to scholars and the general public.

The remaining 1,744 manuscripts were packed in thirty-two metal trunks and were in the process of being moved when the library was attacked. When interviewed, some of the staff initially suggested that U.S. troops had filmed the burning of the building, but when pressed they referred me to the ministry driver ‘Abd al-Karim Sa’id, who was the primary eyewitness to the events amongst the staff members present at my interview. According to Mr. Sa’id, roughly fifteen Arabic-speaking males in civilian clothes drove up to the library in various vehicles, including a white Lada and a white VW Passat with “TV” taped onto their windows and bodies. While two of the men remained at the entrance filming the event, the rest proceeded to remove twenty-two trunks containing manuscripts. The men then used some sort of yellow substance to burn the entire library, including the remaining ten trunks, in under fifteen minutes. Staff members showed me burned out trunks and ventilation shafts containing residue of that yellow substance, which may have been a phosphate accelerant. They also showed me a small plastic container that they had found in the rubble and that they think contained the substance.

Although the staff was convinced—as were most Iraqis—that Kuwaitis were behind the destruction of this library, they admitted that they had no evidence to prove the assertion. As one staff member put it, “Iraqis might have stolen the manuscripts for personal profit, but they would never have burned them.” They were certain, however, that Kuwaitis were in the city at the time, based on overhearing the dialect being used in conversation. That Kuwaitis acted as guides and/or translators for the invading U.S. forces was an assertion made by many eyewitnesses, and it appears to be accurate.

A 1987 published catalog provides detailed information on the Awqaf collection up to that date. Since 1987, about 1,200 manuscripts had been added to the collection, most of them uncataloged. As the staff had acted to protect the core collection first, most of the 1,744 manuscripts contained in the thirty-two trunks were from three collections that had been recently added to the Awqaf collection for safekeeping:

- Kamal al-Din al-Ta’i collection: 250 manuscripts
- Salih Salim Suhrawardi collection: 350 manuscripts
- Hasan al-Sadr collection: 589 manuscripts (on loan during the Musa al-Kadhim mosque renovation)
The remaining 555 manuscripts must have come from the Awqaf library’s core collection. The staff did not know which trunks were burned and which were removed, but they were hopeful that the contents of the twenty-two trunks that were removed will resurface in the future. At about 60–70 manuscripts per trunk, they estimate that about 600–700 manuscripts were permanently lost in the flames, and they showed me some carbonized folios as proof of the damage.

The library’s collection of published books, including the 6,000 Ottoman Turkish books, three large collections of medical books containing close to 4,000 volumes, and 5,300 books concerning Ja’fari (Shi’i) jurisprudence, appears to have been completely destroyed. According to Zayn al-Naqshbandi, a local scholar and book dealer, as of June 2004 this library had not received any form of international reconstruction assistance whatsoever.14

**Iraqi House of Manuscripts (Dar al-Makhtutat al-‘Iraqiya)**

The approximately 47,000 manuscripts held by the Iraqi House of Manuscripts is by far the largest collection of rare manuscripts in Iraq.15 This collection had previously been housed in the National Museum until the early 1980s, and organizationally the facility remained under the control of the National Museum and the Ministry of Culture through 2003. As a result, some confusion has arisen between National Museum holdings and Dar al-Makhtutat holdings.16

The Dar al-Makhtutat facility consists of a set of interconnected traditional buildings appropriated by the state in 1983 as part of a massive redevelopment of Haifa Street. Some of the apartments in the rear of these buildings were occupied by private families. The Dar al-Makhtutat collection and reading room were housed in one building, and preservation and reception facilities were housed in another. While I was present in May 2003, one of the original owners of one of the houses in the complex visited collection director Osama Naqshbandi to state his claim for the restitution of his property. Neither the Dar al-Makhtutat staff members nor the family sharing the property with the Dar al-Makhtutat appeared surprised or upset by the visit. Since there are potential ownership claims of this kind to sort out, and since the facility complex cannot compare with modern structures in terms of climate control and security, it is unclear whether the manuscripts—removed to a bomb shelter for safekeeping prior to the invasion—will ultimately be returned to that same location.

The collection has a number of components apart from its own core collection of 47,000 manuscripts. According to Mr. Naqshbandi, in the course of the 1991 uprising following the Gulf War, it was estimated that about 20,000 manuscripts had been endangered by events in the provinces. In fact,
while only 346 manuscripts in provincial public facilities were confirmed lost and subsequently listed as such in an effort to recover them, an estimated 1,000 manuscripts from the Baraki, Kashani, and other private collections of Najaf and Karbala were reportedly taken to Iran in the course of the 1991 uprising. As a result of this experience, and in accordance with longstanding Ministry of Culture efforts to centralize all manuscript collections in one facility, several of the provincial collections were absorbed into the main collection of the Dar al-Makhtutat in Baghdad in the 1990s.

Other materials in the Dar al-Makhtutat collection were the result of a survey of private and public manuscript collections that had been carried out by each governorate in accordance with the 1974 Antiquities Law. These were kept in box files, which were removed along with the manuscripts prior to the 2003 invasion. Finally, other major components of the collection included the microfilms of 8 million folios from 15,000–20,000 manuscripts, and 250,000 images from illuminated and other rare manuscripts preserved on CD-Roms, all produced by the staff in the course of the 1990s.

Efforts to save this collection from the impending war began four months before the invasion and continued right up to the week immediately prior to the commencement of hostilities. Everything stored at the facility was transported to bomb shelter number 12 in Hayy Dakhiliyya. The 47,000 manuscripts of the Dar al-Makhtutat collection were packed into 500 trunks. Another 200 trunks contained 3,000 manuscripts from other collections held at Dar al-Makhtutat. There were also 83 trunks of rare books. The microfilms were taken to a second (undisclosed) location and the CD-Roms to a third (also undisclosed) location. According to Mr. Naqshbandi, the staff undertook such protective measures even though they did not have official permission to move the collection and were asked to slow their efforts by the Minister of Culture in order not to unsettle the population concerning the possibility of invasion. As a result of these initiatives, when looters entered the Dar al-Makhtutat facility on or after April 10, they were able to strip it of computers, microfilming equipment, and materials in its preservation laboratory—but no holdings were taken.

Fortunately, the bomb shelter where the manuscripts were stored was not targeted by invasion forces. On three occasions in April 2003, however, looters tried and failed to force the doors. On each occasion the “neighborhood” chased the looters away and burned their vehicles. According to Mr. Naqshbandi, relations between the neighborhood and U.S. forces soured in late April 2003 after a U.S. commander attempted to remove trunks from the shelter and transport them to the National Museum, which was by then under U.S. protection. Mr. Naqshbandi expressed disappointment with the lack of understanding by Western reporters of the efforts the staff had taken to preserve the collections, citing articles stating that 40,000 manuscripts had been “found” in a shelter.
Although the shelter was said to be climate-controlled, it is unclear whether long-term storage in this location might prove damaging to the materials stored there. Apart from the Dar al-Makhtutat collection, the following manuscripts are among those stored in the shelter:

- Iraqi Academy of Sciences: 667 manuscripts (including 68 unpublished Mustafa Jawad works)
- Mosul Central Library: 301 manuscripts
- University of Mosul Library: 122 manuscripts
- University of Tikrit Library: 40 manuscripts
- Kirkuk Central Library: 40 manuscripts
- University of Mustansiriyya (Baghdad) Library: unknown number of manuscripts
- University of Basra Library: unknown number of manuscripts

**Iraqi Academy of Sciences (al-Majma‘ al-‘Ilmi al-‘Iraqi)**

Located in Waziriyya, the Iraqi Academy of Sciences is a fully independent research institution dating back to the monarchic period.\(^6\) Intended to serve as an “Iraqi Académie Française,” the academy held collections of manuscripts, periodicals, foreign language books, and unpublished theses. It also contained an Internet computer lab with more than twenty terminals, a printing press, lecture rooms, and offices for affiliated researchers.

Although it is unclear on which day the academy was looted, the way it happened suggests that it occurred quite soon after the city’s fall. According to staff members, the pillage started after a U.S. tank crew crashed through the facility’s front gate, rolled over and crushed the academy’s main sign, removed the Iraqi flag flying at the entrance, and left. Looters then swarmed into the facility; stripped it of computers, air conditioners, electrical fixtures, furniture, and other movable items; and stole all the vehicles in the complex. The fact that the academy was not burned—and that many books were not stolen—suggests that the looting was not as organized as seems to have been the case with some of the other institutions. Academy staff blamed local poor people for what was essentially opportunistic theft.

Although the academy had in recent years transferred to the Dar al-Makhtutat the manuscripts mentioned above, it had retained over 2,000 manuscripts and 58,000 published works. Included in the stolen manuscripts were 93 unpublished works by the historian ‘Abbas al-‘Azawi and a Selçuk-era ‘Umar al-Suhrawardi manuscript. Roughly half of ‘Abbas al-‘Azawi’s unpublished works that were stolen in April had been returned by my visit in May 2003, and staff were hopeful that other parts of the collection would also be returned eventually. A catalog of the entire academy manuscript collection was published prior to the collection’s partial transfer to Dar al-Makhtutat. In addition, there was a handwritten catalog for the manuscripts that were retained in the academy, but it disappeared.
along with the manuscripts. Finally, although photocopies of the entire manuscript collection were said to have been made, these copies were stolen along with the originals. The manuscripts room itself was completely empty during my visit.19

**House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma)**

Bayt al-Hikma is a semi-private center supporting research in the arts and humanities.20 It is located next to the Ministry of Defense, on a large site also containing a thirteenth-century madrasa complex and the first Iraqi parliament building. The main building contained a lecture auditorium, a music room, a printing press, a computer lab, a library of Western publications, and a library of Middle Eastern publications.

Although the madrasa complex itself was relatively unharmed, an Ottoman costume exhibit housed in the complex was stolen. The main building was almost completely looted. Although fire had destroyed much of the second floor, when I toured the facility I noticed that two or three shelves of recovered publications had been placed in two rooms. Air conditioners, computers, printers, books, light fixtures, desks, and chairs, however, had been stripped from the complex. A courtyard on the ground level contained piles of office files, mostly accounting documents and administrative correspondence.

According to Dr. ‘Abd al-Jabbar Naji, chair of the Bayt al-Hikma Department of History, on April 11, 2003, several groups of looters entered the building. In the morning they took air conditioners, generators, and other portable items of value. In the afternoon they stripped the computer lab, took a grand piano, and started to burn the main music hall. They then stripped the lecture auditorium, which may have also been hit by a bomb, as its roof was blown inward from the outside. The next day they returned, this time stripping the library and publications department of most of their books and valuable items. Although it is not known who the looters were, staff members who witnessed what happened were convinced that they were organized.

According to Dr. Naji, because of the 1974 Antiquities Law, Bayt al-Hikma was not officially authorized to collect manuscripts. As a result, it held a relatively small collection of about 100 manuscripts. However, the collection included several important items, such as a ninth-century Qur’ān; a twelfth-century copy of *Maqamat al-Hariri*, an Ibn Sina philosophy text; and a nineteenth-century al-‘Alusi manuscript concerning Baghdad. This entire collection disappeared, and unless the manuscripts reappear at some point, they are effectively lost because no microfilms or microfiche copies had been made of the collection.

Bayt al-Hikma also possessed several other useful research collections, but as all of the contents were copies, some of these collections could be replaced in the future from other sources. The collections included
• a 5,500 volume set of UK Foreign Office documents covering Iraq and the Gulf region, purchased from a library in Geneva;
• a five-volume set of French government documents relevant to World War I and World War II;
• U.S. Congressional documents concerning Iraq’s 1940 coup;
• certain documents related to the former Jewish community in Baghdad, which had mostly emigrated by the early 1950s;
• a fifteen-volume set of Ottoman Tapu property registration documents dating back to the eighteenth century; and
• a fifteen-volume set of Ottoman-era Mahkama Shar’iyya court documents.

According to Dr. Naji, the Bayt al-Hikma Ottoman Tapu and Mahkama Shar’iyya documents were copies of the original documents, which were held in the National Library. As these documents were part of the Ottoman and Hashemite-era archival collection that National Library and Archives director Saad Eskander estimates has been 60 percent destroyed (see my account above), it is possible that they have been effectively lost.

In May 2003 books from the Bayt al-Hikma collection were seen on sale in the square just outside the complex’s entrance. When I passed through this square, I noticed several recent-model computers and printers on sale on a donkey cart, as well as some issues of academic journals being sold on the sidewalk. At the time, Dr. Naji had recently unsuccessfully appealed for funding to finance the repurchase of equipment that had been stolen from the center, as well as for reconstituting the collections.

Qadiriyya Mosque

This collection held 1,883 manuscripts, in addition to published works. Mr. Osama Naqshbandi, the Dar al-Mahktutat director at the time, stated that its condition was fine in May 2003, and a site visit by the Iraq Observatory Team in June 2003 reported the same (see Al-Tikriti, 2003; Johnson, 2005; Watenpaugh et al., 2003).

Iraqi Jewish Archives

This collection was found partially submerged in a flooded basement of a Mukhabarat (Intelligence) facility by U.S. officials in May 2003. Promptly frozen and removed by Coalition Provisional Authority officials for restoration efforts by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the United States, the collection has remained in the United States since its removal. According to a 2003 NARA report, the collection included “16th–20th century Jewish rare books, correspondence and document files, pamphlets, modern books, audio tape and parchment scrolls.”21 The NARA report estimated that 1.5–3 million dollars would be required to fully rescue and preserve the collection. However, in May 2005 National
Public Radio reported that document restoration efforts were stalled due to shortage of funds. Some resentment has been expressed by Iraqi observers about the immense effort undertaken by occupation officials to salvage this collection when considered against the relative lack of urgency demonstrated for the Ottoman/Hashemite archival collections referred to above. At the same time, some tension has arisen concerning the eventual disposition of the collection. The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center has expressed interest in displaying recovered parts of the collection in its museum outside of Tel Aviv following the completion of NARA preservation efforts (Balint, 2005). Iraqi National Museum director Donny George has stated that CPA officials had signed a protocol allowing for a two-year loan of the materials to the United States for preservation, after which they were meant to be returned to Iraq. U.S. officials at NARA and the Library of Congress have not yet stated their intentions concerning the return of these materials to Iraq or elsewhere.

**Al-Hidayah Library (Maktabat al-Hidayah)**

Mr. Osama Naqshbandi indicated that this collection had about 500 manuscripts, and its condition is unknown.

**Chaldean Patriarchate (Deir al-Aba al-Krimliyin)**

According to Mr. Osama Naqshbandi, this collection had about 120 manuscripts, mostly consisting of the personal writings of al-Ustadh Mari al-Krimli, a Chaldean patriarch. The items in this collection were included in a published catalog of manuscripts completed by Dr. Boutros Haddad in the 1990s. As Mr. Naqshbandi had not heard any negative news about this collection; he assumed that its condition was fine in 2003.

**Conclusion**

In the course of my site visits and interviews it became clear to me that, while in certain key cases the damage sustained by collections was not as severe as initially reported, there were significant losses and a great deal of work lies ahead to reconstitute the facilities involved. It also became clear that full restoration of the affected Iraqi manuscript collections and libraries will require the addressing of several needs, including

- the restoration of physical premises;
- the replacement of plundered equipment;
- the reconstitution of the collections involved;
- the preparation of a comprehensive inventory and catalog for all manuscript collections as they stand today;
• the replacement of published works and nonoriginal document copies lost in the looting;
• a project of comprehensive microfilming and data storage for all manuscripts and archival documents of value to guard against future losses; and
• the immediate and ongoing collection of contemporary Iraqi publications.

To address these needs would require a multi-million dollar set of investments. While the funds required to bring the damaged facilities back up to international standards is not insignificant, it pales in comparison to the estimated 1–2 trillion dollar cost of the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation.25 Since such investments might foster a certain amount of goodwill, they should be considered by the U.S. government, an external power potentially liable for the damages described here and in great need of local support and legitimacy.

Acknowledgments

For the original report on which this article is based, see Nabil Al-Tikriti, “Iraq Manuscript Collections, Archives, and Libraries Situation Report,” http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/docs/nat.html, posted on June 8, 2003, on the Iraq Crisis List. I would like to thank Jean-Marie Arnoult, Hala Fattah, Donny George, McGuire Gibson, Charles Jones, Lital Levy, Ibrahim al-Marashi, Edouard Méténier, Osama Naqshbandi, and Zayn al-Naqshbandi for various instances of informational and logistical assistance that went into the carrying out of this research. Although the situation in Iraq remains unstable, accounts continue to emerge concerning the 2003 invasion, and much of the information covered here is based on secondhand sources, I take full responsibility for whatever corrections will eventually be made to this article’s content. Further information concerning contacts and sources can be obtained either through my original site report or through contacting me at naltikriti@yahoo.com.
## Table 1. The State of Iraq Manuscript Collections and Archives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baghdad Collections</th>
<th>Holdings</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Library &amp; Archive (Dar al-Kutub wa al-Watha’iq)</td>
<td>Documents, published books.</td>
<td>Facility partially looted and burned</td>
<td>Saad Eskander Ra’ad Bardar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Endowments &amp; Religious Affairs Central Library (Maktabat al-Awqaf al-Markaziyya )</td>
<td>7,000 manuscripts</td>
<td>About 5,250 manuscripts transferred to undisclosed location; about 600-700 manuscripts burned; about 1,000-1,100 manuscripts looted; facility burned.</td>
<td>Buthayna ‘Abd Allah Qaysi Hasan Freih Salah Karim Baqir Hamid Muhib al-Din Yasin ‘Abd al-Karim Sa’id</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi House of Manuscripts (Dar al-Makhtutat al-Iraqiya) [formerly Dar Saddam lil-Makhtutat / Saddam House of Manuscripts]</td>
<td>47,000 own manuscripts; 3,000 other manuscripts from academies in Mosul, Tikrit, Kirkuk, Basra</td>
<td>Collection transferred to Shelter #12, Hayy Dakhiliyya; preservation facilities looted</td>
<td>Osama Naqshbandi Dhamya ‘Abbas Samara’i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Academy of Sciences (Al-Majma’ al-Ilmi al-Iraqi)</td>
<td>2,000 manuscripts; 58,000 published books</td>
<td>Facility looted, but not burned; about 80% of books looted; some manuscripts returned</td>
<td>Mahmud Hayyawi Ms. Juwan, “Umm Ibrahim,” Muhammad Khudeir ‘Abbas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma)</td>
<td>100 manuscripts; U.S., French, Ottoman, and UK document copies</td>
<td>Facility looted and burned; some manuscripts may resurface</td>
<td>‘Adnan Yasin Mustafa ‘Abd al-Jabbar Naji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Jewish Archives</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Flooded, now in the United States</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadiriyya Mosque Collection</td>
<td>1,883 manuscripts</td>
<td>Condition OK</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deir al-Aba al-Krimliyin</td>
<td>120 manuscripts</td>
<td>Christian manuscripts; condition thought to be ok</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maktabat al-Hidaya, Baghdad?</td>
<td>500 manuscripts</td>
<td>Condition unknown</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES


2. For details concerning such international accords, see [http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140892003], or [http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/iraq/ihlaqoccupation.htm].

3. For example, Professor McGuire Gibson of the University of Chicago made several appeals to US officials for Iraqi cultural protection in the weeks prior to the invasion (see Glauber, 2003). For a general discussion of U.S. military policy concerning Iraqi cultural assets during the 2003 invasion, see C. Johnson (2005).

4. For one example, see [http://www.danielpipes.org/article/1066]. This point is also discussed in I. Johnson (2005).

5. Cruikshank (2003) reported this claim about Iraqi National Museum staff in a BBC documentary based on a visit he made to Baghdad in late April 2003.

6. In my own interviews and site visits, I encountered nothing to suggest that manuscripts collection staff acted improperly vis-à-vis their respective collections.

7. From my own interviews, it is clear that while most outside observers may not have attached direct blame to U.S. authorities for the destruction suffered in 2003, many Iraqis believe that the events of 2003 were a case of intentional and planned negligence. Rebecca Knuth (2003) has explored in great depth the theory and motivation lying behind several other prominent examples of library destruction in the last century. When one compares the events of 2003 against the cases analyzed by Knuth, the motivation behind a possibly planned negligence grows less far-fetched.

8. See [http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140892003].

9. According to the protocols of the 1954 Hague Convention and customary international law regarding belligerent occupation, “cultural property is entitled to special protection; the occupying power must take measures to preserve and safeguard it,” and “[a]ny loss of value from their [public property] use must be compensated.” For more information, see [http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/iraq/ihlaqoccupation.htm].

10. The most significant reports and reference resources to date concerning the postinvasion state of Iraq’s manuscript collections, archives, and libraries include those by the following individuals or groups: Nabil Al-Tikriti, Jean-Marie Arnoult, Saad Eskander, Ian Johnson, Shaye Khanaka, Édouard Méténier, Zayn al-Naqshbandi, Jeff Spurr, Keith Watenpaugh et. al., and the Library of Congress Mission. For links to each of these reports, see the Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries Web site: [http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/melairaq.htm].

11. My discussion here is based on the following reports: I. Johnson (2005), Spurr (2005), and Watenpaugh et. al. (2003).


15. This facility was formerly known as Dar Saddam lil-Makhtutat, or the Saddam House of Manuscripts. On May 27–28, 2003, I interviewed Osama Naqshbandi, the director of the collection at the time (no relation to Zayn al-Naqshbandi), and Dhamya ‘Abbas Samarra’i, his wife, assistant, and successor, at the Dar al-Makhtutat. During that interview Mr. Naqshbandi provided a great deal of general—and tentative—information on smaller Iraqi manuscript collections, which is included in the appendix.

16. For example, Dan Cruickshank stated incorrectly—and rather crassly—that Dar al-Makhtutat manuscript trunks housed in the bomb shelter were “from the National Museum . . . but were only full of books” (Cruickshank, 2003). U.S. Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos,
the head of a U.S. military investigation into the museum looting, repeatedly confused
Johnson, 2005).
17. The 1974 Antiquities Law classified manuscripts and other cultural items as property of
the Iraqi people, effectively placing all manuscript collections under state supervision
and forbidding the private collection of manuscripts. The surveys carried out by each
governorate (a province ruled by a centrally appointed governor) were ordered as part
of the implementation of this law.
18. On May 29, 2003, I visited the academy with Mr. Zayn al-Naqshbandi and briefly inter-
viewed Mr. Muhammad Khudeir ‘Abbas, the director of administration. We were also given
a tour of the grounds by two employees who had witnessed the looting of the academy.
For further information, see Al-Tikriti (2003) and Watenpaugh et al. (2003).
19. For further details concerning the state of this facility’s other holdings during my visit,
see Al-Tikriti (2003).
20. On May 29, I interviewed Dr. ‘Abd al-Jabbar Naji, the chair of the Bayt al-Hikma
Department of History. For further information, see Al-Tikriti (2003) and Watenpaugh et al.
(2003).
http://oi.uchicago.edu/0I/IRAQ/mela/IraqiJewishArchiveReport.htm
23. This opinion was expressed to me by several Iraqi academics during an international
24. For a description of this catalog, see http://www.grac.it/BAC/BAC3.pdf.
25. In January 2006 the economist Joseph Stiglitz and budget expert Linda Bilmes issued a
joint paper estimating the long-term economic costs of the invasion and occupation of
Iraq at 1–2 trillion U.S. dollars. For more information, see http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/
Story/0,2763,1681119,00.html.

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The Moral Imperative to Preserve

Michèle V. Cloonan

ABSTRACT
This article introduces the concept of monumental preservation, which the author defines as the preservation of all cultural phenomena, because from the smallest item to the greatest monument all things emanate from and reflect culture. The imperative to preserve monuments is the imperative to preserve our cultural heritage. Whether there is a moral responsibility to preserve cultural heritage may be considered from philosophical, political, and legal perspectives.

The preservation of cultural heritage has been around for millennia, as illustrated by the biblical passage “take these evidences... and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue for many days” (Jeremiah 32:14). Many similar references to the preservation or safe-keeping of artifacts exist in literature. One recent author has gone so far as to say that “[t]he Human Being is a repairing animal. Repair is ubiquitous, something we engage in every day and in almost every dimension of our lives. Homo sapiens is also Homo reparans” (Spelman, 2002, p. 1).

But equally forceful as the impulse to preserve is the impulse to destroy. History is strewn with countless examples—as the destruction of the Alexandrian Library in the fourth century AD or the destruction of the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992 vividly and poignantly demonstrate. Sometimes destruction occurs in the name of preservation. Perhaps the most cited example is the Elgin Marbles, the Phidian sculptures from the Parthenon. In the process of supposedly liberating the marbles from Greece, Lord Elgin’s workers broke or destroyed a number of them. They had to destroy the original edifice to “preserve” some of its parts.
Preservation and destruction do not necessarily constitute a dualism: one may wish to preserve one's own heritage while destroying someone else's. War is the best example of these opposing impulses. However, as some historians have observed, sometimes destruction is part of the cycle by which societies rebuild themselves (Lowenthal, 2002). The issue, however, is not what the rebuilding yields but what is lost in the destruction. What role do curators, librarians, archivists, and other citizens play in protecting cultural heritage when—and if—it should be protected? In an international context, do we all have a moral imperative to preserve?

I have coined the term monumental preservation to encompass the preservation of everything that defines culture. It is preservation writ large, and it intentionally covers everything: records, works of art, natural habitats, and national living treasures, to name a few. Preservation tries to assure the survival of the human record. It is not just a technical or managerial activity; it is a social, political, and cultural activity as well (Cloonan, 2001). In this article it will refer to everything that can, theoretically, be preserved.

If preservation assures cultural survival, is there a concomitant moral imperative to preserve? To try to establish whether there exists such an imperative, we need a working definition of moral. The dictionary offers several. The two most germane to this discussion are “of or concerned with the judgment of the goodness or badness of human action and character; a moral quandary; and, conforming to standards of what is right or just in behavior.” Moral obligation is defined as “arising from conscience or the sense of right or wrong.” These definitions introduce minefields: whose standards of right or wrong, bad or good? Whose conscience? And whose convictions? And on what is the judgment based? Religious, economic, nationalistic, or other precepts?

The writings of the eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant concerning morals and morality have been a touchstone and a flashpoint for philosophers. Kant believed that there was a duty to be moral, which he discussed within his framework of “the categorical imperative.” Inherent in his principle of morality is the idea that it “involves its own universal validity for every rational being” (Frankena & Granrose, 1974, p. 112). In other words, moral obligation derives from reason and not from God, humans, or communities. Since Kant, philosophers have focused on either an ethics of duty (action, principles, and laws) or an ethics of virtue (being, character, and ideals) (Frankena & Granrose, 1974, p. 224). Kant’s writings remain the most influential attempt to justify universal moral principles without a theological framework.

R. M. Hare, a twentieth-century philosopher, focused on the role of rational moral judgments to prescribe courses of action. He described morality as

the endeavor of a free agent to find for himself principles which he can accept as binding on all alike. . . . it is safe to say that by far the greatest
number of people slip up in their moral thinking through ignorance or neglect of the facts. But secondly, they have to give as much weight to the interests of these other people as to their own interests; for unless they do, they will not be universalizing their prescriptions. (Frankena & Granrose, 1974, pp. 420–21)

“Universalizing prescriptions” is an idea that I will return to later in the context of political theory.

Can moral philosophy guide us in the realm of preservation? Since the mid-twentieth century some philosophers have focused on public morality. In 1971 a group of philosophers—precipitated by the starvation taking place in Bangladesh (then, Bengali East Pakistan)—considered moral obligation as it applied to world hunger (Aiken & La Follette, 1977). As far as I know, this is as close as philosophical debate on the moral imperative of preservation comes. The essays these philosophers wrote are closely related to the current discussion. Peter Singer, in particular, holds the moral principle that if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without sacrificing anything of moral comparable value, we ought, morally, to do so.

The moral obligation to preserve cultural heritage can perhaps be viewed as an extension of helping the starving. Besides needing food, “people crave knowledge of their past and the certainty that there will be a continuity of their cultural-individual selves after they die. If they lose their . . . cultural heritage, they lose their past and the possibility of a connection to the time beyond them.”

The perspectives I have described reflect Western thought. There are many distinct moral and ethical precepts that help to inform the decisions we make as caretakers of objects from cultures with different intellectual and cultural traditions. At the same time, different cultures do have ethical precepts in common. If they did not, cooperation among cultures would be impossible. Still, sensitivity to differences is critical to the underpinning of an international preservation community. I introduce these Western definitions with the idea of presenting a framework that will help focus some of our thinking about the moral obligation to preserve. It follows that we must always be open to diverse cultural norms. For example, David Lowenthal (2002, p. 21) quotes a Zuni spokesman who says that “Everything for ceremonial, religious, and ritual purposes that my culture makes, is meant to disintegrate. . . . to go back into the ground. Conservation is a disservice to my culture,” while Sherelyn Ogden (2004) describes working with tribal curators and conservators to develop preservation strategies.

The twentieth century, a time of maturation for the fields of preservation and conservation, was also perhaps one of the bloodiest centuries on record. It is ironic that the period that fostered new technologies to aid conservation for paper records in danger of deterioration or damage was also the century that hosted two world wars and many other world con-
licts. The number of items destroyed over the last hundred years probably exceeds the number saved.

It is no coincidence that the terms genocide and libricide were coined in the twentieth century. A number of writers, including Rebecca Knuth (2003) and András Riedlmayer (1995), have chronicled instances in which libricide facilitated genocide: to exterminate races or tribes, so as to leave no trace, you must obliterate all material expressions of their cultures. While libricide has probably accompanied genocide for centuries, Knuth points out that “modern communication systems now convey images and texts that give unflinching testimony to violence that might otherwise be hidden from the world” (Knuth, 2003, p. 6).9

In the nineteenth century “the concept of cultural, historic and architectural heritage, viewed as the common heritage of a group or community came into existence” (Lopez, 2002, p. 6),10 though as far back as the Crusades jurists were already considering the obligation to protect cultural monuments in times of war (Boylan, 2001). Yet the rise of nationalism (Sieyès, 1789) — the belief that nations benefit from acting independently rather than collectively11 — over the past two centuries has simultaneously helped and hindered preservation. When sovereign states rose from former empires and kingdoms, national identity and self-determination followed. Since the self-interests of individual nations often dictate that national rather than international goals take priority, cultural monuments might be expropriated or intentionally destroyed for national interests. Nationalism, ideally, embraces pluralism — a condition in which distinct religious, ethnic, and cultural groups can coexist. When nations do not embrace pluralism, the result can lead to xenophobia or ethnic cleansing, which undermine monumental preservation. (One need look no further than to American history and our treatment of Native Americans, their sacred sites, and even their bones.) Since pluralism, at present, is under attack all over the world, cultural heritage continues to be vulnerable.

To be universalizing, nationalism must be more moderate; it must embrace the concept that nations are part of a global community. This raises other issues: what is the obligation of an individual nation to all other nations? And is any given nation a voluntary or involuntary member of a larger group of nations?12

Cosmopolitanism takes the broader view that “one’s primary moral obligations are directed to all human beings (regardless of geographical or cultural distance) and, political arrangements should faithfully reflect this universal moral obligation (in the form of international organizations that take precedence over nation-states).”13 That is, the greatest good for the greatest number trumps the greatest good for any one state. It would be utopian indeed if all nations operated on this “law.” But, as with individual people, individual nations have always taken the stance “Is it good for me? How can I benefit the most?” and most nations have behaved this way, de-
spite the fact that they are signatories to international conventions—and despite the fact that, in so operating, other countries are hurt. This will not work if we are to preserve the cultures of all.

Here it is useful to consider two theoretical views of international relations: realism and interdependence. Realism generally aligns itself with nationalism: an extreme example of this thinking is that the morals you adhere to in your own country may not apply to other countries. In other words, realists hold that “moral norms do not apply to the conduct of states, which should instead be guided exclusively by a concern for national interest” (McMahan, 1993, p. 384). Interdependence, on the other hand, recognizes “contemporary world politics . . . not [as] a seamless web; [but as] a tapestry of diverse relationships” (Keohane & Nye, 2001, p. 4). In this view, averting war or man-made ecological disasters requires collective action, and interdependence is not limited to situations of mutual benefit.

The cosmopolitan or interdependence perspectives make possible the work of international organizations like the United Nations (UN). The purpose of the UN is to “preserve peace through international cooperation and collective security.” For the most part, the UN respects the sovereignty of individual regimes without necessarily monitoring their policies. Its cultural agency, UNESCO, is the world body with oversight for the protection of world heritage. Cosmopolitanism also spawns nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which do much on-the-ground preservation work.

This takes us back to Hare’s universal prescriptivism that accounts for collective as well as individual moral authority. It also gives credence to the idea of the “wisdom of the ages” because such wisdom is “the result of the thought of a great many people in diverse situations” (Hare, 1991). If Hare’s ideas are applied to the UN or UNESCO—forums that allow for the diverse perspectives of diverse constituencies—then protection of human lives or cultural objects can conceivably be accomplished. This is an important concept: if universal principles are rejected, then the human rights movement or the protection of cultural heritage will languish because it will be impossible to move beyond the interests of particular societies.

Monumental preservation is contingent upon the ongoing, though at times precarious, balance of international relations. Cultural heritage is protected through conventions, laws, and treaties, as well as documents that have moral rather than legal authority such as charters, principles, and codes of ethics. But, as history has shown repeatedly, even agreements among countries that carry legal authority—such as the Hague Convention—are violated over and over again.

The preservation of cultural heritage has long depended on legal documents, for example, the nineteenth-century Lieber Code (1863) and the original Hague Convention. Dozens, if not hundreds, of relevant documents were created in the twentieth century. One pre–nineteenth-century influence on later conventions and charters was Emmerich de Vattel’s *Law of
Nations (1758). Although not written explicitly to address cultural property issues, de Vattel sets forth propositions that underlie such later documents as the Hague Convention—namely, that nations unite for the purpose of “promoting their mutual safety,” that nations are “susceptible of obligations and rules,” and that there are rights among nations (de Vattel, 1789). Vattel stressed that, in the interests of mankind, when possible, cultural property should be spared in time of war. An early example of de Vattel’s principles at work was the 1815 Congress of Vienna. Under the terms of the Congress, France was compelled to return to the Venetians the gilded bronze statues seized by Napoleon.

The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict originated with the Hague Peace Conference of 1899. Although other conventions superseded parts of the original treaty, the Hague Convention, modified several times, continues in force. The recently added 1999 protocol provides for “exceptional protection” of significant sites, monuments, and institutions. Significantly, extradition for some crimes against cultural property is now possible. Although the United States is not a signatory, it remains bound by the earlier Hague Conventions. The Convention requires that combatants safeguard and respect cultural property. UNESCO maintains a list of monuments that are under special immunity from attack.

Another recent document, the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, sponsored by the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, is intended to protect stolen objects in times of peace as well as in war. This document complements the Hague Convention—and it is equally challenging to enforce given the robustness of illegal trafficking in stolen art.

Although conventions, charters, treaties, and the like are documents that carry moral and legal weight, some cultural heritage professionals have worried that the rapid proliferation of such documents has led to confusion and even to contradictions. In some cases, documents are so general they can be interpreted differently by various parties. Further, these documents are not always well disseminated, which minimizes their chance for broad implementation (Luxen, 2004, p. 4).

In 1996 a group of cultural heritage professionals representing the International Council on Archives, the International Council of Museums, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions started the International Community of the Blue Shield (ICBS). The Blue Shield is the symbol specified in the 1954 Hague Convention for marking cultural sites, and it was envisioned as a Red Cross for the protection of cultural heritage.

However, a point of contention is whether or not to mark cultural sites with the blue shield logo to signal their protected status in the event of armed conflict. Some fear that marking monuments identifies them as...
ready targets for hostile forces (Luxen, 2004, p. 4). ICBS argues that the risk is worth taking because otherwise they might not receive full protection (MacKenzie, 2002 and 2003, p. 17). The Blue Shield defenders also point out that the Red Cross itself is sometimes targeted but that the benefits of having these organizations outweigh the risks. The critics of the Blue Shield initiative have a point. The very act of labeling something as heritage distinguishes it from other objects and can therefore enhance its value. On the other hand, we privilege objects all the time by placing them in museums or exhibits. As long as we recognize the significance of an object or place value on it, it is at risk. Those out to destroy another’s heritage will have marked targets. Adherents of the Blue Shield approach wager that more good than harm will come of identifying the value and significance of certain monuments.

Thus far the forces of good and the forces of malfeasance or terrorism are in play, and the terrorists have not always been adequately kept in check. One need only draw on the example of the destruction of the Buddhas in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, in 2001. Yet, even if international intervention was not successful in that instance, if we are to preserve monuments we must do so through a coalition of all peoples and through local, as well as global, action. Philosopher John Rawls (1971) would probably assert that principles of “right action” are justifiable for their own sake, independent of the amount of good that the just actions result in.

International law, professional practice, and the concern of the general public seem to point to the existence of a moral imperative to preserve. After a natural disaster such as the 2004 tsunamis or Hurricane Katrina, governments, NGOs, and individual citizens mobilized quickly to try to mitigate the long-term damage to libraries, archives, and museums, as well as dealing with the immediate needs of people and communities for shelter, food, and communications. When victims of disasters are interviewed they often lament the loss of their family photos more than the loss of their dwellings because their dwellings are replaceable. There seems to be an almost instinctive need for individuals to preserve their own personal histories. Today there is a growing emphasis on community-based preservation. In Chile they have a term for this: mingaco, an Indian word that signifies collective preservation.20 Put another way, it is the notion of cultural stewardship. In the words of a political scientist who has written extensively on human rights,

Culture is a very deep part of individuality. To assure the dignity and well-being of future generations we need to safeguard culture. Monuments are a visual library of our human as well as our spiritual passage in all of its fullness—good and evil. It is always cultural monuments that are under attack in political conflicts—and for a very good reason; [to destroy cultural objects creates] a blow to society and to peoples’ sense of security and identity.21
However we choose to define *morality*, it has an important role to play in monumental preservation. Contemporary philosophers are addressing the functioning of morality in the context of such global concerns as the environment and the prevention of nuclear war. The preservation of cultural heritage—monumental preservation—is a concern that fits alongside these others for the reasons that I suggest. But as forceful as a moral stance may sometimes be, it is still subject to war, terrorism, natural disasters, technological obsolescence, and the innate human desire to empower oneself at the expense of others. It is perhaps this last vulnerability that is most difficult to overcome.

“The rules of the game include some national rules, some international rules, some private rules—and large areas of no rules at all.” This observation by Susan Strange in “Economic Power and Who Has It?” (1975) applies aptly to preservation. The protection of cultural heritage has been attended to in international conventions, laws, and treaties, but it is the “large areas of no rules at all” that continue to challenge us.

**Notes**

1. The title refers to a talk by Librarian of Congress James H. Billington titled “The Moral Imperative of Conservation,” which was first delivered at the Art Institute of Chicago on June 16, 1987, and was again presented to the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) October 22, 1987, meeting. It was published in Merrill-Oldham (1988, pp. 5–12). Despite the title of this article, it is a meditation on cultural memory and the role of conservation and preservation in sustaining cultural heritage. He discusses cultural values and preservation, but does not consider “moral issues.”

2. In some other versions of the Bible, “many days” is translated as “for a long time.”

3. In *Innocents Abroad* Mark Twain talks about a practice of pilgrims to the Holy Land who chopped off pieces of famous buildings for their records of their travel. In a way, like Lord Elgin with the marbles, they were taking home artifacts to preserve memory. But in so doing, they were destroying that which needed preservation from them. On one side, the original is deteriorating in order to preserve memories of the excursion, of the experience. On the other side, this “preservation” of memory creates an urgency to preserve that which they are trying to remember. It is two kinds of preservation.


5. See in particular Kant (1964). Contemporary philosophers, including W. D. Ross (1974), have been highly critical of Kant’s logic. Frankena and Granrose (1974) have reprinted an excerpt from Ross’s *Foundations of Ethics* and titled the excerpt “Criticism of Kant.” Bernard Mayo wrote, “It has been said that the whole of Western philosophy is a set of footnotes to Plato. . . And modern ethics is a set of footnotes, not to Plato, but to Kant, and, more remotely, to the Old Testament and Roman Law” (Frankena & Granrose, 1974, p. 231).

6. I am also drawing on Hare (1972).

7. Thanks to Diane Raymond for making these essays known to me.

8. M. G. Bouvard, in an e-mail to the author, October 17, 2005.

9. According to Knuth, Raphael Lemkin coined *genocide* in the 1930s to refer to the murder of whole races and tribes; the term was adopted by the United Nations in 1946. *Libricide* is “the regime-sponsored, ideologically driven destruction of books and libraries” (Knuth, 2003 p. 5).

10. Though this publication is intended for young adults, the author has presented the material in sufficient detail that it is useful for a general audience.


12. There are also many other factors, including religious ones, but they are beyond the scope of this article.
14. Adherents to this view include Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. For the perspective of interdependence see Keohane and Nye (2001). Under the George W. Bush administration, realism has dominated the U.S. approach to international “diplomacy.”
16. Francis Lieber’s Code was issued as Instructions for the Governance of Armies of the United States in the Field, General Orders No. 100 on April 24, 1863; later it was simply called the Lieber Code. The text is available at http://www.civilwarhome.com/libercode.htm (retrieved on October 10, 2005).
17. For a comprehensive list, see Boylan (2001).
18. According to Arlene Krimgold Fleming (1996), “The United States is not a party to the Hague Convention, reportedly because, during the Cold War, the government was unwilling to promise not to bomb the Kremlin, a listed cultural monument.”
20. I was introduced to this concept at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, which was held in Buenos Aires in 2004. At panel no. 107 (August 25), “Preservation and Conservation with Audiovisual and Multimedia,” Antonieta Palma discussed this concept in her talk, “Los Archivos Sonoros y Audiovisuales de Chile.”
21. M. G. Bouvard in e-mail correspondence with the author, April 21, 2005, and October 17, 2005.

REFERENCES


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