

Routledge Studies in Library and Information Science

GLOBALIZING THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIANS AND DEVELOPMENT WORK, 1945–1970

Amanda Laugesen



Globalizing the Library

Globalizing the Library focuses on the globalization of information and the library in the period following the Second World War. Providing an examination of the ideas and aspirations surrounding information and the library, as well as the actual practices and actions of information professionals from the United States, Britain, and those working with organizations such as Unesco to develop library services, this book tells an important story about international history that also provides insight into the history of information, globalization, and cultural relations.

Exploring efforts to help build library services and train a cohort of professional librarians around the globe, the book examines countries in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific during the period of the Cold War and decolonization. Using the ideas of ‘library diplomacy’ and ‘library imperialism’ to frame Anglo-American involvement in this work, Laugesen examines the impact library development work had on various countries. The book also considers what might have motivated nations in the global South to use foreign aid to help develop their library services and information infrastructure.

Globalizing the Library prompts reflection on the way in which library services are developed and the way professional knowledge is transferred, while also illuminating the power structures that have shaped global information infrastructures. As a result, the book should be essential reading for academics and students engaged in the study of libraries, development, and information. It should also be of great interest to information professionals and information historians who are reflecting critically on the way information has been transferred, consumed, and shaped in the modern world.

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Introduction

Libraries for the world

In June 1953, a special edition of Unesco's magazine, the *Unesco Courier*, was dedicated to highlighting the public library and the work of the agency in the development of public libraries around the globe. It was filled with articles with titles such as 'A Sikh Taxi Driver Discovers the Road to the Library' and illustrated with pictures of children and adults around the world, including from countries such as India, France, the USA, Brazil, and Nigeria, reading books or patronizing libraries or bookmobiles. The overwhelming vision communicated by the edition, which had on its front cover the legend 'Books without Chains', was a world united by the library and the books contained therein.¹

In the decades following the end of the Second World War, librarians in a number of countries, including the United States and Britain, worked through both national organizations and institutions, as well as international bodies such as Unesco and IFLA, to develop libraries and the profession of librarianship. Their motivations were diverse and included those who felt they were helping to further world peace and understanding, those who felt they were assisting the 'free world' fight Communism, those who believed in the 'uplift' of those in the developing nations, and those who sought to improve the status of their profession at home. Regardless of motivation, the work that was undertaken to develop libraries, especially in what was then understood as the 'Third World' and today more commonly referred to as 'the Global South', was reflective of important internationalist efforts to promote information and cultural networks across the globe.

This book seeks to explore the history of international library development work in the quarter of a century that followed the end of the Second World War. In doing so, this book tells an important story about internationalism, globalization, the (attempted) spread of information and ideologies about information and how it should be used, modernization and modernity, and the making of the modern world in a crucial period in world history. It explores the ideas and work of a number of librarians and organizations from the USA and Britain, as well as Unesco, and examines how this work played out and was received (and adapted, accepted, or rejected) on the ground in a

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variety of so-called ‘developing’² nations, with a focus on countries in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific.

The postwar period was a critical period in the development of libraries globally. As the world emerged from a devastating war and entered the nuclear age, it seemed more imperative than ever to find ways to facilitate global communication and the sharing of knowledge. With areas of the globe moving out of the orbit of old empires to become new states and with the ideological struggle that saw these areas potentially coming under the influence of either Western capitalist democracies or communism, libraries were promoted as essential educational and cultural institutions for developing countries. People were increasingly regarded as being fundamentally the same across the globe, with only economic and technological disadvantages separating societies.

The story of international library development work is a crucial one in understanding the way modern ideas about information were formed and is essential in placing information work (and workers) within the story of modernization and internationalism. Libraries are all too frequently seen as peripheral institutions, with library history relegated to the margins of historical scholarship. The ideologies of information and knowledge that were articulated and played out in international library development work shaped the modern world.

This book, in keeping with its historical approach and methodology, relies on a rich range of archival sources, while also aiming to build on and draw from scholarship in several key areas. First, it seeks to contribute to the field of the history of the library and information. Scholars are increasingly concerned with explicitly studying the history of information, reflecting our awareness of its importance in our contemporary world. Toni Weller argues that information ‘has a rich but currently under-explored history’ and that information ‘is a vital and intriguing subject of historical enquiry’.³ In addition, W. Boyd Rayward has suggested that we need a more inclusive and multidisciplinary approach to the history of information than has been possible so far.⁴

Library history can be considered as a subset of information history, highlighting the significance of organized collections of information and the role of institutions and individuals in this.⁵ The history of public libraries is fascinating, Alistair Black suggests, because of ‘the multiplicity of dichotomies, or contradictions, that one can observe in its professed purpose and in its everyday functioning’.⁶ In addition, Steven Witt suggests that studying the rise of what he calls ‘global librarianship’ can be an important means of understanding ‘the role of libraries and knowledge production in societal change’.⁷

The story of libraries in this period is also a facet of the history of the book in this period. Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond have talked about the notion of ‘books without borders’, and they call for a transnational history of the book.⁸ While libraries were concerned with more than just

books, connecting people with books was central to their mission. Libraries formed part of the critical infrastructure that connected people with books and shaped their encounters with reading. Librarians were also sometimes involved with publishers and commercial initiatives to convey national (British or American) commercial products (books) to emerging nations and to help them gain a foothold and recognition in the market. Libraries thus must be acknowledged as a critical part of the story of the postwar attempt to globalize the book and to promote (certain types of) reading.

A view of how information networks were built through the institution of the library in the postwar world can provide useful historical perspectives that illuminate contemporary concerns. In particular, the postwar story reveals the dynamics of power involved in the construction of information infrastructure, as well as the very real influence of constructed ideologies of information. Through the postwar period, many librarians embraced the vision of a world brought together by information and knowledge. The making of ‘one world’ through information (or other means) was often presented as a positive and progressive goal to aspire to, but as Jo-Anne Pemberton warns, there is moral vanity in the belief that the world will become a better place if shaped in accordance with what she terms as ‘this or that group’s pet ideals’.⁹ Unpacking the ideals that guided information and library work in this period is therefore an essential task.

It is possible to understand the story of international library development work as an exercise in imperialism. In some cases – for example, Britain’s library work in countries still under colonial control in the immediate postwar period – library development work explicitly took place within imperial structures, but much development and aid work in this period can be seen as a different form of imperialism – Western ‘experts’ taking their expertise to developing nations and helping ‘traditional’ societies become ‘modern’. Development was a process whereby countries’ infrastructure and economies were built up; in this period, a major goal of Western nations was to present a model of development that made countries more Western and capitalist (that is, more like them). Development work intersected with and was informed by ideologies of modernization, and modernization, as Michael Adas has stated, ‘supplanted the beleaguered civilizing mission as the pre-eminent ideology of Western dominance’.¹⁰ Keeping in mind that international library development work can be understood as a form of imperialism allows a focus on the nature of power and control that operated in the broader ‘First-to-Third’ world relationship through the postwar period. Decolonizing nations embraced modernization and aid efforts in many instances, while also protesting and resisting the cultural imperialism they felt sometimes went with these efforts. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that the modernization and aid projects of the postwar period retained explicit power dynamics that shaped global political relations.

Modernization theory and development efforts through the Cold War are topics of growing concern in the historical scholarship of the postwar period.

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There are a number of histories of modernization, many of which focus on American modernization efforts. Modernization theorists of the 1950s and 1960s argued that all societies were moving toward an end goal of modernity (which would resemble something like the modern USA) and were undergoing a process of economic and social change. This process needed guidance by the West to ensure that it resulted in a capitalist, if not democratic, end point. The USSR offered a powerful alternative model of modernization. It has been noted by David Engerman and Corinna Unger that historians ‘know less about modernization on the ground’.¹¹ Sandrine Kott has emphasized how models of modernity shaped the nature of lived experience everywhere;¹² we need to know more about this, and examining library work is one way of illuminating an aspect of this lived experience of modernization. Libraries were imagined as being part of the essential infrastructure of modernity.

The Cold War is a major area of scholarly concern and the literature on it is voluminous. Here it is worth mentioning a couple of key areas in Cold War scholarship that have informed this work. Modernization studies have already been mentioned. More generally, the Cold War has become an area of study that has both sought to acknowledge the *global* dimensions of the conflict and the *cultural* dimensions of the conflict. Scholars such as Odd Arne Westad have demonstrated how the Cold War impacted on the developing world, and scholars such as Heonik Kwon have further argued that we must understand the Cold War as a global conflict that was not experienced on the same terms all over the world.¹³

International library development took place crucially within the framework of the cultural Cold War. The ‘cultural Cold War’ was a product of a war of ideologies, in which the competing powers sought to persuade the world of the ‘rightness’ of their worldview. Cultural diplomacy histories and histories of the cultural Cold War abound, especially histories of the United States Information Agency (USIA), which operated throughout the Cold War to communicate information about the USA around the globe, including through information (USIS) centers. Few of these histories focus explicitly on the information library *as a library*, although Kenneth Osgood briefly touches on the role of books and libraries/information centers in American Cold War cultural diplomacy efforts, and Richard T. Arndt, a former diplomat, discusses USIA libraries in his study of the agency.¹⁴ Library work more broadly became part of the cultural Cold War as librarians sought to negotiate and articulate a variety of ideals around the nature of information and consumption of information.

Library development work was clearly shot through with Cold War concerns, and it would be true to say that librarians frequently, if not always consciously, played out foreign policy goals in their undertakings and sometimes echoed ideological stances in their library rhetoric – for example, in promoting the library as a democratic institution. Yet the story of what we might call ‘library internationalism’ also reveals other dimensions to the postwar library development story. International library

work involved very real international exchanges and the building of international professional and social networks. Recent histories of cultural diplomacy have emphasized the multiple ways cultural exchanges operated, often working both for and against the intentions of official government programs.¹⁵ Library training and exchange programs, as well as the survey and advisory work of library consultant ‘experts’, forged real international relationships that could work to bypass Cold War tensions and forge different sorts of cultural relations.

Decolonization is the other critical framework that informs library development work in this period. A.G. Hopkins argues that the Cold War should be fitted into the broader story of decolonization (rather than the other way around) and that both of these should be seen within a wider context of global transformations of power, interests, and values in the postwar era.¹⁶ Jordanna Belkin has emphasized the importance of seeing decolonization as a social process as much as a political process.¹⁷ Christopher Dietrich too writes that decolonization was always multidimensional and multi-layered.¹⁸ The complicated story of postwar decolonization is a vital context for understanding library development work; the story of library development work reveals both the social and cultural processes of decolonization but also demonstrates the continuation of colonial and external power in the institutions and infrastructures of new nations – and suggests the real tensions and frustrations of this. Decolonization was imagined by the United Nations, Keith Feldman observes, as an ‘orderly, peaceful operation guided by Euro-American-style cosmopolitanism’.¹⁹ It was often anything but, and the consequences and legacies of imperialism lingered.

The international work of librarians has not been extensively studied to date. One of the few contributions to this area is Gary Kraske’s *Missionaries of the Book: The American Library Profession and the Origins of United States Cultural Diplomacy* (1985). He examines the origins of library internationalism in the years preceding the Second World War. He notes that this kind of work was undertaken by a small group of what he describes as ‘more cosmopolitan and scholarly members of the profession’.²⁰ Kraske is particularly interested to examine how American librarians worked in early Cold War cultural diplomacy activities, particularly as undertaken by the Department of State and the United States Information Agency. However, as will be examined in this book, ‘library internationalism’ was much broader-reaching. It extended beyond the work of information libraries and their librarians, and it also was undertaken by other countries, not just the USA.

This study thus explores the much broader dimensions of library internationalism in the postwar decades. It considers the very real contributions made by librarians to the construction and practices of ‘library imperialism’ and ‘library diplomacy’ and so contributes substantially to understanding the role of librarians, libraries, and information in the broader Cold War and decolonization story.

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This book examines international library development work from the end of the Second World War to the end of the 1960s. This 25-year period was a critical one in the twentieth century. After the end of the war – with its devastating impact on the world and the defining markers of the Holocaust and the dropping of atomic bombs – many in the Western nations embraced a program of rapid economic development, while other areas of the world moved out of colonialism and moved ahead with their own programs of economic and social development.

This book concentrates on the story of how Britain, the USA, and Unesco sought to construct a postwar library and information discourse and tried to put it into practice through providing assistance and expertise in building library services globally. I have chosen to focus on British and American librarians, as well as the library development activities of Unesco and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) that also involved librarians from a number of Western European and Commonwealth nations. Librarians from developing countries also played a role in shaping international librarianship – Indian librarian S.R. Ranganathan perhaps being the most notable of these but also including many less well-known librarians who forged professional relationships and traveled to the USA and Britain to visit and to study. There are many more stories to be told about library internationalism, including efforts within the Francophone world, the role of Scandinavian librarians, and the work of librarians within and beyond the Eastern bloc.

The USA and Britain had long traditions of public libraries, and American librarians in particular developed a strong sense of professionalism and concern with the intellectual, social, and political dimensions of their profession. Both of these countries were very active in international library development work in the postwar period, and their ideas, example, and activities shaped international librarianship in many parts of the world. Both countries also used libraries and information in a significant way in their cultural diplomacy efforts. Such work also had the effect of informing and inspiring reflection on professional practices and a broader sense of ‘international consciousness’ at home in the USA and Britain. It is worth noting, however, that not all librarians, even when embracing the idea of internationalism, agreed on its dimensions or how it should be put into practice. British and American librarians developed different ideas around internationalism and international library work, with British librarians sometimes questioning the idealism of American librarians, and American librarians complaining of British methods.

Librarians from these countries (and others) who worked in international library development were often actively involved in international organizations such as Unesco and IFLA. Any story of library development in the postwar period must consider the role of both bodies. Unesco, established in 1946, played an important role in bringing together librarians across the library nations, as well as in developing nations. Libraries were seen as a key

way in which information could be taken to all areas of the globe, facilitating progress and development. Library activity thus became a key concern for Unesco from its establishment, with the organization publishing the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries*, organizing regular workshops and conferences that brought librarians from various countries together to discuss library issues and sponsoring a variety of schemes to promote activities such as bibliographical services, microfilming of resources, publication exchanges, and demonstration libraries. In 1956, the president of Britain's Library Association, Edward Sydney, noted that Unesco had influenced and encouraged 'almost every public library enterprise in the world'.²¹ IFLA, as a representative body of library associations (although skewed to Western librarians), worked with Unesco in the postwar period and also helped to articulate common concerns and issues across the library nations; however, it remained largely focused on Europe through this period, and this limited its role in the development of the profession globally.

Lewis Stieg writing in 1968 noted that over 1,000 American librarians had some kind of overseas experience, although this only constituted about 3% of the total American Library Association membership at the time. He also noted that for each year in the decade immediately following the end of the Second World War (1946–55), an average of 200 American librarians were overseas in some capacity.²² While these statistics suggest that the percentage of librarians who engaged in overseas work was small, it was not insignificant. And those who participated in and advocated for international library development work often had considerable influence within their profession, often being librarians who were otherwise involved in professional concerns.

Many of these librarians were often internationalists, even cosmopolitans. Scholars have noted how the mid-twentieth century decades saw a fascination with internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and the making of a global community;²³ the library profession was not immune from the effects of this. Librarians envisioned a 'one world' of professional library networks, with librarians across the globe wedded to a common cause of uniting the world through books, reading, knowledge, and education. These librarians were motivated by various causes including the desire for world peace, the promotion of their profession, humanitarianism, or even the desire to 'uplift' people considered to be trapped in 'traditional' ways of life. This book argues that an understanding of their work provides an important insight into the nature of postwar internationalism, as well as allowing us to consider the extent to which the values and ideals professed by librarians were challenged and shaped by real problems and complexities in a global context.

The developing countries that worked with Britain, the USA, and Unesco participated in this work for a variety of reasons. Many countries embraced development and modernization as a path to national modernity; these countries also worked politically in this period to become a 'third force' in international politics. The nonaligned movement in the 1960s represented an effort on the part of a number of countries to try to assert their own power separate

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to the Cold War ‘binary logic’.²⁴ Indeed, the story of library development unveils the complexities and impact of both the Cold War and decolonization on the ground and reveals how people in developing countries became caught up in, and tried to assert themselves within, these processes, as well as in the globalization of culture.

The way information and libraries were imagined in these decades shaped the way society, culture, and politics were thought about. Libraries and library development work became sites where ideas about modernity and international exchange, knowledge and information, the self and society were negotiated. In the actions of librarians and other information professionals in this period, we can see how these ideas and imaginings played themselves out in reality, shaping developing nations as they moved forward and also influencing the Western nations that participated in them.

Library thought and ideology was central to shaping international library development activity. Some of the key ideas articulated by librarians in relation to international library development are explored in Chapter 1. Several themes emerge as being of concern to librarians in the postwar period, and these ideas helped to frame and justify international involvement and activities. For example, the postwar period saw a preoccupation with the desire to use information and libraries as a way to facilitate greater understanding between nations and peoples and so further world peace. Such a goal shaped international library work and helped to make sense of why it was important to be involved in such work. In the 1950s and 1960s, with the Cold War and the threat of nuclear war being very real, there was a strong sense that working to further the goal of international understanding and world peace was of major importance. Other themes explored through the chapter include the idea that libraries could help to both make the modern nation and the modern self.

The second chapter considers how the ‘problem’ of libraries in the emerging nations began to be imagined and understood. Through surveys and seminars, the lack of libraries was identified, and possible solutions and plans began to be debated and discussed. Survey work was shaped by ideas about ‘traditional’ societies, modernization theory, and the desire to ‘know’ the countries and people being surveyed. Much of this work was undertaken by ‘experts’ who articulated the ‘problem’, conceived of the ‘developmental subject’, and looked to implement technocratic solutions through the application of expertise and Western know-how. While they sometimes acknowledged the limitations of Western library models for developing societies, the Anglo-American library model was often held up as a solution.

The next chapter looks at some of the various library projects undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s. The chapter begins by examining the ‘pilot’ public libraries that were set up by Unesco. These demonstration libraries, established in places such as Delhi, India, and Enugu, Nigeria, aimed to provide a model for other libraries in an area to follow and to acquaint people with the workings of a public library. Some of the various projects to establish

school, university, and public libraries are then examined, revealing the efforts made and the challenges faced in trying to establish library services where few or none existed. The chapter then turns to considering some of the aspects of the modern library that were transferred to these new libraries, including the promotion of ideas such as classification and bibliography. The role of technology as a possible solution to the ‘information explosion’ of the postwar years is also addressed. These practices and technologies helped to build an international ethos of librarianship based on such technologies and practices – such technologies and practices were in turn grounded in ideologies about, and understandings of, information and modern society.

One of the major problems identified for the development of a strong library service in many countries was the shortage of qualified and trained staff. Library training was a major issue in library development work, and a variety of programs and projects addressed this. In addition, efforts to develop a global library profession through the formation and activities of library associations contributed to the development of library services in emerging nations. The fourth chapter thus addresses some of the ways in which training for librarians was undertaken in this period and discusses some of the problems encountered.

In the next chapter, we explore library work as foreign policy, through an examination of information libraries and formal government library and information programs, including the work of the United States Information Agency (established 1953) and the British Council (established 1936). Such work demonstrates how libraries could serve to explicitly buttress foreign policy efforts during the Cold War. USIA libraries, Richard Arndt argues, ‘made a strong political statement about America’.²⁵ But these libraries were also regarded by some librarians as being the only way to demonstrate modern library practices in countries where libraries did not otherwise exist.

The final chapter turns to considering cultural relations, or cultural diplomacy, in practice, another dimension to ‘library diplomacy’. The activities of librarians on the ground forged cultural relations in a variety of ways, sometimes circumventing the more formal efforts of government. Visits of librarians for consulting work, exchange programs offered to librarians to visit the USA and Britain, and everyday interactions of librarians from different nations all served to enact cultural relations in very real ways.

Libraries were key sites where ideas about information and its operation and use were articulated in the postwar world. A variety of ideologies about information were articulated, including the argument that libraries were fundamental to intellectual freedom and democracy. But these ideologies were not value-neutral: Various assumptions were made about the efficacy of libraries, the value of reading, and the type of modern individual and society that was needed. Any exploration of international library work must tease out the complexities and limitations of library thought in this period and question

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some of the assumptions built into the ideologies that motivated international library work.

At the same time, library internationalism in the postwar period, with its optimism and faith in a better tomorrow, provides some instructive lessons. While it is true that international library work made assumptions about the societies where it operated and was not free of colonialism and even racism, efforts to take information and knowledge to the globe were coupled with a faith that it was possible to use information and knowledge to make the world a better place and to avoid conflict. In retrospect, this may seem naïve, and looking at current information issues – for example, that the Internet has not yet delivered the utopia its boosters promised but is suggesting something closer to a prospective dystopian nightmare – we may be especially wary of the promises of information as a means of uniting (and bettering) the world. But a critical perspective on the library internationalism of the past may yet offer some insight into where we are now and where we may go in the future.

Notes

- 1 *Unesco Courier* 6, no. 6 (June 1953).
- 2 There is no ideal term to refer to countries that were considered to be ‘developing’ nations in this period. I have chosen this term as the least problematic and used it as a shorthand to refer to these nations viewed as a collective at a specific point in their histories. However, it should be noted that Western nations made all sorts of assumptions about these countries and regions (and their common features and ‘problems’), and the term ‘developing’ continues to carry some of these assumptions.
- 3 Toni Weller, ‘Conclusion: Information History in the Modern World’, in *Information History in the Modern World: Histories of the Information Age*, ed. Toni Weller (Houndsills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 199, 200.
- 4 W. Boyd Rayward, ‘Information Revolutions, the Information Society, and the Future of the History of Information Science’, *Library Trends* 62, no. 3 (2014): 708. An article discussing the nature of information history as an intellectual discipline is James W. Cortada, ‘Shaping Information History as an Intellectual Discipline’, *Information and Culture* 47, no. 2 (2012): 119–144.
- 5 Toni Weller, *Information History – An Introduction: Exploring an Emergent Field* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2008), 58.
- 6 Alistair Black, ‘“Arsenals of Scientific and Technical Information”: Public Technical Libraries in Britain During and Immediately After World War II’, *Library Trends* 55, no. 3 (Winter 2007): 475.
- 7 Steven Witt, ‘Agents of Change: The Rise of International Librarianship and the Age of Globalization’, *Library Trends* 62, no. 3 (Winter 2014): 505.
- 8 Robert Fraser and Mary E. Hammond, ‘Introduction’, in *Books Without Borders, Volume 1: The Cross-National Dimension in Print Culture*, eds. Fraser and Hammond (Houndsills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3, 9.
- 9 Jo-Anne Pemberton, *Global Metaphors: Modernity and the Quest for One World* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 191.
- 10 Michael Adas, ‘Modernization Theory and the American Revival of the Scientific and Technological Standards of Social Achievement and Human Worth’, in

- Staging Growth: Modernization, Development and the Global Cold War*, eds. David C. Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefle, and Michael E. Latham (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 35.
- 11 David C. Engerman and Corinna R. Unger, ‘Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernization’, *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (June 2009): 380.
- 12 Sandrine Kott, ‘Cold War Internationalism’, in *Internationalism: A Twentieth Century History*, eds. Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 356.
- 13 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 18.
- 14 Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006); Richard T. Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005).
- 15 See, for example, Danielle Foster-Lussier, *Music in America’s Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
- 16 Antony G. Hopkins, ‘Globalisation and Decolonisation’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 5 (2017): 737.
- 17 Jordanna Balkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 237.
- 18 Christopher R.W. Dietrich, *Oil Revolution: Anticolonial Elites, Sovereign Rights, and the Economic Culture of Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 11.
- 19 Keith P. Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 29.
- 20 Gary E. Kraske, *Missionaries of the Book: The American Library Profession and the Origins of United States Cultural Diplomacy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 5.
- 21 Edward Sydney, ‘Public Library Development in the Post-war Years: The First Decade’, *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries* 10, nos. 11–12 (November–December 1956): 255.
- 22 Lewis Stieg, ‘American Librarians Abroad, 1946–65’, *Library Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (October 1968): 317.
- 23 Glenda Sluga, ‘UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley’, *Journal of World History* 21, no. 3 (September 2010): 395; see also Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
- 24 Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, Sandra Bott, Jussi Hanhimaki, and Mario Wyss, ‘Non-alignment, the Third Force, or Fence-Sitting: Independent Pathways in the Cold War’, *International History Review* 37, no. 5 (2015): 901–11.
- 25 Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings*, 156.

1 Imagining the global library

In 1947, a scant two years after the end of the Second World War and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the American Library Association's (ALA) annual meeting addressed the role of the library in the promotion and achievement of international understanding and world peace. Mary Rothrock, the outgoing president, addressed the Association to argue that the events of recent years made it important to see the library 'as an instrument active in the service of mankind'; libraries were not just conservators of cultural heritage, they had a responsibility for 'getting the insides of books into the minds of men'.¹ Paul North Rice, the incoming president, similarly argued in his address to the organization that it was vital to encourage international understanding and that librarians had an essential role to play in this. 'Believing as we do', he declared, 'that our libraries are one force that assures that the United States can never succumb to fascism or any other kind of totalitarianism, we should do everything we can to influence Unesco to stimulate such libraries everywhere'.²

The period following the end of the Second World War saw librarians across a number of countries, as well as through international organizations such as Unesco, attempting to spread the idea of the library, as well as its professional practices and processes, domestically and globally. The library was imagined as playing a vital role in facilitating world understanding, but it was also seen as playing a role in helping what were then considered to be 'under-developed' countries to further their progress toward an imagined end point of modernity. Information, as delivered through books and the library, would shape the modern self, and through the modern self, the modern nation. By helping to guide this development, democratic nations would help to mold better world citizens and further the project of liberal democracy, it would also help to create a more consensus-based society that held common ideas and values.

This chapter traces some of the ideas that were developed through the decades following the Second World War concerning books, libraries, and information, and how these circuits of libraries and information could shape the modern world. Deconstructing these ideas is critical to understanding what motivated librarians, shaped their decisions, and informed their attitudes

and worldview when they worked abroad. Unesco, the USA, and Britain drew on a variety of ideas circulating at the time about society and culture, as well as established traditions and beliefs about the power of books and libraries, to develop a ‘library discourse’ that shaped their activities through several decades of the twentieth century (and as described throughout the rest of this book). American librarians in particular played an important role in articulating and elaborating on these ideas, as did Unesco.³ British librarians also engaged with these ideas – notably Lionel McColvin – but were not as engaged with the development of ‘library thought’ as American members of the profession. As will be clear, librarians from developing nations also responded to and began to contribute to these ideas, although in these years, there were fewer avenues for them to articulate and communicate their own reflections on and attitudes toward libraries and librarianship.

Overall, librarians and those who worked with libraries actively sought a place in public life and advocated the power of libraries in shaping civil society at a critical time in world history. In imagining the library globally, these people played an essential role in promoting new ways of understanding how ideas and information could transform the world. American librarian Leon Carnovsky, a great advocate of international library work, saw librarianship as ‘a discipline rich with international implications’. If librarians came together, they could ‘hasten the day when freedom of information and the spread of culture through libraries are realities everywhere’.⁴ Similarly, Flora Ludington, writing in *Library Quarterly* in 1954, called for American librarians to be ‘international in our thinking’.⁵ In 1956, Edward Sydney, president of Britain’s Library Association, reporting on Unesco’s first ten years of library work, saw postwar work as ‘essentially new’ because it was the first time ‘powerful international forces [were] at work in the cause of public library service’. He also saw international library development work as ‘one of many facets of a post-war world in ferment’.⁶

Three main, overlapping, themes can be discerned in the imagining of the ‘global library’ and will be discussed in this chapter. The first is the ways in which libraries, books, education, and information could serve to promote international understanding and world peace. This first theme developed as a response to the Second World War (although it had its roots in the interwar period) and continued as a response to the tensions of the Cold War (if also inflected with Cold War politics). A second theme that emerges, and that runs through much of the library development work undertaken in this period, is that of helping countries modernize and develop. Building on (and retaining aspects of) earlier (imperial) thinking about welfare, ‘uplift’, and the civilizing project, modernization became a major strain of development thinking and work in the postwar period. Modernization theory seemed to be a convincing paradigm in the middle decades of the twentieth century, and shaped much of the thinking around development and aid generally. Linked to the process of decolonization and nation-building that newly independent countries were experiencing, modernization theory posited that all countries would follow

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a particular path to modernity. Libraries, information, and education were considered to be vital to such development. The final theme relates to how books and libraries were seen to shape the modern individual. This drew on a longer history of the way libraries were considered to be essential in educating the self and shaping the individual and citizen.

These ideas were articulated and communicated through a variety of professional writings, including library association journals, such as the *American Library Association Bulletin* and the *Library Association Record*, international organization journals, such as the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries*, and professional journals such as *Library Quarterly*. Librarians in the library nations who were, by professional necessity, required to be members of their relevant professional association, would have read (or at least been exposed to) these writings, and attended regular conferences relevant to their profession where they would have heard papers on these topics. Students of librarianship would, to varying extents, have been exposed to such ideas in their teaching. Books on topics relating to librarianship, as well as publications such as the various Unesco library manuals, also formed part of the professional information and thinking available to librarians across the library nations and, increasingly, in the developing world. This print culture linked to their professional interests helped to inform, if not shape, the professional views of librarians, also making them aware of the issues being taken up and discussed across the international library world.

These ideas translated into and informed the many activities that were undertaken in library development, some of which are explored in the chapters that follow. While librarians often preferred practical activity to meditating on the intellectual and cultural dimensions of that activity, library thought was important, and helped to establish purpose and give meaning to such international library development work. It also helped to shape an ‘imagined community’ of librarians and allied professionals that operated not just locally, but nationally and globally. Such a vision had its attractions in helping to cultivate a cosmopolitan image for librarianship, but also fundamentally shaped library professionals’ outlook on the world. As librarians sought to advance the argument that libraries could shape the modern world, they were also arguing their own ongoing value and relevance to that world. In addition, information increasingly became part of the social and cultural fabric of modern life, as the idea of the ‘information society’ began to take root.

Libraries and world peace

As Rothrock and Rice’s comments at the 1947 ALA meeting suggest, one of the most important reasons that American librarians looked abroad and concerned themselves with international activity was to help further world peace. This theme was particularly dominant within American library thought but was also articulated by some British librarians.

Concerns with international affairs predated 1945, however, with a variety of American prewar and wartime library activities attesting to the American view that international library work could operate to ameliorate the worst effects of world events. The ALA's International Relations Office (IRO) was established in 1943 in the midst of the Second World War and was supported through funds from the Rockefeller Foundation, a philanthropic foundation that supported, and would continue to support through the postwar period, many international development efforts, including and especially in the educational field. The IRO worked to assist overseas libraries in various ways, including supplying library literature to other nations and distributing bibliographies, assisting in arranging international exchanges, and involving itself in a number of other projects that aimed to take the work of the ALA to the rest of the world.⁷ A Committee on Aid to Libraries in War Areas, also assisted by Rockefeller funds, oversaw the distribution of books abroad during the war years and the years immediately following the war's end. Another ALA Committee, the Committee on Library Co-operation with Latin America, focused on assisting Latin American librarians to travel and study in the United States, helped to provide material on library science to Latin American institutions, and collected information on Latin American libraries.⁸

The Second World War was an incredibly destructive war, and its devastating effects included the destruction of libraries and books in countries on the war's front line. In the immediate aftermath of the war, energies were directed to rebuilding libraries and restoring library collections in Europe and Asia. Librarians recognized the importance of assisting in the reconstruction of war-devastated libraries. Writing in the *ALA Bulletin* in 1946, Mary Rothrock appealed to American librarians to support reconstruction work because it offered 'the opportunity to help stricken peoples by restoring those intellectual agencies through which they can most effectively help themselves'.⁹ British librarians too were involved in reconstruction efforts, although Britain was itself hit by the destruction of the war and suffered from its economic impact. British librarianship during the war years had understandably been more focused on maintaining services to the British population and extending service to the serving forces than with international relief efforts.¹⁰ But the spirit of reconstruction was widespread. The May 1945 edition of the *British Library Association Record* noted, even as the war in Europe had only just ended, that 'reconstruction pervades the whole world of librarianship at the present time'.¹¹

The USA was perhaps the most active 'library nation' in terms of practical international work in the immediate aftermath of the war, given its relative prosperity and lack of home-front destruction. The ALA's International Relations Board (ALA-IRB, the successor to the IRO) turned its attention through 1946 and 1947 to distributing books and periodicals to libraries abroad. Much of this work focused on Europe.¹² While some books were sent to Asia, work in Asia and the Pacific remained difficult so soon after

the conclusion of hostilities, with some areas very difficult to access.¹³ Nevertheless, the ALA-IRB worked with the Department of State to provide books for China and the Philippines; there was also a ‘Books for the Near East’ project on the go.¹⁴ These projects built on the idea of helping countries rebuild after the destruction of the war, but they also segued into new Cold War foreign diplomacy directives of informing countries about the USA and sought to build ‘an appreciation of American culture and understanding and ... a much wider knowledge of the United States in all its aspects’.¹⁵

The infant organization of Unesco, established in 1946, quickly came to concern itself with library work aimed at war-devastated areas. In mid-1948, it was working in both Germany and Japan to help rebuild library collections. In particular, Unesco worked with various countries around the world to encourage the sending of library material to Germany and Japan to rebuild book stocks.¹⁶ Such work had practical effects on the ground helping to restore the collections of libraries, but these efforts were guided by an emerging rhetoric focused on the important role of libraries (and through libraries, books, information, and education) in restoring good relations and helping these countries restart their intellectual life.

Unesco articulated the broader significance of the library as an essential institution in realizing the agency’s broader vision. Its declared goal was to work ‘to promote peace, and social and spiritual welfare by working through the minds of men’.¹⁷ Roger Coate has argued that Unesco was formed as an ‘organization of ideals’, the ‘conscience of a new post-war world order’ representing internationalist sentiments.¹⁸ Clare Wells has further written that Unesco saw its primary task to be the ‘promotion of peace at the level of intellect and conscience’,¹⁹ and hence information and culture were crucial in the work to be promoted and nurtured by the organization. The Unesco Public Library Manifesto, promulgated in 1949, proclaimed ‘Unesco’s belief in the public library as a living force for popular education and for the growth of international understanding, and thereby for the promotion of peace’.²⁰ Public library work was regarded as ‘[a] practical demonstration of international co-operation’, as its director-general Jaime Torres Bodet wrote in 1949.²¹ Unesco also declared that it must work to ‘open the doors [of libraries] and distribute the stored-up knowledge and delights for the use and benefit of mankind’.²² Frank Gardner, a British librarian who worked with the organization, further commented in 1957 that ‘ignorance is not bliss’ and that there was a ‘real and urgent job to be done in pulling down the barriers of language, illiteracy, prejudice, and ignorance that at present stand between man and man, country and country, continent and continent’.²³

Unesco was therefore an important factor in shaping and articulating a postwar library discourse that emphasized the importance of the exchange of information, knowledge, and education as a means for greater international understanding and hence the furthering of world peace. In 1947, the ALA articulated its role in the postwar world in a policy statement. American librarians had, it was argued, a responsibility to world peace: They had a

role to play in facilitating ‘an adequate interpretation abroad of the United States’; the ALA also had a role in providing support for organizations that were seeking to advance ‘international library service’. They should support international exchanges wherever possible and ‘assure the continuation and expansion of the exchange of information and ideas between [the USA] and other countries’. The statement ended with the declaration that ‘[i]t is indeed in the minds of men that lasting peace is to be assured. It is with minds of men that librarians work’.²⁴ This statement clearly echoed the aims and language of Unesco.

A 1947 meeting of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), held in Oslo and the first meeting of the association since the Second World War, saw librarians from a number of countries agree that after the war years this was a much valued opportunity for librarians to meet and talk about both their problems and their ‘hopes for the future in a peaceful world’.²⁵ That year, IFLA and Unesco signed an ‘agreement of mutual recognition’ that saw them work together to promote library work, including a focus on promoting libraries in developing countries.²⁶

The ALA clearly undertook their activities as part of a response to the very real devastation of the war: The world had emerged from the shadow of Nazi Germany and its horrors but also now lived with the reality of a world with nuclear weapons and the possibility of a nuclear Armageddon amid growing tensions with the USSR. In this context, books, libraries, and most importantly thought and culture were invested with particular significance. Carl Milam, a key figure within the ALA in this period, articulated some of these anxieties. In a 1946 *ALA Bulletin* article on adult education, Milam emphasized the importance of having an educated, informed citizenry. He argued that public libraries had to become ‘increasingly aware of social, economic, political, and cultural *objectives* and must learn how to use their materials and personnel to help people advance *towards those objectives*’. For him, these objectives included international cooperation and good race relations.²⁷

Many of the projects undertaken by the ALA were not articulated in explicitly political ways (although the emerging politics of the Cold War can be discerned), except insofar as they attempted to promote this ideal of peace and understanding through the sharing of knowledge. There was some evidence of the creeping Cold War in their campaigns, however. A 1949 campaign ‘Books for the Kids of China’, funded by the Department of State and using ALA input on book selection and purchase, is reflective of how such campaigns were conceived of as promoting the ideals of peace and intercultural understanding but also assuming considerable political dimensions as America tried to prevent China from slipping to communism. The campaign aimed to provide books, mainly picture books, to Chinese children. The books were sent to the US Information Library in Shanghai and then went on a rotating exhibition around 11 United States Information Service (USIS) branches, including those in Nanjing, Tianjin, and Chongqing. From

each of these branch libraries, books were sent out to schools and children's centers. Books were even selected for translation and broadcasting over local radio stations, including books by Mark Twain. The librarian writing about the campaign commented that the campaign would 'perhaps when the children grow up ... help a little in international understanding'.²⁸

American librarians continued to push for the promotion of cultural internationalism despite the growth in Cold War tensions. Ongoing support of the United Nations (a somewhat contentious political issue in the United States) was promoted by the ALA in what was considered in the early 1950s as a 'time of world crisis'. Educating people about the value of the United Nations was seen to be an urgent task; internationalism rather than nationalism was invoked.²⁹ The reality of nuclear bombs required 'sober and continued thought' by the public. Luther Evans, acting Librarian of Congress and future Unesco director-general, saw the United Nations as 'the sole hope of modern man against further warfare'; for American libraries to support the United Nations in its work would be, he argued, 'a welcome opportunity for the manifestation of our deep goodwill'.³⁰

Library development work was increasing cast within a rhetoric of freedom, a discourse mobilized during the Second World War and used once again during the Cold War but which drew on longer American political thought. Luther Evans, then Librarian of Congress, spoke at a symposium on public librarianship in 1952 to talk about 'free libraries in a free world'. The freedom of libraries should be defended at home in the United States but also exported to other countries.³¹ The 'free' public library, American librarian Leon Carnovsky argued, was 'free' in 'the sense that the reader shall be free to choose what he wants, and therefore the library must make available (or be able to borrow) books reflecting all shades of opinion'.³² In 1958, Evans, now director-general of Unesco, called for the ALA to continue its support of the international agency. Highlighting the importance of cultural relations and the work of Unesco in promoting 'tolerance among cultures', he argued that education helped to secure peace. 'I think we have to have faith', he argued, 'that education and cultural understanding would lead to a situation where the chances of peace would be much greater than at the present time'.³³ Also in 1958, Theodore Waller, chair of the International Relations Committee of the ALA addressed the organization to urge the continuing support of international work. 'The times call on us', he instructed the ALA, 'to redouble our efforts to provide through publications and library channels such aid as we can in achieving the necessary level of communication among countries'.³⁴

Waller went on to outline what the ALA, through the IRO, was doing to further international understanding. This included activities such as the exchange of library personnel, participation in Unesco through an ALA panel, placing an observer at the United Nations, and consulting with government 'to insure that the place of libraries and librarianship in overseas information and mutual assistance programs is sustained'.³⁵ Waller encouraged all

American librarians to see international relations as relevant to them in their professional lives:

The world of books is, in a deep and true sense, one world. This is not mere poetry. The practical consequences are that through books, even perhaps more than through the post office and the airplane, let alone the hydrogen bomb – the unity of the world may yet grow. We know that all peoples of the world are, to a degree, united in a common fate and that the best library service is hardly good enough for any of us. We may not have a lot of time. Here in the international field is an area in which individual librarians can in part meet their obligations as citizens in time of stark global crisis.³⁶

A language of crisis can be discerned in postwar library discourse, as Waller's statement makes clear. Such language served to underline the importance of being dedicated to building bridges with the world.

For a number of librarians, the postwar liberal idea of 'one world', articulated in the final years of Second World War, had deep appeal in its emphasis in bringing people together to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. It provided an additional dimension of importance to the library profession. Many librarians embraced the work of Unesco because of this, and not just American librarians. In 1960, British librarian J.M. Martin wrote an essay for the *Library Association Record* on the topic of librarianship and 'one world'. Arguing that since the Second World War, 'the sword has not been beaten into a ploughshare'; it was possible that the 'one world of librarianship could do much to remove fear by providing knowledge'. It was imperative that librarians think internationally, and not parochially.³⁷ Indian librarian S.R. Ranganathan, writing in the *Library Association Record* in 1957, noted that librarians 'must march into the area of international relations' because of the great tensions in international affairs.³⁸

British librarians also contributed to the articulation of a postwar understanding of libraries and library work that was shaped by concerns about world peace, although the theme is less evident in British postwar library writing than it is in the American material. Lionel McColvin, arguably Britain's foremost librarian of the period, observed in his 1956 book *The Chance to Read: Public Libraries in the World Today* that the present age was 'obsessed with the fear of destruction'. Men had to make an active choice between destructiveness or construction, he argued, and libraries – the embrace of knowledge – was part of making the right choice.³⁹

British librarians similarly called for support for the United Nations, and believed that the organization would help the world avoid future conflict. 'It is becoming increasingly realized by men of goodwill everywhere', wrote McColvin in the *Library Association Record* in 1946, 'that the greatest danger to peace and security is the lamentable fact that as individual persons we know so little about our fellow-men in other parts of the world'. Libraries would,

he argued, help people become more familiar with one another. McColvin invoked the image of a ‘frontierless world’ that librarians could help to build to overcome the divisions that could lead to conflict.⁴⁰ In 1946, Prime Minister Clement Atlee, talking at the closure of the wartime Inter-Allied Book Centre, which had collected books for war-damaged libraries, marked the closing by reiterating to his audience of librarians and book industry people that ‘war originates in the minds of men’ and that it was important to ‘build up the defences which will prevent the idea of war taking command. These defences are built out of knowledge and understanding’.⁴¹

Britain’s Library Association also promoted the work of Unesco and encouraged its librarians to join Unesco projects and to undertake work that involved international activity. These activities are discussed in later chapters. Here it is worth noting that British library thought did not focus on the theme of world peace and understanding to the same extent that American librarians did – a far more prominent theme was that of the development of the individual self (discussed below). We shouldn’t go as far as to say that British librarians were *not* concerned with world peace – they clearly were (although perhaps less optimistic, given their own recent experiences through two world wars that took a much bigger toll on Britain than the United States). Yet British librarians seemed warier of making too grand a claim for the power of libraries. Lionel McColvin believed Americans to be too concerned with the library ‘as an instrument for the betterment of people’, and he argued that libraries could only ever be ‘the handmaid’ of cultural and educational institutions.⁴² McColvin did talk, however, about the need for librarians to help make ‘books a living force in the world of today’.⁴³ Although focusing on the individual, he argued in his 1952 Presidential Address that:

The peace of the world depends not alone on *our* good will and understanding but on the good will and understanding of all men, upon the gradual overthrow of those conflicts born of ignorance, intolerance, social maladjustments, and economic pressures that alone lead to war. If we escape mass destruction by the ABC of the Civil Defence – atomic, biological and chemical warfare – we may well die of starvation unless millions, maybe far removed, can learn enough to apply known methods of soil conservation, plant and animal breeding and disease prevention and unless they can also see why they themselves would benefit by the development of concepts of free, individual development. All of these are matters where education, books, and libraries have a major part to play.⁴⁴

Librarians across the globe continued to point to the value of information and knowledge exchange as central to the achievement of world peace and international understanding, even as the world seemed increasingly fractious through the 1960s. The president of IFLA, speaking at its conference in Bern in 1962, commented that the library profession continued to have a function ‘of uniting nations ... just at those times when political relations are bad or

even have been torn asunder', as well as at times 'when slender bridges, often under the circumstances much too slender political or economic bridges, are erected between nations should help to strengthen the foundations'.⁴⁵ B.S. Kesavan, Indian librarian and bibliographer, addressed the 13th biennial conference of the Library Association of Australia in 1965, noting that there 'is no easy way to international peace and understanding', but he noted the value that 'men learn to know and to be themselves and to respect the diversity which enriches the world'.⁴⁶ In 1968, Curt D. Wormann, Israeli librarian and soon-to-be visiting professor to Columbia University's School of Library Science, wrote in the professional journal *Library Quarterly* that international library cooperation was still an important goal and would help achieve 'better human understanding' and facilitate 'the social and cultural progress of the worldwide community of our time'.⁴⁷ In troubled times, he believed that the library still held out an important means for furthering world peace and understanding.

Libraries and the global project of modernization and modernity

The postwar world was shaped by the forces of decolonization, as many areas formerly under imperial control gained independence and industrial and economic development. The belief that all countries were on a path to modernity was far-reaching and persuasive through to the 1970s when such beliefs came under fire. International library and information work was often placed within a broader political and intellectual discourse about modernization, and this concern with the way information, libraries, and education could further development and progress can be discerned early in the postwar period. Unesco in particular was concerned with the potential of libraries in furthering education and development, and through that, to assist all nations in achieving modernity. A second theme we can therefore explore in library thought in this period is that of how libraries could help societies progress and achieve a very particular type of modernity.

The linking of national development and the library was not entirely a product of the post–Second World War period, although it reached its fullest articulation in those decades. The idea of the library as a nation-building vehicle had been deployed in colonial contexts. For example, George Roe's study of influential Indian librarian S.R. Ranganathan demonstrates that Indian librarians explicitly linked the library to anti-colonialism and nationalism in the years before the Second World War. While Ranganathan was wary of linking the library movement directly to the political agenda of the Indian National Congress that was pushing for Indian independence, he saw the library as a vital means of self-empowerment in the face of imperial control.⁴⁸

In the immediate postwar period, Britain attempted to assist countries within their empire to prepare for independence. A strong emphasis in the early years was on colonial 'welfare' and education that would allow those

who were regarded as not yet prepared for independence to become so. British librarian R.A. Flood, writing about public libraries in the British colonies in 1951, regarded colonial populations as ‘not ready’ for self-government, and it was thus the responsibility of the governing power to provide appropriate education so as to assist them. This would also, Flood argued, serve to protect the Commonwealth as a whole, so it was ‘not wrecked by the inability of a large part of its peoples to govern themselves’.⁴⁹ Public libraries were important in this effort, because education was insufficient on its own. Flood concluded that ‘[t]he public library is the community’s storehouse and distributor of knowledge. Without a public library service a community cannot have access to knowledge and without knowledge it cannot progress, indeed it will stagnate and ultimately degenerate’.⁵⁰ He therefore advocated that much more needed to be done to develop public libraries in the colonies.

This explicitly imperial framework can be discerned in British library thought about modernization for a number of years following the war and carried the baggage of ways of thinking about the empire and subject populations. However, increasingly through the postwar period, the idea of modernization was embraced as a way to focus on the development of ‘under-developed’ nations in a way that was not explicitly recognized as imperial. The USA in particular contributed to the development of thinking about modernization as they rose to global superpower status and became increasingly involved in countries around the world as part of the Cold War.

Modernization was a powerful intellectual paradigm that shaped politics and policy through the 1950s and 1960s, falling somewhat out of favor by the 1970s. Modernization intellectuals argued that ‘traditional’ societies were transitioning to become ‘modern’ through a process of economic, social, and political change.⁵¹ It imagined this process of modernization as universal and inevitable. All societies were moving toward an end point of modernity that resembled a typical Western liberal democracy, and it was especially important that the West ensure that developing countries did not follow the Soviet path to a modernity that was not democratic or capitalist in nature. Particularly powerful in the USA, this belief shaped US foreign policy and shaped development aid and projects that were undertaken through these decades by both government and NGOs. Michael Latham notes that modernization ‘was also a vision of the United States and the nation’s mission to transform a world eager to learn the lessons only America could teach’.⁵²

Modernization was, according to David Ekbladh, ‘deeply implicated in what has more aptly been described as the establishment of American global hegemony’. He also notes that development was ‘a weapon in the ideological combat that was the Cold War’.⁵³ Modernization was not just about technologies and infrastructure, but was also about a type of outlook and attitude.⁵⁴ Nils Gilman writes that modernization theorists imagined modernity as ‘not just an aesthetic phenomenon but also a form of social and political practice in which history, society, economy, culture, and nature itself were all to be the object of technical transformation’. Modernization theory posited that a

'meliorist, rationalizing, benevolent, technocratic state could solve all social and especially economic ills'.⁵⁵ As Daniel Speich has noted, through the 1950s and 1960s there was a 'practically unlimited trust in scientific and technical expertise'. But he also notes that 'developmental knowledge always found itself exposed to ideological claims in the context of the global Cold War'.⁵⁶

This ideological and intellectual framework was a powerful one and informed the way in which a variety of people who worked with international development projects – including library development – understood the world and their work in it. Modernization provided, as Michael Latham suggests, a 'powerful and appealing narrative' that 'promised that sweeping changes were possible and that the world would be rapidly transformed'.⁵⁷ Modernization was deeply implicated in defining global power relations. Both of the two superpowers sought to control the 'Third World' and to help determine the path of its development. Development and modernization came to be deployed as weapons in the ideological Cold War.⁵⁸ Scholars have noted that those on the receiving end of such projects 'contested and negotiated its deployment in important ways'.⁵⁹ For developing nations themselves, especially after the Second World War, there was often a conscious effort to embrace the project of modernization, and they too must be considered as agents in this process.

Education and literacy were considered to be integral to modernization and development work. As Harvey Graff suggests, modern states have considered (and often promoted) literacy and progress as identical. Literacy is considered to be a 'distinguishing feature of a civilized man and a civilized society'.⁶⁰ He further writes that '[t]he rise of literacy and its dissemination to the popular classes, therefore, was, and is, associated with the triumph of light over darkness, or liberalism, democracy, and universal unbridled progress; literacy takes its place among the other successes, and causes, of modernity and rationality'.⁶¹ Yet this link between literacy and progress needs to be queried – empirically, the link is not absolute, and the ideological basis for promoting this argument needs to be viewed critically. Historically, literacy can be understood as a way to shape and control (especially indigenous) populations in colonial contexts.⁶²

The library nations and Unesco actively embraced the push for spreading literacy and basic education in the postwar period, linking libraries to the fight. In 1947, Theodore Besterman, counselor for the Unesco Library and Documentation Service, addressed the ALA. Unesco was to concern itself with fighting global illiteracy and was already engaging in programs in countries such as Haiti and China. But library work played an essential role: '[I]f you teach a man to eat you might as well provide him with something to eat when he has acquired the art'.⁶³ A 1953 edition of the *Unesco Courier* was devoted to discussing the public library and similarly commented that fundamental education programs were not going to be of much use or impact if those who were newly literate had 'nothing to read or only strip cartoons and the trivial but dangerous trash that can be found even where there are no good

books at all'.⁶⁴ Here the literacy student had to be exposed to 'quality' reading material, which libraries could provide.

Unesco worked to promote a broader vision of the value of the library, especially in the developing world, in helping to create the modern state and to supplement the mass education programs it worked to support. A 1951 conference on public libraries in Latin America, held in São Paulo in Brazil, saw librarians gather from around the region and the world. Luis F. Málaga, librarian of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, addressed the conference to identify the needs and objectives of libraries in Latin America. While Latin America had public libraries, they were not able to fulfill the needs of what he called 'popular education'. Education would be vital to Latin America's development, and Málaga argued that libraries needed to be transformed:

Public libraries will no longer remain warehouses for books or a refuge for unfortunate writers, but will be agencies for fundamental education collaborating in the work of teaching the ignorant masses. They will complement the education given in the schools and help to form the reading public of the future. They will act as social service agencies offering information, advice, recreation and guidance to children, adolescents and adults who do not come under the influence of formal education – regardless of social conditions, nationality, race, creed, language or profession. And finally they will be at the service of the interests of the community and of the highest human ideals, to awaken the social consciences of the individual and of the group, to contribute to the development of creative activities for the people and to guide and direct the altruism of the best elements of society.⁶⁵

While much of the conference was devoted to discussing practical library development work, such conferences helped to articulate and promote ideas about the value of the library in development, reconceived the role of libraries in helping countries develop, and served to propagate such ideas with librarians.

Through the postwar period, but especially in the earlier years, library development discourse also drew on a strain of thought that presented the library as central to civilization and a civilizing tool. American librarian and professor of library science, Pierce Butler, commented in 1952 that 'the library contributes not merely to the well-being of civilization but to its existence'.⁶⁶ William H. Carlson, University Librarian at Oregon State University and a former president of the Association of College and Research Libraries, wrote a brief article in the *ALA Bulletin* in 1958 entitled 'The World Wakes Up to Read'. This article aimed to put National Library Week, an annual American library activity, into an international context. He took the opportunity to praise Unesco for helping to 'effectively and quietly roll back the dark curtain of ignorance that rests over all who have not mastered the mysteries of the

printed word'. He believed that 'the peoples of all the world are awakening through reading'. Carlson argued that the USA could help to 'let the sunshine of knowledge and the cheerful light of understanding through reading shine on all the peoples of our planet'.

Frank M. Gardner, a British librarian who traveled to India to view the first Unesco pilot public library in 1955, saw such library activities as being central to any attempt at social betterment in such countries. He argued that the 'extension of public library service to all the world should be our [American librarians] twentieth century purpose'.⁶⁷ Other librarians similarly linked the establishment of public libraries to progress in 'underdeveloped countries'. British librarian Edward Sydney, president of the Library Association, in 1956 linked Unesco's public library work – which he determined as hugely influential – to the broader United Nations' brief to 'raise the standard of living in underdeveloped countries'.⁶⁸ The assumptions underpinning Gardner's and other librarians' thinking about developing societies is evident: These were 'traditional' societies that would be lifted out of the darkness of ignorance. These views were not without the taint of racialist thinking. In 1959, S.B. Aje, a Nigerian librarian who was working in the United Kingdom, commented on how Western ideas about the 'African intellect' had shaped discourse about library services in Africa. Aje argued that it was the lack of services that caused issues, and the 'African mentality is ... most unlikely to be a problem in library development unless it is deliberately or inadvertently made so'.⁶⁹

In 1962, Unesco announced that universal literacy was a basic goal, and education was placed centrally in plans to assist in economic and social development.⁷⁰ There was little place for traditional societies in this vision, even as this vision articulated an anti-colonial view of the world. The goals of literacy and education, patterned along the lines of the experiences of developed nations, did not much allow for the preservation of traditional cultures and social organization.

A strong strain in modernization thought was faith in the power of the 'expert', technical expertise, technology, and science.⁷¹ Librarians embraced a sense of their professional expertise and sought to export it – as we'll see in later chapters, the library expert became an important figure in international library work. Modernization scholar Nils Gilman uses the term 'technocosmopolitanism' in his discussion of modernization experts.⁷² The term is a useful one and could be seen as a quality of the library expert of the postwar decades. Gilman writes of how the modernization expert imagined a 'meliorist, rationalizing, benevolent, technocratic state [that] could solve all social and especially economic ills'.⁷³ While librarians did not articulate their work quite in these terms, the notion that the library expert could help to transfer a fundamentally modern institution that could help educate (and shape the modern individual), and hence develop a modern society, follows a similar kind of vision.

Library development activities, however useful they may or may not have been, were fundamentally shaped by a range of assumptions about the

‘developmental subject’. Developing nations were imagined as being ‘under-developed’ and in need of assistance, especially the assistance of the ‘foreign expert’. Stereotypes framed the modernization project and a rhetoric of ‘uplift’ can often be explicitly or implicitly discerned in much of the language deployed by librarians talking about international library work in this period. Societies in the developing world were frequently talked about as ‘traditional’ and ‘untouched’ by the modern world. Even the library itself, regardless of what it might have offered, can be understood as a kind of institution of control that assisted (or tried to assist) the development of a modern state, and the making of a modern, cosmopolitan citizen of the world who could contribute usefully to the progress of their society.

Advocacy of the value of libraries to economic and social progress continued into the 1960s, when modernization reached its greatest point of influence on development work. A Unesco seminar on ‘Library Development in Africa’ noted that ‘information and education are basic requirements for economic and social development in every nation’, and libraries had ‘an essential role to play in the economic and social progress of every nation, state and community’. Progress in education was ‘essential to economic progress’, and libraries were central to the education system.⁷⁴ Akira Iriye has pointed to the general rise of an emphasis on economic development in the work and thinking of international organizations as the postwar period progressed.⁷⁵ This focus on economics was part of a concerted effort on the part of developing countries to integrate all countries into the international economy, something that largely served to benefit developed countries. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that all modernization efforts were shaped by the power dynamics that shaped the modern world and were driven by economic goals as much as by loftier humanitarian aims.

Development theory and aid work were also shaped by the political pressures of the Cold War. The world was shaped in these decades not just by the ideological and geopolitical struggle of the two major world powers, the USA and the USSR, but also by the two competing models of modernization offered by these nations. International organizations and efforts such as those of Unesco sought to bypass and even subvert the bipolar model for a more interconnected one, but despite this, were still affected by Cold War politics.⁷⁶ International library development in offering a model predicated on intellectual and individual freedom, and on economic development, could not entirely avoid articulating values that were folded into the Cold War ideological struggle.

Although Unesco’s work was international in scope and predicated on a kind of global transmission of ideas and practices, including in the field of libraries and librarianship, there was a strong emphasis on the way in which education and information could be deployed by developing countries to achieve the building of a modern and successful nation-state. New states, especially those forged from old empires, needed, it was argued, a sense of national identity. There was a question as to what such an identity would be

based on. André Maurois, arguing in a Unesco pamphlet on the importance of public libraries, believed that this identity would come from books. He wrote: 'A library is not only a valuable instrument for the nation's use – it helps shape the nation itself'.⁷⁷

In developing countries, the importance of libraries for national development was often advocated. J.O. Dipeolu, an African librarian, noted that libraries 'play a significant part of economic, political, and cultural development'.⁷⁸ B.A. Wan, CEO and Secretary of the Mass Education Council in Burma (Myanmar), in commenting in 1953 on the importance of rural library services in his country, noted that 'public libraries play an important and effective role in the social development of modern society' and regarded libraries as 'institutions actively catering for the educational and recreational needs of the people'.⁷⁹ In 1955, Indian Minister of Education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, argued that libraries should be 'a part of a national plan of education development'.⁸⁰ Abdur Rahim Khan, in reporting on the state of library development in Pakistan in 1957, acknowledged the problems his country faced and argued: 'The libraries of a country provide a foundation on which all aspects of its economic and cultural advancement ultimately rest. It is essential that those of Pakistan should be transformed as soon as possible into a broad and solid basis for the country's development'.⁸¹ B.S. Kesavan similarly commented that Unesco's work was essential for allowing areas of the world to 'build up their basic knowledge, which will enable them to overcome malnutrition and ignorance'.⁸²

For emerging nations, therefore, library development was important. Various assertions of the importance of libraries were made, especially early in the years following independence and/or national establishment. As we saw, Indian librarian S.R. Ranganathan was, from before the Second World War, a strong advocate for libraries. He saw libraries as an important means for nation-building.⁸³ Postwar, librarians (and politicians) from developing nations continued to formulate an argument for the value of libraries. The inaugural edition of the Pakistan Library Association's new journal *The Modern Librarian Quarterly* included a foreword by Fatima Jinnah Sahiba, the wife of Prime Minister Jinnah, in which she declared that the journal would 'focus the attention of the nation on the imperative necessity for developing library science as a vitalizing forces in the spiritual, economic, and political advancement of the masses'. In the same edition, Khawaja Nur Elahi, librarian of Lahore's Punjab Public Library, called for a plan to establish libraries and train librarians: 'It is high time for the Government and people of Pakistan to realize that the library must play a very prominent part in [Pakistan's] political, economic, and cultural progress'.⁸⁴

Nation-building and modernization thus became an essential theme and justification for international library development work and was a powerful way of persuading people (and governments) of its value. It demonstrated how libraries could assist in the making of a modern world and how Western

nations could assist in the process not just of decolonization but also the maturity of newly independent nations.

The library and the making of the modern self

In 1961, French writer André Maurois anonymously authored a pamphlet for Unesco entitled *Public Libraries and Their Mission*. The pamphlet promoted the institution of the public library and argued for the value of reading for becoming, as he put it, a ‘cultured’ person. ‘A great book never leaves the reader the same as he was before – he is always a better man for having read it’. Reading was imagined as having a transformative effect on the individual, and through the individual, the world. Maurois’ pamphlet was lavishly illustrated with pictures of people around the world reading in libraries. Men, women, children, young and old, are all depicted sharing in the universal knowledge offered by the library. We now turn to examining one of the key themes discernable in Maurois’ pamphlet: the idea that information, culture, books, and the library could help to make the modern self. This discourse intersected with concerns about democracy, rights, and intellectual freedom, as the public library ethos was imagined as being central to these fundamental values.

Postwar library discourse drew on a long tradition of considering the importance of libraries in making the self that stretched back to the nineteenth century and the origins of the ‘free’ public library. Thomas Augst has commented that within the British and American library traditions, public libraries were seen as an investment in the leisure and education of the working classes,⁸⁵ thereby preventing, it was assumed, social discord and upheaval. He further comments on how public libraries through the turn of the twentieth century came to be regarded as akin to temples to a civil religion that cultivated ‘public faith in secular ideals of individual and collective progress’.⁸⁶ Wayne Wiegand has also pointed to the longer history of the way in which librarians used libraries as a means of shaping individuals, and through them, projecting a particular vision of society. In the late nineteenth century in the USA, he writes, librarians encouraged patrons to engage in ‘better’ quality reading; through into the early twentieth century, libraries were used as a means for assimilating new immigrants to the country.⁸⁷

The ethos of the public library and the making of the self envisioned a particular kind of modern person. The postwar period saw certain aspects of the modern individual emphasized. Notably, it was argued that race was no longer a defining feature of the modern individual – the modern citizen could be potentially the same the world over if they were inculcated in the values and practices of modernity, such as literacy and education with a common ‘world’ cultural heritage. There is an argument that Unesco promoted a particular vision of the world and the person in that world that was essentially assimilationist in nature. The modern world was imagined as consisting of a certain type of society and citizen, a type similar to the USA or a Western European nation.

Various librarians emphasized the role of the library (through reading and education) in making a modern individual who could operate as a citizen of the world. Lester Asheim, an American librarian, at a conference on reading development held in 1951 addressed the way in which book industry professionals (including librarians and publishers) had to work to promote the idea of reading in the USA. The book, he and his fellow professionals argued, had an essential role to play in the making of the modern world and offered the ‘one free medium ... modern man can [use to] escape from the pressure of contemporary living’.⁸⁸

British librarian Lionel McColvin was a particular advocate of the importance of the library for the individual patron and the individual finding his way in a modern and changing world. He began his articulation of this during Second World War. As Alistair Black has commented in examining some of the ideas articulated by McColvin, his 1942 report on public libraries, which articulated a philosophy of public libraries for all, ‘resurrected the burning faith in the importance of self-realization through the public library that had marked the discourses of the service’s Victorian pioneers’.⁸⁹ Many of his postwar writings similarly articulated the importance of the individual’s relationship to knowledge.

In a manual written for Unesco on public library extension published in 1949, McColvin concluded with an idealistic statement about the philosophy of librarianship: ‘[I]f [the author] is right to say that it is the function of the public library to provide every man with a full free opportunity to secure, at his own free will, whatever books can give him for the better enjoyment and utilization of life, surely it is a good thing for nations to seek to outstrip one another in their efforts to make this opportunity the birthright of their peoples’.⁹⁰ Two years before, writing in the *Library Association Record* on public library service, he commented that the book and the library had a ‘vital and unique contribution to make to the development of the individual, to his happiness, efficiency and freedom’. He further saw the library as countering the impact of what he called ‘mass produced ideas’ and propaganda. He stated: ‘I believe that it is the primary – and the unique – function of the public library to provide every man with the full, free opportunity to live his own life and make the best of it to his own satisfaction as a genuine individual in a sane, intelligent and developing society’.⁹¹ Elsewhere McColvin linked the library to the encouragement of ‘the development of individuality ... In no other way in this modern world of mass media can this highly desirable individuality and variety be better promoted’.⁹²

Unesco engaged strongly with the theme of the importance of the library in making the modern self, and through that, society. Robert L. Hansen, director of public libraries in Denmark, spoke at the 1951 Unesco conference on libraries in Latin America, not only to advocate the importance of the public library but to argue that libraries were essential in ‘increasing [the individual’s] personal knowledge for the benefit of society as a whole ... The social value of a citizen increases when his intellectual and material knowledge increases’.⁹³

McColvin also contributed to this conference, continuing his advocacy of the public library and the importance of the book:

Only if [people] can wander around the shelves, discovering something of the wealth and variety of the world of books, can the public library attempt its most important task – that of educating the public to make full use of books, of permitting readers to discover and take advantage of the immense opportunities that exist for them today because most of what men have done, thought, dreamed and would achieve can be told on the printed page. The book is so important a factor in twentieth century civilization that unless people can read and have full free access to books they suffer an enslavement of the mind, body and spirit which is totally inconsistent with democratic ways of life. Every library ... is a weapon to destroy their chains.⁹⁴

In 1956, IFLA adopted a Memorandum at its International Congress of Libraries Documentation Centers that articulated some of its fundamental beliefs about the public library. It argued that ‘public libraries should promote and sustain freedom of thought and action, individual development, and the good of the individual and the community’. It continued: ‘It is essential that nothing should be done to deny the principles of free choice and liberty of thought; and that due regard should be paid to the differing needs and abilities of potential readers’.⁹⁵

As is clear from the above statements about the role of the library in the life of the individual, intellectual freedom was an important component of postwar library ideology. Intellectual freedom was an important part of the ethos of public libraries, both before the Second World War, in the articulation of the fight against fascism, and in the Cold War context of an ideological struggle with Soviet totalitarianism. American libraries in particular articulated the ongoing importance of intellectual freedom. On the cusp of US involvement in Second World War, the ALA set out a Library Bill of Rights (in 1939) and established an Intellectual Freedom Committee (1940). In 1953, in an attempt to resist the pernicious influence of McCarthyism on American intellectual and cultural life, the ALA put out a ‘Freedom to Read’ statement. Despite this commitment on the part of the profession to intellectual freedom, individual libraries and library practices varied considerably. Disputes over what to include in collections shaped the information available to library patrons, and in the US South, many libraries remained segregated throughout the Jim Crow era.⁹⁶

Individual librarians argued that libraries were of value in the struggle for intellectual freedom, providing free access to books and information. C.A. Part, a British librarian, commenting on the purpose of the public library, noted that the Library Association’s slogan was ‘self-development in an atmosphere of freedom’, suggesting the importance of the individual and their intellectual life in British library thought.⁹⁷ Lionel McColvin, participating in

a 1952 Latin American regional seminar on public libraries, once again made a clear statement on the importance of literacy and free access to information: '[U]nless people can read and have full access to books they suffer an enslavement of the mind, body and spirit which is totally inconsistent with democratic ways of life. Every library ... is a weapon to destroy their chains'.⁹⁸ In 1956, he argued that the 'primary purpose of any worthy public library is that of facilitating and promoting individual freedom'. He further argued that librarians were no less than 'apostle[s] of freedom'.⁹⁹

This strain of library thought also increasingly touched on the issue of libraries as a human right or as a means to make human rights a reality. This was especially strongly articulated through the Unesco literature, which served to buttress the aims of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights put out in 1948 and which provided a framework for the idea of a universal humanity which shared the same basic rights and freedoms, including freedom of thought and freedom of expression.¹⁰⁰ Unesco's development work emphasized universality, humanism, and human rights.¹⁰¹ A 1958 issue of the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* addressed the issue of the role of libraries in human rights, setting out the following argument:

Librarians everywhere have a vital part to play in making the human rights and fundamental freedoms set forth in the Declaration [of Human Rights] a reality. Libraries should make available the publications and other materials essential to the community, and give guidance in their use; all men and women, young and old, should be offered the opportunity and encouragement to educate themselves continuously, to keep abreast of progress in all fields of knowledge, to maintain freedom of expression, to be better social and political citizens of their country and of the world, to develop their creative capacities and powers of appreciation of arts and letters, and to contribute generally to the advancement of knowledge.¹⁰²

The 1955 IFLA statement similarly argued that the library (or access to its knowledge) was 'one of the fundamental "human rights"'.¹⁰³ Maurois reiterated this idea in his public libraries pamphlet: 'There is truth in the saying that today the right to read is one of man's inalienable rights'.¹⁰⁴

Libraries were also strongly linked in the library nations to ideas about democracy. Libraries could be used to help shape the individual within a democracy, as well as serving as a site for democratic and intellectual action. In the USA, public libraries were from their earliest establishment regarded as examples of 'democracy in action'.¹⁰⁵ The years of the Second World War saw American librarians articulating the importance of American libraries (and books) to the promotion of democratic values. From the beginning of the war, American librarians clearly stated their commitment to democracy and aimed to use libraries both to inform the public about the war and the world, as well as to use the library as a space for promoting not just national unity

for victory but to articulate the values that the United States was fighting for.¹⁰⁶ Writing in 1954 on the public library, Ernestine Rose commented that '[n]othing can be more important for librarians and users of libraries than a knowledge and understanding of the potential dynamic force inherent in an institution which is free ... It is not only an opportunity which the library possesses, it is a solemn obligation on a democratic institution in a society which needs so sorely the beneficent influences of sound education, accurate knowledge in many fields, and an understanding free of prejudice'.¹⁰⁷

Lionel McColvin, in discussing British libraries, similarly commented that libraries were both 'instrument and bulwark of democracy'.¹⁰⁸ He also noted that '[t]he enemies of democracy are apathy and totalitarianism and both can be countered only by the spread of active individualism and a sense of responsibility, both of which are little likely to flourish among those who do not read books'.¹⁰⁹ As we saw earlier, McColvin saw the development of the individual through books and libraries as being less susceptible to propaganda and the influence of mass media, something he saw as essential to ensuring democracy. But in order to be effective, a library service had to be, he argued, 'both the servant and the expression of the community'; it could not be imposed from above. He concluded in his manual on *Public Library Extension* that 'we have no doubt whatever that the public library must provide all people with the best and most useful books that are able and willing to use and must do so freely and without discrimination against any social classes or racial and religious elements'.¹¹⁰ Edward Sydney, president of the Library Association, similarly argued during his tenure as president that 'public library service is, and always will be in any really democratic society, an essential instrument in enabling its citizens to love wisely, agreeably and well'.¹¹¹

Developing countries embraced the public library ethos as a means to effect democracy as well. S.R. Ranganathan saw libraries as essential to a democracy: 'How can the common man form a proper opinion unless he is given an opportunity to know all the sides of a question?'¹¹² Anis Khurshid, of the newly formed Pakistan Library Association, wrote in 1960 that 'a modern public library is an instrument for creation of informed and reflective public opinion in a democratic society'. He touched on the fact that one way in which the library supported democracy was through providing a means to lifelong education by providing unrestricted access to books and other material.¹¹³

Lifelong learning, or adult education, was promoted as part of the way in which librarians could demonstrate the role of the library in supporting democracy. André Maurois commented that the 'citizen of a democracy who wishes to fulfill his duties conscientiously must go on learning all his life'. He went on:

The public library must give children, young people, men and women the opportunity to keep in touch with their times, in every sphere. By offering them, impartially, works representing conflicting points of view, it enables them to form their own opinions and preserve that attitudes of

constructive criticism towards public affairs without which there is no freedom ... *Every library is a centre for international understanding.* By its very existence, free from propaganda and prejudice and with no axe of its own to grind, the public library serves peace as well as democracy.¹¹⁴

In the USA, the ALA sought to promote the importance of the public library in making better American citizens. In 1958, partly in response to the impact and concern generated by the launching of Soviet satellite Sputnik, the ALA adopted a statement on 'Libraries Today'. 'International events of recent months', began the statement, 'have forced the American people to a realization as never before, of the immediate necessity of broadening and intensifying American education as essential to the survival of a free society'. Library services were indispensable in such a context. 'We are convinced', the statement went on, 'that the first task of American education is to produce well-rounded, cultured, and intellectually mature citizens who are capable of exercising good judgment upon the great problems confronting our modern society'.¹¹⁵ But as the Cold War escalated, the rhetoric of the self also placed individualism in contrast to what was imagined as the Soviet concern with the collective. The freedom of the individual contrasted to totalitarianism.¹¹⁶

The making of the productive individual – one who contributed to economic progress and stability – is a theme that can also be discerned in the library focus on the making of the modern self. In focusing on the library as a means to adult education and in discussing the work of the Industrial Social Service traveling library (SESI) in Brazil in 1952, for example, it was commented that the library would provide industrial workers with reading and would thus help make the typical worker 'a good family man, conscious of his duties and responsibilities, and with higher standards of skill and productivity, [and] he shall improve his own and his children's minds'.¹¹⁷ This discussion explicitly engaged with the idea of the library as a means for producing a particular type of citizen and member of society – indeed, even performing something of a normalizing and disciplining function within society.

This vision of the library as essential to the making of the modern self, and the modern citizen, was widely embraced in the decades considered here. S.R. Ranganathan closed his presidential address at the Eighth All India Library Conference in 1949 with the exhortation: 'Let us pray for the day when our land will become rich in the broad highway of libraries, along which everybody can walk all through life to reach his own fullness and thus bring to himself and radiate to others material happiness, mental joy and spiritual delight or *Ananda*'.¹¹⁸ Dietrich Borchardt, an Australian librarian, argued in 1968 of the importance of the library 'to life'. 'The relationship of libraries to life', he wrote, 'is marked by the support, stimulus and faith which they offer the individual self in search of a meaningful function in society'.¹¹⁹ The continuing faith in libraries in the lives and making of individuals was apparent here and has continued to be an important feature of library thought. Like arguments about helping countries modernize and the achievement of world peace, the

argument that libraries made the modern self who could operate effectively in a modern society was a powerful and persuasive one.

In the postwar period, librarians sought to find a place for themselves in a rapidly changing world. It was important to redefine the importance of the library and the library profession for a modern world; indeed, the profession sought to play an active role in shaping what postwar society might be. This was particularly evident in the USA, a country that had emerged from the Second World War as a global power. But it was also evident in Britain, a country beginning to move towards a new social welfare system and beginning to grapple with the dismantling of empire.

Events such as National Library Week in the USA (begun in the later 1950s) reflected efforts to create new audiences for books and libraries and to assert the importance of the library in public and cultural life.¹²⁰ The casting of the library as an agent in helping to achieve world peace and international understanding, on the one hand, and helping countries achieve progress and modernity, on the other, was also a powerful way to articulate the value of the library in a world in which mass media threatened to place books as a less popular and important medium and libraries as less relevant institutions in an age of television.

As the optimism of the 1950s and early 1960s gave way to a sense of crisis and anxiety about the present and future, international library work faced challenges that reshaped library discourse and, more generally, shaped international development work in the 1970s. For Unesco, work continued, but the 1970s saw a shift to an increasing concern with ‘basic education’ and continued literacy campaigns, on the one hand, and documentation efforts rather than library work, on the other. Recognizing that the fight to teach literacy was much harder than expected and not easily undertaken meant that libraries became less urgent than basic literacy and fundamental education. Nevertheless, the 1950s and 1960s marked a time when libraries were imagined as central agencies for ‘remaking men’s minds’ and for helping to create new global circuits of information and education. Such ideologies were powerful and attractive, and underpinned and inspired much of the work undertaken in the period.

This chapter has argued that an understanding of library thought is vital to understanding library internationalism in the post–Second World War period. Many librarians were inspired and deeply informed by the ideas discussed above in their development work. We will now turn to considering how these ideas were put into action.

Notes

1 Mary Rothrock, ‘On Some Library Questions of Our Time’, Presidential Address, June 30, 1947, *American Library Association Bulletin* 41, no. 7 (August 1947): 243.

- 2 Paul North Rice, ‘Toward Mutual Understanding’, *American Library Association Bulletin* 41, no. 7 (August 1947): 248.
- 3 For a fuller discussion of Unesco’s thinking about libraries in this period, see Amanda Laugesen, ‘UNESCO and the Globalization of the Public Library Idea’, *Library and Information History* 30, no. 1 (2014): 1–19.
- 4 Leon Carnovsky, ‘The Public Library in the United States’, *Libri* 19, no. 2 (1953): 291.
- 5 Flora B. Ludington, ‘The American Contribution to Foreign Library Establishment and Rehabilitation’, *Library Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (April 1954): 204.
- 6 Edward Sydney, ‘Public Library Development in the Post-war Years: The First Decade’, *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries* 10, nos. 11–12 (November–December 1956): 257.
- 7 Ralph R. Shaw, ‘International Activities of the ALA’, *American Library Association Bulletin* 41, no. 6 (June 1947): 209.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 205.
- 9 Mary U. Rothrock, ‘The American Book Center’, *American Library Association Bulletin* 40, no. 6 (June 1946): 212.
- 10 P.S.J. Welsford, ‘International and Overseas Contacts with special reference to the Book Recovery Campaign and the Services’ Libraries’, *Library Association Record* (July 1945): 133–8. See also Valerie Holman, *Print for Victory: Book Publishing in England 1939–1945* (London: British Library, 2008).
- 11 L.R. McColvin, ‘Plans in the Dominions’, *Library Association Record* 47, no. 5 (May 1945): 87.
- 12 For a discussion of this, see for example Marek Sroka, ‘“A Book Never Dies”: the American Library Association and the Cultural Reconstruction of Czechoslovak and Polish Libraries, 1945–1948’, *Library and Information History* 33, no. 1 (2017): 19–34.
- 13 Keyes D. Metcalf, Loleta Dawson Fyan, Margaret S. Gill and Paul North Rice, ‘A.L.A. International Activities’, *American Library Association Bulletin* 40, no. 11 (October 1946): 344–5.
- 14 Flora B. Ludington and Frederick Cromwell, ‘A.L.A. International Activities’, *American Library Association Bulletin* 41, no. 11 (October 1947): 353.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 ‘News and Information’, *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries* 1, no. 7 (July 1948): 238–40.
- 17 ‘A Force for Popular Education’, *UNESCO Courier* 6, no. 6 (June 1953): 2.
- 18 Roger A. Coate, *Unilateralism, Ideology and US Foreign Policy: The United States In and Out of UNESCO* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1988), 38.
- 19 Clare Wells, *The UN, UNESCO, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 45.
- 20 ‘The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto’, Appendix A, in Lionel R. McColvin, *The Chance to Read: Public Libraries in the World Today* (London: Phoenix House, 1956), 249.
- 21 Lionel R. McColvin, Foreword, *Public Library Extension* (Paris: UNESCO, 1949), vi.
- 22 Carl Milam, ‘UNESCO’s Library Program’, *American Library Association Bulletin* 41, no. 1 (January 1947): 35.
- 23 Frank M. Gardner, ‘Lowering the Barriers: Ten Years of UNESCO’, *Library Association Record* (January 1957): 10

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- 24 'Policy Statement of the ALA International Relations Board', *American Library Association Bulletin* 41, no. 6 (June 1947): 198.
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2 Identifying the ‘library problem’

In 1954, Ruth Robinson Perry, a librarian with the Hoover Institute and Stanford University Library, wrote to the *American Library Association Bulletin* to state that ‘[m]any things are happening in Africa, happening so quickly that one can scarcely follow them, but nothing offers more hope for the future than [the] provision of books for an eager population which is emerging into the modern world’.¹ Perry was commenting on sub-Saharan Africa, but her comments were just as applicable to a whole range of areas of the world, many of which were just then achieving independence from colonial empires and beginning to build up their national infrastructure. Libraries were seen as a potentially important part of the dynamic process of nation-building, and librarians could step up to play an important role in the making of a modern world.

The 1950s marked a period of expanding opportunities for global library work. As the devastation of the Second World War was left behind, and as the USA in particular prospered economically, a sense of looking outwards to help assist development increasingly dominated the period. This sense of ‘internationalism’ was intertwined with Cold War concerns and the fear of communism, as well as the realities of decolonization. But it also reflected a much greater sense of engagement with the developing world for many Western countries than in the period before the Second World War. It spoke to an emerging sense that regions of the world should be (and needed to be) assisted to achieve their full potential and to realize an imagined ideal of (Western) modernity.

As we’ve explored in Chapter 1, the vision that dominated international library development in the 1950s and into the 1960s was concerned with ideas about development, progress, and the library as a vehicle for modernization and modernity. Unesco most strongly articulated this vision in internationalist terms; national governments were more interested in development and aid for strategic political and foreign policy reasons, especially in the context of the Cold War, but nevertheless continued to embrace the internationalist possibilities of library work abroad.

Librarians were motivated to participate in and support library internationalism for a range of reasons, some of which intersected with the aims of

international and national programs, but some of which were more personal and individual. The more personal and individual stories will be explored later in this book. Here we see librarians embracing the broader potential for international engagement for their profession and for the advancement of the institution of the library globally. The library profession sought to use international work as a way to assert the continuing importance of the book and the library in an age of mass media and when, at times, the book and reading appeared to be under threat.

In the last chapter, we considered some of the justifications and intellectual underpinnings for international library development work; this chapter is concerned with how librarians (and others) began to shape a problem that they believed needed addressing. It begins by examining some of the infrastructure created to undertake library development work and then considers some of the activities used to help identify needs and to articulate 'problems' that were seen to be in need of 'solutions'. These library development activities included seminars devoted to bringing together professionals to discuss the information needs of various regions of the world, and surveys of information and library services and requirements undertaken by 'expert' consultants from Britain, the USA, Europe, and the Dominions. The chapter also takes a closer look at two library 'experts' and considers the consequences of creating the idea of the 'expert' and the 'subject'. The conclusion to this chapter briefly considers the issue of how developing nations responded to all of this. For emerging nations, libraries offered one means of helping to develop essential educational infrastructure that was central to the building of strong and vital new and independent nations. While surveys, seminars, and other library activities were sometimes shot through with elements of colonialism and paternalism (even racism), what is clear is that developing nations also actively inserted themselves into the story of international library development.

International library work infrastructure

Infrastructure to allow developed states to assist developing nations was essential to international library development work. A variety of British and American programs were created to assist in international library work, alongside the international efforts of organizations such as Unesco and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). The library work of the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the British Council will be considered separately in a later chapter, but here we will take a look at some of the other infrastructure that was created (or used) to facilitate library development work around the globe.

Many American book and library programs with an international focus were developed in the 1950s and 1960s, although funding for such activity was often precarious and limited. These programs included efforts to collect and send books overseas, programs to develop indigenous book publishing, and government programs that involved some element of book and library

work, including both foreign aid and cultural diplomacy programs. American efforts in this period reflected American affluence as well as an interest in international engagement that was motivated by both Cold War concerns and a fear of the spread of communism. It also involved a desire to disseminate American-style values (and extend commercial influence) abroad.

The American Library Association (ALA) enthusiastically supported the idea of international library work, and they began to undertake such work in the interwar period. International library work was largely organized through the International Relations Office (IRO) with a small dedicated staff. The work of the IRO was overseen by an International Relations Committee, a policy-making body within the ALA. In the years preceding the Second World War, and through the war years, the IRO was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Funding did not continue after the war, but eventually resumed in 1956. From the mid-1960s, partial support was given to the IRO from the ALA's own funds. After the revival of the IRO in 1956 and with the support of Rockefeller funds, librarian Lucile Morsch noted that the ALA now had 'a very real responsibility to play a more active role than it ever has in the past in the whole field of international relations'.²

Jack Dalton was director of the IRO from 1956 to 1959, followed by Raynard Swank from 1959 to 1961. Swank argued that the job of the IRO director was to be a kind of 'cultural relationist'.³ Lester Asheim was director from 1961 to 1966. Asheim was succeeded by Ralph Esterquest (1967–8), who in turn was followed by David Donovan, who remained director into the early 1970s. Before becoming director, Donovan had spent time overseas, working as director of the Library of Congress PL-480 program in Karachi, Pakistan, and before that had been regional director for USIS libraries in India.⁴

Lester Asheim argued in 1962 that the ALA was not just committed to librarianship within the USA but also to librarianship abroad. 'Our international activities are not merely a reflection of a current political atmosphere', he said, 'but of a basic philosophical conviction of long standing'.⁵ Thomas Buckman, who worked for the IRO in the late 1960s and who testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1967 about American book efforts, observed that the ALA had dedicated itself to seeking 'ways of making books vital forces in the lives of individuals, of making libraries more accessible to all people, and of improving standards of librarianship'.⁶ Philosophical beliefs such as these provided a rhetorical justification for the profession's involvement in Cold War and library development activities abroad. While the IRO did receive some criticism from within the profession (for example, there was a complaint that the IRO was a 'closed shop'⁷), international work was an important aspect of the ALA's mission in these years. It asserted the importance of the library and the librarian in American and international life.

The major functions of the IRO through this period were described as being 'study and investigation, stimulation and liaison'.⁸ The office was 'not an operating office, but a catalytic agent',⁹ that is, its primary aim was

to connect people and stimulate interest in libraries and librarianship rather than to undertake specific programs and operations on its own. This was as much a product of the reality of limited budgets as a philosophical position; when the US Agency for International Development (USAID) provided funds for library development in the 1960s, the IRO worked under contract for them. Asheim observed in 1965 that the ALA, through the office, 'attempts to encourage library development and progress throughout the world and to assist directly to the extent that the American experience and qualification is relevant and useful'.¹⁰ He also noted that it was the responsibility of the IRO to 'stimulate or initiate projects where they do not exist'.¹¹ As time went on, the ALA's emphasis started to shift toward 'mutual exchange' from 'one-way assistance', reflecting the development of library services and the library profession in countries that the USA worked with.¹²

Much of the work of the IRO was only able to go ahead through working with, or receiving funding from, other agencies, including government agencies and philanthropic foundations. The US Department of State, USIA, USAID, and the Peace Corps were all government departments or agencies that the IRO worked with over the years. Philanthropic funds such as the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Rockefeller Foundation were also essential supporters of book and library work.

The government agencies the IRO worked with were those engaged in development, educational, or cultural informational work abroad. The USIA engaged in cultural diplomacy and information work; the ALA primarily worked to provide advice to the USIS libraries. USAID became an important funder of individual projects in library (and book) development, and the IRO's director also provided advice to USAID on projects as part of his survey and consultancy work. The Peace Corps was established in 1961 as an initiative of the Kennedy administration, assigning volunteers to development projects, including education and literacy programs, around the globe. Libraries were therefore of importance, and the IRO provided advice to the Peace Corps and supported the recruitment of librarians as volunteers.

The IRO's relationship to government varied over the years. Librarians of the IRO asserted their role as independent experts in consulting and working with government and philanthropic organizations. This was important not just for their own sake but also for ensuring that other countries did not view their work with suspicion.¹³ However, librarians were often unhappy with the approach taken by government. In working with the USIA (responsible for cultural diplomacy) and the State Department (responsible for international exchange and educational work), Lester Asheim commented that he had come to have a jaded view of State Department conferences, writing in 1966 that they were 'usually brain-washing sessions in defense of US foreign policy'.¹⁴ Asheim also expressed concern over USAID around the same time. He found that the time taken to secure funding through USAID and the tendency of the agency to treat books 'as mere commodities' were problems

for librarians. ‘Somehow everything falls apart before it finally gets put into effect’, he lamented.¹⁵

For the profession as a whole, there was concern over just how close the ALA should be to government, not least because of the message a close relationship might send to people overseas. In 1958, the IRO debated whether the general objective of the office should be the export of a ‘philosophy’ of American librarianship. It was decided that a ‘more neutral statement of objective’ be formulated in which the IRO was said to aim to ‘extend the benefits of library service throughout the world’.¹⁶ The same meeting revealed that there had been some ‘heated debate’ as to whether ALA policy was involved with ‘national policy in the cold war and whether ALA’s international relations are thus part of US cultural diplomacy’. This discussion came in response to an article written by Theodore Waller (a publisher active in international book development activities) on ‘The International Relations Program of the ALA’ before it was published. It was decided that passages in the piece that most identified ALA policy with national objectives would be excised,¹⁷ thus distancing the ALA from too close an identification with government foreign policy objectives.

Foundation funding, especially from American philanthropic foundations, was essential to postwar development, including book and library work. The postwar period saw a dramatic expansion of foundations such as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations supporting a broad range of activities from university study into the social sciences¹⁸ to agricultural research programs. The Ford Foundation was particularly active in Africa and South America. While a lot of its work focused on projects to do with areas such as health, medicine, and agriculture, there was some support for American book and library development efforts. For example, in 1963, the Foundation financed a special library advisor, Carl M. White, to help develop a national library for Nigeria.¹⁹

Foundation money was vital for the ongoing work of the IRO, with the Rockefeller Foundation providing important funds for the ongoing existence of the office’s operations. From 1956, the Rockefeller Foundation provided grants to support the IRO.²⁰ Beyond grants given to support the IRO, the Rockefeller Foundation was notable in its support for university development around the world and as such supported and helped to fund library development in a number of locations. For instance, in the late 1960s, it supported a library-training program at the University of Delhi in India over a five-year period.²¹ The Ford Foundation similarly supported universities and university library collections. One example was a grant given to Haile Selassie I University in Ethiopia for a two-year period that supported the purchase of books, periodicals, and other library materials for the university library. The IRO’s role in the project was to provide advice and purchase collection material.²²

The Carnegie Corporation of New York, founded in 1911, was notable for its support for libraries in the English-speaking world and parts of the British

Empire in the decades before the Second World War and funded surveys of library services in the same countries. After the end of the war, it no longer placed the same emphasis on library work; however, some grants were still provided to support library projects.²³ Projects the Corporation supported in the library area included a grant to help establish the first library-training course in West Africa in Ibadan, Nigeria.²⁴ It also supported library surveys such as Harold Lancour's 1957 survey of Ghana and Nigeria. In addition, it often awarded grants that enabled librarians to travel to the USA to tour libraries.²⁵

While foundation money was clearly vital to the international library development work undertaken by the USA, there was a concern that much of that funding was only for providing initial (seed) funding rather than ongoing financial maintenance for institutions. After visiting Africa, Lester Asheim wrote to the Ford Foundation to say that while there he had heard from numerous people that maintenance funds were what was most needed: 'While it is recognized that the foundations should not be expected to carry projects forever, and that the recipient countries should feel an obligation to provide some support from their end, the realities of many of the situations are such that whole projects are lost for want of a nail'.²⁶

Semi-private agencies, such as the Asia Foundation (later discovered to have been covertly funded, in part, by the CIA), were also important supporters of international library development work. The Asia Foundation supported various library efforts, including the provision of grants to Asian students to study in the USA. In the 1963–4 financial year, for example, it granted funds to 28 library students from countries such as Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Thailand, and Afghanistan. The grants helped students attend the ALA annual meeting or state or regional library conferences.²⁷

Global library work began as part of the colonial enterprise for the British, with a number of libraries established in countries of the empire. But these libraries were often only aimed at Europeans located there (and often only allowed Europeans to use them). From the time of the Second World War, however, there was a stronger focus on the need to 'prepare' colonial populations for independence. Development and modernization efforts began, and these included library training and development, which was often linked to the need for educational infrastructure. Britain passed a Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940 that included support for education, and a report on mass education in African society was produced in 1944 that recommended prioritizing education. The 1944 report argued that education should be relevant to the role of Africans in society, and should help to 'promote the advancement of the community'.²⁸ The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945 allocated money to finance welfare schemes in the colonies.²⁹

Much of the work that the British subsequently undertook, in areas still under British control and in those newly independent but still part of the Commonwealth, was undertaken through the British Council (discussed at length in Chapter 5), through individuals who worked as library experts

for Unesco, through individuals who became expatriates, and through Commonwealth programs for technical assistance such as the Colombo Plan (which involved librarians from Commonwealth countries such as Australia and New Zealand). The Library Association in Britain did not have a dedicated office for international library work, but the Association did take an ongoing interest in international library development, especially the training and accreditation of librarians in colonies or newly independent countries.

Many British and Commonwealth librarians (and some Americans) participated in international library development work through involvement with Unesco. In 1958, the ALA established a panel within the International Relations Committee with the aim of 'decisively and importantly increasing the range and depth of ALA involvement in Unesco matters'.³⁰ This represented a significant commitment of the ALA to promoting and working with Unesco, even though the USA more generally had an ambivalent relationship to the organization. Luther Evans, former Librarian of Congress who was Unesco's director-general from 1953 to 1958, argued for the importance of the organization to the ALA and contended that it was vital to convince the public of its value.³¹

Unesco was a central agency in the international library development work of the postwar period, initiating a number of programs for addressing library needs, from producing the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* to organizing seminars to bring together library professionals and other specialists and supporting library 'expert' consultations and surveys. The USA, Britain, and Commonwealth countries all participated in Unesco library work, as did many Western European countries, notably through attendance and contributions to seminars and conferences and by contributing expert consultants. In addition, Unesco supported a range of efforts to help develop and standardize bibliography, documentation, microfilm copying and distribution, and to promote uniformity in classification.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Unesco played a vital role as an advocate for the library, emphasizing its value, and that of books and reading, for the modern world and for world peace. Unesco preferred to select projects that prioritized public library work because of 'the extent to which the methods developed can be generalized or adapted to other areas, and the extent to which the problems involved are typical of the region and the consequent value of the library or library school as a pilot project'.³² It also became something of a voice and advocate for emerging nations' educational and library efforts. It therefore helped to facilitate a great deal of library development in the postwar decades. But facilitation only went so far, and it is important to note that actual funding support from Unesco was always limited because of its constrained budget.

One last organization needs mention in the story of postwar international library development infrastructure: IFLA. This was the professional body that represented member library associations. IFLA was established in 1927 and reflected the vision of the League of Nations for supra-national organizing.³³

It also reflected an interwar desire to forge international organizations that could further international understanding and avoid future conflict. But its focus at this time was very much European. After the end of the Second World War, IFLA expanded to take in other countries, including some of the newly independent countries. In 1954, IFLA had 64 member associations in 42 countries; in 1963, 88 member associations in over 50 countries.³⁴

IFLA was not very active in library development work in the global South, with its main focus being to provide a forum for librarians to come together to discuss professional concerns, and to develop responses to problems of an international nature. This drew criticism from some quarters. S.R. Ranganathan, a leading Indian librarian, criticized IFLA for not being truly international.³⁵ In 1954, he wrote an article for *Libri* in which he criticized its European focus and argued that 'international' meant 'virtually Western European'.³⁶ He believed that there was still an attempt on the part of the West to force their culture on the rest of the world, but he expected things would change with a younger generation.³⁷ Little appeared to change in the shorter term: In 1964, J. Periam Danton, an American librarian, criticized the IFLA conference held that year in Rome – he observed that there were only four delegates from Asia, two from the Middle East, one from Africa, and no one from Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent. This was partly due to the realities of funding, but he argued that 'if the "I" of IFLA is to be more than an impressive word ... every conceivable means must be used and every effort undertaken to insure truly world-wide representation at the Council meetings'.³⁸ Scholars have subsequently agreed with Ranganathan's judgment: Johanna DeVries observes that 'international' was a limited concept for IFLA through its early years; nevertheless, it promoted the valuable concept and ideal of international cooperation between libraries and librarians.³⁹

All the infrastructure discussed above helped to create a basis for international library development work. It both supported the advocacy and development of the ideas about libraries and librarianship discussed in Chapter 1, and became a practical (if sometimes flawed and politicized) means of enabling actual on-the-ground work to build libraries and collections, and to train librarians. We now turn to considering the survey and seminar work that was vital to establishing new library services and to identifying needs and possible solutions to problems in developing nations.

Surveys and seminars

Surveys and seminars became an important means for identifying issues in library development, but these took place in a fraught global environment. The developing world consisted of countries and regions that the Western nations felt needed to be 'understood'. Like earlier forms of imperialism, the desire to map and survey in order to understand was clearly evident in the period of Cold War modernization and decolonization. Timothy Barney talks about the developing world as a 'spatial battleground' and emphasizes the

importance of mapping in framing modernization (for example, the mapping of disease).⁴⁰ Library surveys can be argued to have helped to determine actual practical problems and issues that were faced, but they also served to label and categorize developing countries and the populations of these countries. They provided a framework of understanding that in turn shaped how library development (and library users and readers) would be comprehended. This section of the chapter thus considers surveys of, and seminars about, libraries in Africa and Asia in the 1950s and 1960s. It only touches on a few examples: There was a great deal of survey work undertaken in this period, and many seminars and conferences held to discuss problems and issues, all of which produced voluminous reports and documentation.

While both Africa and Asia consisted of countries with very different cultures, histories, languages, and experiences, both continents were often framed in these decades as relatively homogenous. Africa in particular tended to be seen by Western nations through a lens that often blurred individual histories and particular experiences, which in turn created its own problems. Differences between countries (with the exception of North Africa and the settler nations of South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)) were often downplayed in favor of regarding these countries as facing similar types of development problems and in need of similar types of development aid.

Many early library surveys of Africa were conducted by the British Council and Unesco. An early (1951) report on the state of public libraries 'in the colonies' was by R.A. Flood, then regional assistant with the Books Department of the British Council. In keeping with Britain's focus on preparing colonies for independence, Flood emphasized the value of libraries for education. He noted that the 'welfare and future of the Commonwealth depends on the education of colonial peoples', and education had to be backed up with public libraries. He concluded his report by arguing that the public library 'is the community's storehouse and distributor of knowledge. Without a public library service a community cannot have access to knowledge and without knowledge it cannot progress, indeed it will stagnate and ultimately degenerate'.⁴¹ In keeping with the British approach of the time, Flood's language framed public library development work as both welfare work and as essential for the making of modern independent nations.

Undoubtedly, many of Africa's countries faced a significant lack of educational facilities as the 1950s began, including libraries. Surveys and seminars were therefore seen as essential in order to identify the range of issues and needs for libraries in various parts of the developing world. Unesco took a leading role in this work. Seminars brought together library experts and information professionals from various countries, and the reports produced by these seminars provide insight into some of the thinking and assumptions that underpinned and shaped library work in this period. The first Unesco seminar held to consider the library needs of African countries was held in Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1953. The report resulting from the seminar, published by Unesco in 1954, identified the dearth of public libraries in Africa; with these

countries looking to implement mass education and literacy programs, this lack was a significant problem that needed to be overcome. The seminar had little African representation, as Frank Gardner, a British librarian, observed in a report to Unesco, but he believed the seminar had nevertheless helped to stimulate progress in library development.⁴²

Unesco's approach to addressing the problem of libraries was premised on the fundamental value of education, literacy, and the public library to the (future) nation-state and to the individual; it was predicated on the positive good of becoming modern. The Unesco report declared that African people were moving out of a state of 'illiteracy and ignorance', and libraries were essential to effect such a move.⁴³ Operating on the premise that newly independent nations should and would embrace a vision of progress and thus embrace an education and library infrastructure, Unesco also emphasized the importance of creating a democratic understanding of the importance of libraries. The basic principle of free access to all groups, regardless of skin color, and that the book stock of libraries 'embrace every shade of opinion, without prejudice to anyone' was considered intrinsic.⁴⁴

The Unesco report tells us much about how library experts viewed Africa and how they believed libraries could address some of the fundamental problems faced by Africa at a critical point in the continent's history. Cultivating a demand for books was considered to be a particular challenge.⁴⁵ While many library experts identified the real need for books in local languages, one expert at the seminar, J.C. Pauvert of the French Cameroons, advocated that more education in a European language would be necessary for 'rapid progress for the African peoples'. He believed the aim should be to impart 'certain easily assimilable elements of Western culture'.⁴⁶ Pauvert's comments are suggestive of a racial paternalism present at the 1953 Unesco seminar despite the progressive rhetoric of Unesco. Whether advocating books in local or European languages, the view was that African people must be connected with books and that this was part of a necessary and inevitable process of modernization. Assumptions were made as to the typical African reader's needs: For the most part, African adult readers were deemed to have a preference for material that was 'likely to help them in bettering their lot, whether from the economic, social or cultural point of view'. Books of a practical nature were thus the most suitable to provide; if reading for recreation was to be provided, 'the classics will be the favourites, because of their universal appeal, but they are better in simplified form'.⁴⁷ These assumptions about 'African' reading continued to be cited for years in library work undertaken in developing nations.

In 1963, the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* reported on a second seminar on library development in Africa, this one held in Enugu, Nigeria. It reiterated how intrinsic information and education were to 'economic and social development', and acknowledged the value of the public library to 'making informational and educational materials generally available on a democratic basis'. Progress in education was essential to economic progress.⁴⁸ The second African

library seminar concluded with an emphasis on the importance of planning and the value of libraries within national education planning.⁴⁹ The tone of this second report was more about modernization and economic development than the 1953 one, but similarly assumed the positive good of the library and of information.

Two years after the first African seminar, Unesco produced a report on public libraries in Asia, based on a seminar held in Delhi in October 1955. Frank Gardner, who wrote the foreword to the report, declared that the report and its recommendations were 'by Asians for Asian countries'.⁵⁰ The seminar was seen to have been a productive event in the development of Asian librarianship insofar as it had provided a stimulus for the organization of an Asian Federation of Library Associations.⁵¹ In contrast to the African report, which saw little representation by African librarians or other professionals, Unesco's Asian report began with the text of the seminar inaugural address that was given by the Indian Minister of Education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who squarely put the blame for poor library facilities on colonialism. He argued that libraries must 'be a part of [a] national plan of educational development'.⁵² Asian librarians played a significant role in the proceedings as a whole.

The report on Asian public libraries also provided an overview of the state of library services across Asian countries. This showed the varied state of library development: Countries such as Japan and the Philippines had reasonable library facilities, while countries such as Cambodia, Laos, and British Malaya had limited or no library services.⁵³ Various working groups at the seminar prepared reports outlining library needs in Asian countries, such as pilot public library projects; open and free access to books; training for librarians; the need for more publications for Asian libraries, especially those produced in Asia for Asian needs; and more services for children. Two themes clearly stand out there: the need for services but also for professionally trained librarians and the need for suitable material for libraries. Chapters 3 and 4 deals with how such work, identified as problems by seminars such as these, was implemented. These reports, written with the input of Asian librarians, highlighted some of the very real needs of Asian library users, especially the need for suitable material for library collections. Unlike the 1953 African report, however, this one more accurately reflected the complexity of the issues faced and allowed a voice for developing nation participants.

A working group assigned to consider the kinds of materials Asian readers might want noted how there was a definite need for 'books about readers' daily needs, written in simple language'. This included books written on topics such as agriculture, industry, health and hygiene, and childcare and maternity welfare. The working group also stated that 'books written without bigotry and with restraint and respect for other people's point of view are needed on the brotherhood of man, ideas of God, prayer, history of religions, prophets and saints'. They suggested that while translation of fiction from European languages might have some popularity in cities, it was unlikely to

find readers in rural districts.⁵⁴ The head of the Public Library division in Jakarta, Indonesia, linked the development of the library to Indonesia's fight for mass education and against illiteracy. But he also noted that a challenge for Indonesia was the existence of many languages and dialects; while the country was trying to promote national unity through the development of a common language, Bahasa Indonesia, it was expected that the transition to this language would take some time, and materials in local languages would still be essential to developing literacy.⁵⁵ A librarian from the Public Library in Columbo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) reported on his library and profiled its typical users, also pointing to the challenge of language. He noted that the library was used primarily by those who spoke and read English and that not only were there few books in Sinhalese or Tamil but few patrons demanded such books. His report pointed to some of the complications that hindered library development in some Asian countries. In Ceylon, he reported, the Sinhalese population was looked down on by the English-educated minority, and there had been no effort to produce material in that language; Tamil speakers were, he argued, even more isolated and ignored.⁵⁶ More generally, he commented on the importance of the library for the developing country: '[I]n the present-day world, it is essential for the ordinary man to keep abreast of both current events as well as advances of knowledge, if he is to lead a life that is satisfying to himself and useful to the community in which he lives'.⁵⁷

Seminars thus had a vital role to play, even as they conveyed certain ideas and assumptions. Their value largely outweighed their problematic elements, however. A conference focused on Asia and the Pacific was held in the Philippines in 1964 that attempted to come up with concrete plans for action. The conference was seen as a valuable way of bringing people together to discuss their problems and share solutions; they also noted the importance of thinking of a common goal of 'larger national understanding'.⁵⁸ Indeed, one Indian librarian, B.S. Kesavan, saw the 'personal contacts made possible by the conferences and seminars [of Unesco]' to be its most valuable contribution to the development of libraries and librarianship.⁵⁹

As is clear from the discussion of the seminars above, Unesco was active in survey work for libraries, often utilizing British and Commonwealth library 'experts' to undertake such work. But the USA also undertook a lot of state- and foundation-sponsored survey work, as well as the ALA-IRO's director travelling the world to see how libraries operated and where foundations and other programs might direct their efforts. A few examples of this work illustrate the kind of activity that was undertaken that supplemented the work of Unesco.

In 1957, the Carnegie Corporation sponsored American librarian Harold Lancour, associate director of the University of Illinois Library School, to travel to West Africa to survey library facilities. He was accompanied by Stanley Horrocks, a British librarian and Unesco advisor to the Library Board in Enugu. The two men traveled to Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Ghana as part of their tour. Lancour also met with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, then

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Premier of the Eastern Region of Nigeria and Minister of Education for the Region. Azikiwe conveyed his great enthusiasm for education and libraries, as well as telling Lancour how familiar he was with the American library system, having been educated at American universities. Azikiwe argued to Lancour that he was convinced that the library would 'be an effective device in the developing of African countries'.⁶⁰

Lancour's tour enabled him to observe what books were being sold and being read. After visiting a Presbyterian book depot (a type of store he said was to be found in 'every part of central Africa'), he noted how the store was filled with books, mostly British, but 'practically all are in English'. Despite the coming of independence, because there were many different languages, English, he reported back, was accepted as the 'lingua franca'. On his last day in Africa, Lancour participated in a gathering of African librarians to discuss their plans, hopes, and dreams; through this discussion, 'the library of the African future took shape in our minds'. He concluded his report on the trip to the American Library Association with the statement:

In Africa they are making the decisions which will change the destiny of millions. The West African, as the American, has put his faith in democracy. The library is going to play a big part in the educational development of the future. We will be called upon to help. I hope our response will be adequate.⁶¹

He subsequently published his recommendations for libraries in West Africa. He took it as a given that the countries of this region were rapidly advancing, that education would be improved, and that libraries would be a significant means of 'dissemination of education, information, and culture'. He identified a major issue as being the lack of trained personnel and his main recommendations centered around ways to create a cohort of professional librarians.⁶² His work was essential in identifying 'problems' that needed 'solving' and assisted with decisions made around funding for development projects (and so were consequential). But the assumptions made about the nature of modernization and development, as well as presuming English to be the lingua franca of the future if not the present (not an accurate prediction, given numerous African countries took other paths through this period), could have significant consequences in decisions made in library and book development work.

The ALA's IRO directors also frequently traveled to undertake both survey work and to liaise with libraries and librarians overseas. Lester Asheim, head of the IRO from 1961 to 1966, traveled around the world on numerous occasions surveying library development needs and activities and advising government and foundations on their programs, as well as libraries. His primary job was to act as liaison between American librarianship and librarianship in other countries.⁶³ In surveying Africa in 1962, he noted that the 'first, and overriding impression ... that one receives as he moves from one African country

to another [is] the great desire for education and literacy that characterizes the African people of today'.⁶⁴ He used his survey trips to identify the need for books and information infrastructure: The book was 'an important support of economic and technical advances'.⁶⁵ Asheim noted how lucky he was to travel as he did, but while noting that the job was glamorous, it was also frustrating. Despite the hard work, he observed that many plans never came off.⁶⁶ At the same time, he thought it worth persevering – the achievements were worth the frustrations.⁶⁷ He also noted that 'the work in the field and the work in the office are interrelated, and support and supplement each other'.⁶⁸ Work undertaken by Asheim helped to conceptualize the problem for those in the USA, in the library profession, and in allied funding bodies such as government and foundations.

The observations and judgments of people like Lancour and Asheim were crucial in deciding which projects and activities would be funded and supported not just by the IRO but also by funding bodies. After a trip to the Middle East in 1965, for example, Asheim wrote to the Ford Foundation to comment that while he thought Iran 'a beautiful place', it was 'a dubious gamble for foundation investment in education and library development'. He believed Iranians were unable to take advice or accept criticism and that any success depended on knowing the right people. Support from the Shah of Iran or his sister Princess Ashraf meant a project could move forward, but otherwise it was impossible to get anything off the ground. 'This is whimsical at best', he concluded, 'and at worst leads to all manner of political corruption'.⁶⁹

Asia was the target of various American government-sponsored surveys through the 1950s and 1960s, often as part of a broader concern with book needs in various Asian countries. USAID, for example, sponsored surveys of book needs in a number of Asian countries in the second half of the 1960s, including Thailand and Vietnam. A survey of Vietnam – which took place during the war – went for three weeks and was undertaken by Stanley A. Barnett, Erroll D. Michener, and C. Walter Stone. In their report on the survey, the men outlined the great need for library services in Vietnam and called for a team of library planning consultants to assist in developing library services.⁷⁰ David Donovan, director of the IRO, also traveled to a number of countries in Asia in the late 1960s, with support from USAID. He observed that these countries had a great desire for education, although there were considerable challenges, including the issue of a viable publishing industry in vernacular languages. He concluded that as development continued, libraries and the use of books would have an 'increasingly important role'.⁷¹

British and Commonwealth librarians also undertook important survey work. F.A. Sharr was a British librarian who went to live and work in Australia, while also participating in international library development survey work. Sharr was responsible for developing the Western Australian library system, and was State Librarian of Western Australia. In 1962, he traveled to Northern Nigeria to survey library needs. He was the first adviser

sent by Australia to an African country under the Special Commonwealth Africa Assistance Plan. Sharr was asked by the government of Northern Nigeria to survey all libraries in the province and to 'examine all development plans and prepare a plan for co-ordinated and economical overall library development over the next ten to fifteen years, including the training of librarians the production of a Regional Bibliography'. As a result of his work, Sharr produced a report of over 250 pages.⁷² His report on Northern Nigeria, published in 1963, also identified the need for not just libraries but qualified librarians.⁷³ A contemporary review of Sharr's report praised his 'thoroughness, flexibility of mind and sound judgement'.⁷⁴ Sharr was subsequently invited by the director-general of Unesco to join a group of experts that met in Colombo in December 1967 to study the problems of Asian national library planning.⁷⁵

Surveys, seminars, and the material published to record and communicate findings all helped to identify and articulate problems and needs in relation to library development work. They were an important, indeed vital, part of international library development work. They provided invaluable information as to what services were available and identified where libraries were needed, and for new nations in particular such surveys provided the basis for deciding whether or not to fund library services. At the same time, these surveys, seminars, and literature also shaped certain understandings of the developing world, as well as of the typical reader and library user in the countries of the developing world, for the Western nations that involved themselves in international library development work. It established clear ideas that linked a lack of libraries to underdevelopment and asserted the importance of Anglo-American library models as part of the essential development needed. The suitability of such models for developing countries was sometimes mentioned, but rarely did it figure strongly in the huge amount of words devoted to the topic of libraries. Surveys and seminars did, to varying extents, allow for some voices from developing countries and this helped to insert issues such as the need for more vernacular material (and thus raising the issue of more structural problems to do with publishing and culture in some places); but, on the whole, Western nations constructed problems and solutions with many assumptions about the needs of library users and the 'developing nation reader' underpinning them.

Creating the 'expert'

The kinds of surveys and seminars discussed above very much relied on the involvement of 'experts' and helped to create the role of the expert librarian who could work as a consultant on library development projects. The *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries* regularly reported on Unesco's support for sending advisors to various places around the globe. In 1956, for example, advisors were sent to Afghanistan, Korea, Indonesia, and Pakistan. The 'effort and sacrifice' of 'those connected with the carrying out of these

missions' was praised.⁷⁶ In 1959, Unesco sent experts to Argentina, Ceylon, Greece, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan.⁷⁷ In 1963, advisors were sent to African countries including Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Tanganyika, and Tunisia. In the same year, experts were also sent to countries in Asia and the Pacific, including Ceylon, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, the South Pacific, and Thailand.⁷⁸

The word 'expert' was used at the time by Unesco. In a 1967 call for librarians to serve in the field, the organization asked for 'field experts'. To be successful in applying for a position with a Unesco project, it was expected that these librarians would have 'good professional training', 'suitable experience', and a university degree. It was an advantage to know more than one language. Librarians on Unesco projects received financial remuneration, with various benefits depending on location and family status. Experts could be appointed to longer-term appointments (typically a year or two), as well as work as short-term consultants (two to six months).⁷⁹ Another recruitment call noted that the 'Unesco expert must be a person of proven professional stature in his field of specialization' and that for American recruits, while there would be adjustments to make to work in a developing country, 'many Americans find it worthwhile to contemplate rendering international service in a developing nation. Experience gained overseas is usually unmatched for professional satisfaction and personal fulfillment'.⁸⁰

David Donovan, head of the IRO in 1968, observed that the foreign advisor was important as a catalyst and had the opportunity to 'talk to individuals at levels the local librarians can not reach'.⁸¹ He also noted that advisors brought with them benefits, such as their professional networks.⁸² But Donovan warned that

the dynamic personality and character traits sometimes prized in our competitive professional circles are not always welcomed in other cultures. Mannerisms and personality traits, ignored or overlooked in the United States, have on occasion taken on added importance in overseas situations and have so prejudiced colleagues and counterparts that effective two-way communication was difficult if not impossible.⁸³

Equally, the advisor may find it difficult to deal with work cultures different to their own. Donovan thus advised that it was necessary for the expert to be both sensitive and realistic. 'His objective is to develop people, not institutions, his goal is to leave behind something lasting to which the local authorities will have a feeling of commitment. He works with his local counterpart as an equal and a partner. He is neither condescending or subservient'. A good library consultant was, Donovan concluded, one who 'listens and observes'.⁸⁴

Who were these 'experts' and what kind of work did they undertake? The stories of two individual expert librarians, Harold V. Bonny and Frank M. Gardner, are discussed here. Their work also features in later chapters, as

does the contributions of many other librarians from all over the world who participated in library development activity in this period.

Harold V. Bonny was British, and he began his career in Britain before traveling to Australia to take up a position at the State Library of Tasmania. He subsequently traveled to many countries across the world to provide advice and expertise in libraries and library development.

Bonny was appointed as a Unesco consultant and first advised the government of Afghanistan on the establishment of the Kabul Public Library; on a subsequent contract, he helped the same library with the classification of the English books in the library collection.⁸⁵ He also provided shelf guides and helped to instruct staff on 'routine library methods'.⁸⁶ Bonny also worked as a library consultant in Iraq, spending a year helping to train library personnel. His reports helped to publicize the issues faced in Iraq with respect to library services: He noted the shortage of qualified library personnel, the lack of professional literature in translation, and the lack of a professional association. Teaching in Iraq was, Bonny observed, difficult for a number of reasons, including the varying levels of experience among his students, the lack of a library 'laboratory' for demonstration purposes, and no good textbook being available in Arabic.⁸⁷ While Bonny had taken an Anglo-American model of librarianship to Iraq, he noted that librarians there wanted to take the opportunity 'to develop services in accordance with their own culture and tradition'.⁸⁸

Bonny also went to Jordan to survey existing library services and to encourage the Jordanian government to develop more library services. In addition, he surveyed the Kuwaiti school and public library situation.⁸⁹ Bonny then went to Libya, where he advised on library services and helped a university librarian to classify and catalogue the library of the commerce faculty of the university.⁹⁰ He also surveyed Lebanon and helped to develop a 'national plan for library services' for the country. Bonny noted that 'books are an essential part of education, but the effectiveness of books is limited unless they are organized in a well-conducted library'.⁹¹ He provided a detailed set of recommendations for Lebanon in considering how to set up a nationally coordinated library service.

Later, Bonny was assigned to the South Pacific to assist with library development there. He toured the region from April to September 1962 at the request of the South Pacific Commission, surveying existing library services. He noted, in a report to Unesco, that services were generally limited. But he also observed the importance of providing services to people who lived in rural areas, not least because it would 'help restrict the flow to urban areas, decimating the necessary rural labour force on which the country's economy is based'. He argued that the information contained within books and periodicals could help improve production, and hence boost prosperity.⁹² Bonny's advice was to develop libraries not along Western lines but to work through existing organizations such as cooperatives or women's institutes. Community centers were important because 'these can be organized by the community spirit which is inherent in tribal or village life ... But the library

must be the heart of the community centre work, not a shelf of books added as an afterthought'. He also emphasized librarian training and called for more books on the South Pacific to be available.⁹³ He noted the importance of books in vernacular languages to be available as there was 'a danger of the loss of national cultures, legends and traditions'.⁹⁴

Bonny visited Ceylon in August 1960 and subsequently submitted his recommendations. He called for the establishment of a national library and argued for public library services. 'Public library services are an economic, social and cultural necessity', he wrote. 'Money spent on public libraries – which reach the mass of the people irrespective of class or creed – pays a great dividend by way of increasing knowledge, efficiency and morale'.⁹⁵ Bonny also argued for the training of librarians and the development of a library association and profession.⁹⁶

In 1965, Bonny was in Nigeria working on a pilot school library project. From February 1964, the project, which was sponsored by Unesco, aimed to build up a school and college library service. Demonstration libraries were opened in February 1965 at a boys' school, the Baptist Academy, and one at the Methodist Girls' High School, each with a collection of 1,500 books. An education library was also created and made available to education officers, university students, teachers, and teachers-in-training. In addition, training courses were held and book lists provided. In making some concluding comments on the project, Bonny felt that there had been a 'definite' effect, although he felt the effect had been limited by staffing issues.⁹⁷

Bonny was an exceptional 'expert' library consultant, traveling to places all over the globe. His influence on international library development was significant. Bonny was able to recognize that the Anglo-American model of librarianship did not fit every situation, but at the same time he brought with him the cultural and professional baggage of his training and assumptions. Little is known about Bonny's early career or personal views outside of his library reports, although he was the author of a book entitled *Reading: An Historical and Psychological Study* published in 1939 in which he argued for the importance of reading for the individual.⁹⁸

Another Unesco expert was Frank M. Gardner, also a British librarian. Born in 1908, Gardner commenced his career in 1925. In the 1930s, he was working in London, and this was a period of stimulating political engagement for him. His own politics were on the left: He supported the Spanish Civil War, the Left Book Club, and he later remembered those years as a time of being 'politically committed as well as socially committed'. During the Second World War, Gardner continued working as a librarian (then heading up the Luton library), while also working as a Food Administrator and Civil Defence Administrator.⁹⁹

After Edward Sydney went to Delhi to help set up a Unesco pilot public library (see Chapter 3), Gardner was asked to succeed him. Gardner had a long-standing interest in India and had long wanted to visit. He commented on his time there:

India proved to be everything I had ever dreamed it to be. It's a unique land ... when you land first in Bombay there's the pervasive smell, of dung, of cows, and with it – it's hard to describe – a timeless aroma – spices, and a smell of burning. Into all that, new ideas were being canvassed since India had only recently secured its independence, and the notion of public libraries free to all was one of the heady prospects – the first really public library service in the modern world in Asia.¹⁰⁰

He worked as consultant to the Delhi Library from November 1951 to June 1952, with the goal being to open a 'typical public library on Western lines, to demonstrate modern methods'.¹⁰¹ Gardner saw the Delhi library project as successful 'beyond all expectations ... We were providing something which the people quite clearly wanted, and that made it a tremendously moving experience'.¹⁰² By the time he left, after a year in India, he noted that the library was lending 2,000 books a day. He returned two years later to evaluate the service and was thereafter often used as a Unesco expert.¹⁰³

In 1960, Gardner spent three months touring parts of Asia under Unesco auspices, including visits to Karachi, Lahore, Dacca, Calcutta, and Tehran. He concluded from his survey that these countries 'need libraries. They are at a point of development when books in quantity are necessary for cultural, economic, social, and political development'. A major issue for the countries he visited was a lack of finances and he also identified the problem of governments not considering libraries to be important enough. 'They still think of a public library as a storehouse, not as a shop; as a place where books are kept, not as a place where people go'.¹⁰⁴ In 1964 and 1965, he toured Africa.¹⁰⁵

Gardner was deeply informed by his belief that the library was 'for the ordinary person, still almost the only means to acquire self-education'; furthermore, the use of the library was something that 'adds to that sense that one is part of a larger world'.¹⁰⁶ This probably owed something to his politically active years in the 1930s. He brought his beliefs to his work as a Unesco expert and worked as a proselytizer for the library ethos.

Both librarians discussed here were men. As we'll see in subsequent chapters, many librarians who worked abroad were in fact women, but at the level of 'expert', the majority were men, reflecting the gendered nature of the profession's leadership at the time (as well as gendered assumptions about women's capacity to operate and negotiate with politicians, bureaucrats, and other figures of authority in many developing countries). While women might be given a position that involved sharing their expertise in a library abroad, they were much less likely to be assigned the role of a 'roving' expert like Bonny and Gardner.

Expertise was a fraught construction in a Cold War and decolonizing world. It was shot through with the power dynamics that was making and remaking the world through this period. Matthew Hilton observes that this was a period

of talk about the ‘collective and scientific triumph of “expertise”’ and argues that in the context of the Cold War, expertise (as practiced and deployed by nonstate actors) was often represented as apolitical.¹⁰⁷

Western librarians saw the developing world in particular ways and imagined remaking developing societies and individual readers in ways that would help to integrate them into the modern sphere. The people of other countries would become people of the book and be integrated into the cultural and economic circuits of the West; in other words, libraries would help them to become good global citizens.

But at the same time, such aspirations also meant that the people of African and Asian nations continued to be imagined as ‘developing’ not ‘developed’ – they were still undergoing some kind of process that was making them more like the citizens of Western developed nations. They were often categorized as readers who preferred to read for educational or self-improvement purposes; libraries should help to make readers more productive rather than imagining that they might want to read all sorts of material, including the cultural productions of their own countries. Readers were not given much agency in these surveys and seminars; yet African and Asian readers had a great deal of agency to use books and libraries as they saw fit and even to reject them altogether.

S.I.A. Kotei, a Ghanaian writer and librarian (at the Padmore Research Library), believed in the value of the library seeing books as essential tools to education and through that to ‘individualism in a modern world’.¹⁰⁸ But he also expressed the frustration of African people over collections that consisted of American and European texts. Public libraries needed to ‘come to grips with African realities’, he argued.¹⁰⁹ He acknowledged ‘nationalist fervour’ as the main factor in the development of libraries in the developing countries.¹¹⁰ It is this nationalism and desire for education and improvement that was one of the driving factors for newly independent and developing countries to embrace the library ethos.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, then, international library development work was underpinned by a vast amount of seminars, surveys, and documentation. Such work was essential, but it was also informed by the cultural and political assumptions of both developed and developing nations as to what they needed, why they needed it, and who should benefit from such essential informational, educational, and cultural infrastructure. We now turn to looking at some of the library projects that were undertaken, with Western involvement, in this period.

Notes

- 1 ‘Letter to the Editor’, *American Library Association Bulletin* 48, no. 1 (January 1954): 7.
- 2 Lucile M. Morsch, ‘Promoting Library Interests Throughout the World’, *American Library Association Bulletin* 51, no. 8 (September 1957): 580.

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- 3 Peggy Sullivan, 'The International Relations Program of the ALA', *Library Trends* (January 1972): 585.
- 4 Lester Asheim to Harold Munger, February 21, 1966, IRO New Office Subject Files, Record Series 7/2/6, Box 2, Folder: Franklin Book Programs, American Library Association Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (hereafter ALA Archives).
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3 Making the modern library

In 1962, Raynard Swank of the American Library Association (ALA) gave a talk on ‘International Values in Librarianship’ (later turned into an article). His talk mainly focused on American involvement in global library activities, while acknowledging the ‘good’ work of British, Australian, and French librarians.¹ He discussed what he believed were the ‘exportable values’ of American librarianship, including a body of technical knowledge, a specialized literature, a social mission, and a sense of ethics.² For Swank, the library was essential to the ‘advancement of intellectual freedom’,³ and organized information ‘a vital resource that is vital even to the welfare of nations’. The library was and must be recognized, he concluded, as a ‘significant public concern’.⁴ Swank’s talk, given at the height of American involvement in global library work, not only testifies to the idea that Western librarians saw their expertise as something exportable but also highlights how important the library was seen to be to modern life. Accordingly, American librarians looked outward, as did librarians from other Western nations, to help others realize successful library services. Supported by government, philanthropic, and other sources of funding, a variety of library projects were embarked upon in this period.

This chapter, then, considers some of the many library projects of the 1950s and 1960s, focusing on those in African and Asian nations. It first examines the development of pilot ‘demonstration’ libraries under the auspices of Unesco in India and Nigeria. Next, it considers a selection of projects aimed at establishing public, school, and university library services in a number of developing nations. It follows this discussion of selected individual projects with a discussion of some of the technologies and methods that were extended to libraries across the globe, such as bibliography and classification – forms of technical transfer that had an impact on the globalizing of information management practices. Finally, it looks at the making of library collections, including considering some of the ways Western nations’ collections were influenced by global involvement. Not all traffic was one way, and participation in international library work also informed American and British librarianship and practice.

In all of this, we can see how efforts to build actual libraries and library services worked. But we also need to consider the practices that were transmitted,

and we need to consider the way such libraries aimed to shape the reader and user of the library. Joseph Deodato writes that libraries are ultimately institutions of cultural hegemony, reflecting and reinforcing the dominant worldview of the societies that create them. Libraries do not merely organize knowledge, he argues, they construct it.⁵ The libraries created in developing nations in this period addressed a very definite need in these countries, but at the same time, the involvement of British, American, and other overseas librarians, who often brought with them assumptions about methods, readers, appropriate reading material, and the type of library that should be built, helped to construct very particular sorts of institutions. In the conclusion, I discuss the extent to which these libraries were considered to have met (or not) the needs of the people they were meant to serve. Building libraries and library services was an important and consequential element of international library development work, but it had complications and issues.

Unesco pilot public libraries

One of the key methods employed by Unesco in developing libraries in countries without many (or any) library services in the postwar period was the establishment of ‘demonstration’ or ‘model’ libraries. At the time, it was believed that such libraries would serve to demonstrate what a modern library was, could provide a model of modern library methods and processes, and could inspire the establishment of similar libraries. A number of Unesco-sponsored pilot libraries were built around the world. The first was in Delhi in India, the second in Enugu in Nigeria, and the third in Medellín in Colombia. The stories of the establishment of the Enugu and Delhi libraries will be considered here, and they provide insights into some of the processes used to try and globalize the institution of ‘the modern library’. Optimism motivated these attempts – both optimism on the part of the developed nations but also on the part of the developing nations, who saw libraries as an integral part of their necessary modernization and growth. These demonstration libraries (and reports about them) also further extended the discourse first put forward in survey reports about the nature of the typical reader in the developing world.

In 1952, Edward Sydney reported to Britain’s Library Association on progress of the Unesco-sponsored Delhi pilot public library project. The leaders of ‘developing democracies’, he wrote, ‘appreciated that many of their intelligent citizens not only wished to make a fuller, more effective, and more responsible contribution to the welfare of the society in which they lived but also that they were anxious to understand, in a world in flux, the changes taking place around them and to appreciate the new and strange privileges and responsibilities now resting on them’. They sought ‘to develop themselves as human beings to their fullest personal capacities and to integrate themselves as happily and as successfully as they could in their own immediate community’.⁶ India was the site for an experiment that would allow what these leaders desired: a pilot public library that would provide a model to inspire

others and that would help to create informed citizens who could participate fully in a 'developing democracy'.

Sydney went on to explain to Library Association members why this project was important for British librarians to support. Change was happening in India and other developing nations, and books, periodicals, and other printed material were essential to the education that underpinned and helped to make such change possible.⁷ 'But a belief that an adequate public library service to the ordinary man in the street is also a national necessity is not obvious, and had to be explained and demonstrated even to intelligent people', he continued. The establishment of a public library was, he argued, 'an act of faith and its continued maintenance a sustained conviction that democracy prospers best and quickest where ideas and information necessary to a full participation in the life of a society are freely and easily available to all individuals'. Public libraries were one of the agencies that 'make and mould men's lives and minds'.⁸ Libraries underpinned the all-important life-long education so vital to a democracy. Sydney concluded his report by declaring that 'it is no idle pipe-dream to imagine in the next fifty years, a great Delhi Central Public Library such as now stands in New York, Manchester, Stockholm and many other cities, a living expression of a profound belief in man's unconquerable mind'.⁹

The Delhi project was first mooted in 1949 as a joint venture between Unesco and the fledgling Indian national government. The Indian government would bear the cost of the establishment and maintenance of the library; the selected city would provide a suitable building; and Unesco would financially support a number of things, including the visit of a (temporary) foreign advisor-director, publicity materials, and a fellowship for a permanent Indian director to receive training abroad.¹⁰ Delhi was selected as the site of the library, and it was to be housed in the former Wavell Canteen in Queens Road, Old Delhi.¹¹ The building was now Dalmia Jain House and located in a major commercial area of the city.¹² The library aimed to 'serve the needs of all members of the civic community without distinction, class, creed, occupation or race'.¹³ From the perspective of Unesco, the purpose of the project was to provide the people of New Delhi with a public library service 'using modern techniques' and to 'demonstrate the use of modern library techniques under Asian conditions'.¹⁴

It was noted by Edward Sydney that the library was 'not to be a western conception adapted to Indian situations, but an Indian institution utilizing those ideas from western experience which can best help it to make its maximum effective contribution to the life and progress of the Indian people at the earliest moment'.¹⁵ A library board of some 11 members was appointed, including Unesco and Indian government representatives, as well as several 'experts' with skills considered 'useful' to the library. Yudhvir Singh, president of the Delhi Municipal Committee, served as the first chairman. Library experts who served on the board included S.R. Ranganathan (then president of the Indian Library Association), and Edward Sydney. After Sydney

left to return to Britain, S. Das Gupta, librarian of Delhi University, was appointed to replace him.¹⁶ The library was inaugurated on October 27, 1950, by Jawaharlal Nehru, who addressed a crowd of some 1,200 people in both Hindi and English.¹⁷ Within six months, the library had some 6,000 members.¹⁸

In 1957, Unesco published an evaluation of the Delhi Public Library Pilot Project to assess its progress. This was the first report on a pilot library project undertaken by Unesco; it was also a summary of the results of the first assessment of such a library and the first major survey of a public library in Asia.¹⁹ At the time of its assessment by Unesco expert Frank Gardner, the library had a staff of some 45 people, was open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week, and membership was free and open to all.²⁰ The main reading room of the library permitted both members and nonmembers as patrons. The library also operated a mobile library service, which had begun in 1953 and which serviced 15 locations every week in both urban New Delhi and surrounding rural areas, as well as maintaining a number of 'deposit stations' for the return of books around the city.²¹

The assessment that resulted in the 1957 report on the library was begun in 1955 and was undertaken by Gardner with the assistance of several Indian librarians. It was, Gardner wrote, 'the first sizable survey of a public library in Asia'.²² Gardner and his team undertook surveys, interviews, and made observations of the library's operations. Their aim was to assess 'how far the Delhi Public Library had met a social and culture need', and to see how the library was used, whether it met user needs, and, more broadly, aimed to throw 'some light on the administrative and organizational problems involved in operating a public library in Asia'.²³ Gardner's evaluation and report stands as the most important document on the state of the Delhi pilot project in its early years. It provides a good record of how the library had evolved through the first few years of its existence and also gives insight into what Unesco hoped the library would achieve. It also demonstrates how a British librarian viewed the role, purpose, and uses of a library in India. Gardner considered the library to be an inspiration for similar initiatives in Asia.²⁴

The Delhi Public Library was considered at the time of its assessment to be something of a success, but it faced a number of ongoing challenges. One of these was the need to find a user base: in other words, readers. Delhi's literacy rates at the time of the survey (1957) were estimated to be about 39% of the total urban population, which gave it a reasonable base for potential membership. The library's membership consisted of mostly young men in their 20s, many of whom were students, along with many children. Clerical workers, businessmen, and professional workers also made up significant occupational groups in the library membership. Nearly all members of the library were male, some 93.72% of the membership. Sixty-five percent of users attended the library at least once a week, and 89% not less than once a fortnight.²⁵ Gardner commented on the lack of female patrons, observing that social custom was the reason for this and also speculating that women were perhaps

likely to borrow books from family members rather than directly from the library. The report also observed that 13% of the users surveyed read aloud to their families, which was ‘of great social value in a country where illiteracy is still common’.²⁶ Gardner believed the lack of women members of the library to be an issue that needed addressing, however, writing that possible solutions to the problem might be to set aside particular days for women to come to the library or to create separate facilities for women users of the library.²⁷ In asking those who didn’t use the library why this was the case, the main excuse given was that the library required a guarantor for membership. Other reasons proffered for not using the library included a lack of time, and the distance of the library.²⁸

Another challenge for the library, and for Indian librarianship as a whole, was the issue of India’s numerous languages and how to provide adequate reading material in those languages. Library users spoke Hindi, Urdu, and/or English principally, but several other languages were also spoken by Delhi’s citizens.²⁹ The majority of the book collection was in Hindi, with English and Urdu material also held; users tended to borrow Hindi material most frequently and English material the least. The book stock in Hindi and Urdu was noted as being of poor quality, one of several problems identified with the library’s collections.³⁰

The Unesco report provides us with some insight into the borrowing habits and library use in Delhi at the time. Books were preferred for reading, with few members attending the library for any other reason. Some used newspapers and periodicals. People cited using the library ‘for the purpose of increasing knowledge generally’ (39% of users), for general interest (26%), and for the purpose of an examination or assignment (18%). Fiction was preferred in Hindi; nonfiction in English. Most readers who used the library could read both English and Hindi but preferred reading in Hindi. In addition, they felt that there was not enough material in that language to meet their demands.³¹

In English, the types of books chosen, in order of preference, were: social sciences, ‘technics’, philosophy, literature, and history; in Hindi, the order was literature first, followed by social sciences; and in Urdu, preferred categories were literature, biography, and history. While literature was the preferred category of borrowing, in a survey of what readers would *want* to read, biography topped the list, followed by literature, self-improvement, Indian history, and technical knowledge. They least desired books on politics, psychology, technical works, and books on economics and world history. The survey also asked readers what they preferred within each category. In fiction, readers put love stories at the top of their list, followed by stories about modern India, crime and detective novels, and historical stories about India.³² Unable to help himself from judging these preferences, Gardner saw the choice of romance as the preferred genre as ‘regrettable’.³³

The survey also sought to ascertain how readers selected their reading, an issue that was of concern to Western librarians and something that prompted

them to discuss how to help readers make ‘better’ choices. In the case of the users of the Delhi Public Library, most patrons depended on making their own choices or took the advice of friends. Only a small number relied on book reviews, and none mentioned radio or films as informing book choices – something that librarians of the time said differed from typical Western library users. Many patrons simply selected books from browsing the shelves. The report observed: ‘Newness of books has little apparent influence, and the author is a more potent influence than the subject’.³⁴

Gardner concluded his report on the Delhi library by stating that he believed that the Delhi project was an inspiration for similar initiatives in Asia and noted how impressed he was with the ‘deep interest in reading appreciation of books for their own sake’ that the Delhi library users displayed.³⁵

The Delhi public library was subsequently used as a site for training librarians ‘and for the provision of information and advice on all aspects of public library organization and operation’. The *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* noted that this move opened ‘the way to a more complete realization of the library’s objective to serve as a model for all of India and other countries in the region’.³⁶ The library also served as a demonstration at a more global level: A documentary film was produced by Unesco entitled *Books for All*, which profiled the Delhi library and illustrated how public libraries could help support programs of fundamental education. The film was distributed in three languages: English, French, and Spanish.³⁷

It was perhaps unsurprising that Nigeria would be the home of Unesco’s pilot public library for Africa. Nigeria was one of the leading nations in Africa for developing educational facilities, notably several higher education institutions. This made it a logical location for the development of libraries. As we’ve already seen in Chapter 2, in 1953, a major Unesco conference was held in Ibadan, Nigeria, to survey and discuss existing library services across Africa and to plan for the future. Various attempts were made through the first years of the 1950s to establish regional public libraries in a number of African nations and in parts of Africa still under British control.³⁸

An early initiative in African library development was the establishment of the Regional Central Library in Enugu in Eastern Nigeria, sponsored by Unesco.³⁹ The Enugu project was a joint initiative between the Eastern Nigerian government and Unesco and was launched in 1957.⁴⁰ The building was designed by British architectural firm James Cubitt and Partners, which had some experience of building schools in Ghana and who also designed the University of Nigeria at Nsukka.⁴¹ In 1961, a few years after its opening, a report on the library was compiled by Stanley Horrocks, Borough Librarian of Reading in Britain, who served as a Unesco expert in Enugu in 1957 and 1958.

Eastern Nigeria was part of the Federation of Nigeria and took in a large and diverse population, as well as stretching over a significant geographical area. Most of the region was rural, and most residents spoke Ibo.⁴² Literacy rates were low, but English was at the time considered to be the lingua franca. Horrocks cited a view of the time that regarded English as a language that

could unite a Nigeria made up of several different vernacular languages.⁴³ Enugu was the region's capital, and a recently developed town that dated to the discovery and mining of coal in the area. At the time of Horrocks' report, it had a population of around 89,000 people. Enugu had a small number of schools, but there was no system of compulsory education. Most people worked in the rail or coal industries.⁴⁴ Few recreational facilities existed in Enugu, and the only libraries that existed were British Council and USIS libraries. There were no dedicated bookshops. The plan was to establish Enugu's pilot Unesco library at a location that could attract many people, close to the town's market and on a major traffic route.⁴⁵ The new library was opened in March 1959, and a mobile library service was established at the same time.⁴⁶

As with the report on the Delhi library, Horrocks' report aimed to profile typical users of the Enugu library, and this gives us some insight into who used the library and why. The library allowed borrowers to join the library for free, and they could borrow two books at any one time. According to Horrocks' survey, one in eight members of the literate population of Enugu was a member of the library.⁴⁷ Most were keen readers and borrowed regularly from the library. But the reference library attracted more users than the borrowing section, attracting mainly clerks and students who read newspapers and magazines.⁴⁸ Activities undertaken in the library included working on job applications, but most were there, the survey concluded, to study or for the purpose of 'general reading and pleasure'.⁴⁹ However, it is notable that most of the users of the library were Europeans living in Enugu rather than Africans.⁵⁰ Of the Africans who did use the library, most were young males, the majority of whom were students or clerks looking to use the library for the purposes of study. Few African women were members of the library.⁵¹ The mobile library service was an important initiative in trying to reach a wider range of users beyond the central location in Enugu. Operating from May 1958, a mobile library truck carried over 1,000 books into remote areas, serving both adult and children patrons.⁵²

Horrocks' report provided insight into what material users of the Enugu library sought out. Nigerian newspapers were popular, as were a range of English newspapers including *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Observer*. The American magazine *Time* and the British periodical *The Economist* were also popular choices. The more locally relevant *West African Review* (published in London) was also in demand.⁵³ In terms of books, fiction made up 41% of borrowing; this, Horrocks observed, 'would seem to belie the oft-repeated statement that the reading of imaginative works is not done by Africans'.⁵⁴ Popular genres included: 'stories of modern Africa' (the most popular and including a demand for Nigerian or West African authors), romance, adventure, historical novels, and crime. In nonfiction, popular categories included books on trade, motorcar repair manuals, self-improvement, politics, history, African affairs, and economic and technical subjects.⁵⁵

Horrocks deemed the library to be a general success, but he addressed the problem of how to reach those who did not use the library. Those surveyed who didn't use the Enugu library argued that they got their material elsewhere, including from British Council and USIS libraries. They also claimed that their time was spent in other pursuits, including listening to the radio and going to the cinema. A few argued that they had no time to go to the library or that the library was too distant.⁵⁶ Horrocks believed the library had a promising future nonetheless. While its remote locale worked against it, it was being widely publicized. There were also plans to develop the library as a site for librarian training, in cooperation with the School of Librarianship that had been created at the University of Ibadan.⁵⁷ Public libraries had an important duty to fulfill in a society, Horrocks believed. They supported adult education, they could function as valuable research and information centers for industry and commerce, and they could serve 'as a place where people of similar cultural interests can meet and exchange views'.⁵⁸ Progress was subsequently made with the establishment of library services in Nigeria, but this progress was uneven – while the Eastern region developed good services, other regions did not.⁵⁹

The reports on the pilot libraries provide us with insight into a number of important aspects of library work in the 1950s and provides insight into how the libraries were used, even if these user surveys were shaped by particular questions and assumptions. Library users of the time clearly used these libraries as a mean to self-improvement and to supplement educational efforts – as we will see in Chapter 5, this was also true of many users of British Council and USIS libraries. But readers were also seen (or stereotyped) as 'developing', hence the surprise from Horrocks when some African readers wanted to read fiction and Gardner's concern over the choice of romance by Indian readers. It is possible, although not explicitly articulated, that these librarians may have felt that here was an opportunity to shape a better and more serious reader rather than a self-indulgent reader who might be drawn to 'cheap' fiction. While much was made by international librarians of encouraging intellectual freedom, there was still a tendency to try and mold a better class of reader when given an opportunity; the 'developing' reader was the perfect subject for this.

These Unesco reports also provide us with some insight into the practical problems of libraries in developing nations, explored in the rest of the chapter. While the pilot libraries had some success in creating a library that could be used by local populations, they struggled to build relevant collections and to provide adequate services to a wide and largely poorly educated population. In Nigeria, in particular, the Enugu library was hampered by some of the fundamental problems of the country as it moved to independence. These problems included regional differences (which would result in civil war by the end of the 1960s), multiple languages (with limited publishing capacity in these languages), and variable literacy. Nevertheless, in 1960, Kalu Okorie, regional librarian for Eastern Nigeria, reported to Unesco on what he regarded as the

success of the pilot library. Okorie argued that the library had ‘set the pace’ and was worthy of study by ‘public library planners in young African states’. He concluded that Unesco could ‘well be proud of its achievement in West Africa’.⁶⁰

The major Unesco pilot library projects were not the only such efforts to use this kind of approach of establishing demonstration libraries. A number of smaller-scale pilot projects were developed, some of which were linked to education efforts. One example is the ‘Rural Public Library Demonstration Programme’ run by the Arab States Fundamental Education Office. This aimed to serve as ‘a demonstration of public library services for students at the center, who are being trained as leaders in rural improvement work to raise the standard of living in Arabic countries’. ‘Active participation in the work of the demonstration libraries, and in a library science course’, reported the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries*, ‘shows the trainees how they can later set up public library services as an aid to fundamental education in their own countries’.⁶¹ Elsewhere, a pilot library was established at the Ivory Coast (Côte d’Ivoire) as part of a coordinated effort to address library needs in Francophone Africa.⁶² This library, located in Abidjan, was given Unesco support in the form of a library expert and some books and equipment. It also had the support of the Ivory Coast government.⁶³

Demonstration libraries were thus important initiatives in the development of library services (and the dissemination of the public library idea) in West Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and elsewhere. However, they were reliant on foreign aid and expertise and were shaped by assumptions about methods, collections, and ideas about the reader and the role of reading for individuals. This would be the case for a number of other library initiatives in this period, which we now turn to.

Library planning and development: Public, school, and university libraries

Many developing and newly independent countries aimed to set up library services, including public, schools, and university libraries. Services varied in quality, and often were limited by issues such as lack of trained staff and financial support. Various methods of establishing library services were employed, with pilot libraries, as discussed above, being only one way of furthering the move toward a public library service. In some countries, such as India, reasonable library services already existed, while in other countries, there were no existing services to build on.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, then, many emerging nations established libraries, from school libraries to public libraries to university libraries. In September 1957, for example, the Kabul Public Library was opened in Afghanistan with a collection of 1,000 English books and 1,500 Persian books. The library also opened with a five-year plan to further develop and expand its services.⁶⁴ The Kabul library was built in a country where there was

next to no existing library services, but many library services were developed out of some basic colonial services. One such example is the public library service established in Singapore. This service emerged from the colonial library service built around the Raffles subscription library established in the late nineteenth century. Following independence, there was a move to turn the Raffles collections into a national library, establish a library board, and set up public library services.⁶⁵ This new service was to be free, and not subscription as it had been previously.

Singapore, unlike some parts of Asia, had high literacy rates, but a main focus was on cultivating good reading habits in children.⁶⁶ New stock was built up, and material in the main languages of Singapore, including Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, was included. The challenge of obtaining material in languages other than English was observed. Reading material in Chinese was available, but tended to have, it was believed, a ‘Communist influence’. It was noted that the Singapore and Malaya government had therefore drawn up a list of banned authors. New stock was built up, and material in the main languages of Singapore, including Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, was included. Malay and Tamil material was less available.⁶⁷ It was also noted that there was some focus on providing ‘books of interest to business men. There is need in a city with a large entrepôt trade for a variety of books dealing with commercial matters of all kinds’. Hence a public library could ‘play an important part not only in the commercial, but also in the industrial life of a city’.⁶⁸

Another example of a library service that evolved from colonial origins was that in the Gold Coast (Ghana). The British supported the establishment of libraries through the Gold Coast Library Board, with the first being established in Kumasi in 1955 and a second in Sekondi that same year. The opening of these libraries were public events: Sekondi’s opening included ‘two chiefs [dressed] in colourful regalia attending, along with E.J.A. Evans, the Director of Library Services’. The library was housed in a new, modern, ‘open plan’ building, with a lending library with space for 12,000 volumes and a reference library with space for 8,000 books.⁶⁹ In 1956, a new Central Public Library was opened in Accra, with the opening ceremony including independence leader Kwame Nkrumah. The president of the Library Association, A.G. Walker, was also present, having been invited by the Gold Coast Library Board and supported by both the Board and the British Council for travel out to the Gold Coast. Walker used his speech at the occasion of the opening to emphasize the importance of public library service ‘for successful enterprise, democratic government, and individual responsibility ... sane government, commercial progress, and industrial development demands books and information at all levels of a society’.⁷⁰

Literature bureaus also played an early role in establishing library services in some locations. The East African Literature Bureau (EALB) notably ran library services in Uganda in the early 1950s and established some 60 library centers, many of which were attached to social clubs, missions, and schools.⁷¹ It also ran a mobile library through the distribution of book boxes.⁷² This

buttressed their work in producing literature (much of which was basic reading material).⁷³ C.G. Richards, reporting on the EALB in 1961, noted that its purpose was ‘to meet and, indeed, to foster the ever-increasing demand among Africans for books of all kinds and to encourage African authorship, all of which are needs which cannot be adequately met by the ordinary publishing trade’.⁷⁴

Even where colonial library services existed, these were often very limited, especially to American eyes. In a 1957 letter to Jack Dalton, James A. Hulbert, who was director of library services in Dacca, East Pakistan (Bangladesh), decried the lack of library services at every level, observing that ‘with the widespread blight of poverty and backwardness, the conditions of these libraries are inferior to the poorest of our American Southern libraries thirty years ago’. He noted that the USIS was helping to study the library situation and to implement some improvements. He noted that projects for library development were being planned, including an American Bibliography project ‘in which we would place a standard collection of bibliographic aids in two university libraries, one public library and one scientific library’, and a grant-in-aid project ‘for depositing a basic collection of American reference books in the newly planned Central Public Library of this city ... a library which will ultimately become the nucleus of all public library development in the region’. He concluded that ‘people here are eager for books and education’.⁷⁵

Many countries thus had to build up their services from little but were eager to try and implement some kind of library service. In Tanzania, which gained its independence in 1961, a library service was quickly established on the advice of British librarian Sidney Hockey who provided plans for it. In 1963, E.M. Broome, another British librarian, arrived to take up an appointment as director of the Tanzanian Library Service.⁷⁶ Services began at the end of 1963 and by the middle of the decade, a number of small libraries were in place. The public library in Dar es Salaam was especially popular, although it took time to develop an African, as opposed to European, readership.⁷⁷ A National Central Library service was established in 1967, supported by both the British Council and the Tanzanian government.⁷⁸ The Tanzanian service was of mixed success: It had problems related to finance, library stock, and space, but there were also issues with building up readership. One view expressed at the end of the 1960s was that the library service was geared toward ‘minorities’ and ‘local elites’, and there was a concern about whether there was enough appropriate material for the average reader of Tanzania.⁷⁹ A Tanzanian librarian, E.E. Kaungamna, took over from Broome as director in 1970, helping the process of Africanizing the library service.⁸⁰

Mobile libraries were a popular means of taking public library services to rural and remote areas in a number of places. The Delhi public library, as we saw, incorporated mobile library services, taking collections in Hindi and Urdu to a variety of areas around Delhi by way of an Austin van.⁸¹ In Ghana,

mobile library services worked through book boxes – boxes of 50 books each were sent out to clubs, schools, local councils, and individual subscribers.⁸² A traveling library scheme was established in the Solomon Islands (still under British administration) in 1957. A variety of material was included in the library boxes (which were made out of ex-army ammunition cases from Australia) with a particular effort made to include material related to the Pacific and regional countries such as Australia.⁸³

While public library services were a major focus of international library development, so were university and school libraries. A priority for emerging nations was the creation of universities; as a necessary adjunct to any successful institution of higher education, it was vital to have a well-stocked, functional university library that could provide material to both staff and students and underpin both research and education efforts. An Inter-Universities Conference on university library needs in Tropical Africa was held in Southern Rhodesia in September 1964 sponsored by the Leverhulme Trust, which had the theme of ‘cooperation’.⁸⁴ John Harris, a New Zealand-born and British-trained expatriate librarian who lived in West Africa, delivered the keynote address. Acknowledging that there may have been evils as a result of British colonialism, he stated that one positive British legacy was the libraries established ‘in the last days of its rule’.⁸⁵ A variety of other papers were presented, including one by Sam Nyowe, vice-president of the Nigerian Library Association, who spoke ‘resplendent in national dress’.⁸⁶ An exhibition of African writing in English and French accompanied the conference.⁸⁷ One of the benefits of such conferences, it was noted, was that it brought together and allowed for face-to-face meetings and discussions between professionals.

A number of universities looked for overseas assistance in developing their libraries, and there was professional concern to develop these kinds of libraries. The University of Tehran and the University of Damascus were both helped by Unesco in reorganizing and expanding their libraries in the early 1950s.⁸⁸ University libraries were often supported by grants from American agencies and foundations through the 1950s and 1960s. For example, the Asia Foundation helped to sponsor the development of the Afghan Ministry of Justice Library in Kabul and the University of Kashmir Library in Lucknow in the early 1960s.⁸⁹

Nigeria established a number of universities at the beginning of the 1960s, including the University of Nigeria (1960), the University of Ife (1962), and the University of Lagos (1962). Much of the push for higher education came from Nigerian nationalist leaders but relied on essential support from organizations such as the British Council, USAID, and foundations such as Ford and Carnegie.⁹⁰ Nigerian and Ghanaian universities became particularly important centers in West Africa for the development of library, documentation, and bibliographical work.⁹¹

Haile Selassie I University in Ethiopia was aided by the USA through a Ford Foundation grant. Rita Pankhurst, the university librarian, noted how funds had helped to build up the library’s book stock, while her own work had

helped to reorganize the library, with priority given to allowing open access to the library stacks.⁹² Pankhurst also developed library-training programs.⁹³ Library collections and stock were supplemented by books donated by the Peace Corps, the American University Presses Project (a project to take American university press books to developing countries), books donated directly by educational publishers, and donations from some European and Commonwealth countries.⁹⁴

School library development was another area of concern in library development. Support for school libraries was forthcoming from Unesco, which prioritized basic education: A project in the early 1960s developed school libraries for Nigeria and resulted in the launching of a School Library Service for the Federal Territory of Lagos in 1964.⁹⁵ Harold Bonny, a Unesco 'expert' who we met in the last chapter, consulted on its development. As we saw, on his advice two demonstration school libraries were opened in 1965, each with a stock of 1,500 books, shelving and equipment supplied by Unesco, and a simplified card catalogue. Bonny noted in his report on the project that the libraries were designed 'to serve as model libraries to demonstrate the need for, and place of, school libraries in the educational system. In my view they should also serve as research centres for school reading and as guides to book selection, reading interests and needs'. Such libraries were needed to help 'provide experience in the use of books and of libraries'.⁹⁶

The USA also took an interest in supporting the development of school libraries. Lester Asheim of the ALA's International Relations Office (IRO) occasionally undertook contractual work while working abroad for USAID. In 1964, he fulfilled a contract that included surveying the library school program of University of Indonesia, examining and studying the overall library situation in Indonesia, and setting out future possible goals for Indonesian school library activity.⁹⁷ Asheim thought it a 'very interesting and enjoyable assignment'.⁹⁸ Cultivating young readers was deemed to be an important part of the mission of global library development and was also seen to be important to the development of a global book-reading and book-buying public.

All of this took place in a context whereby library planning was promoted as a crucial part of library development. Many library surveys and consultants argued for the importance of detailed library service plans, and this was one of the areas of expertise offered by the library experts we encountered in the last chapter. Certain areas of the world were conceived of regionally in terms of developing library service plans. For example, frequent conferences on library planning in Asia were held in the second half of the 1960s, sponsored by Unesco and local governments. Expert consultants joined with delegates from Asian library services and attempts were made to try and develop cooperative regional services and develop specific national plans.⁹⁹ Yet planning remained patchy and variable, and this affected the ongoing growth and development of libraries and library services.

Technologies, methods, literature

The discussion in this section will, by necessity, be brief, but international library development work sought to globalize the means by which information was managed. Christine Pawley has argued for the importance of seeing libraries as institutional actors in the system of print culture.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, libraries in this period became a key means of shaping access to print and information in a variety of ways, including through the implementation of techniques to organize collections and to make material available, as well as through the formation of particular collections.

Librarians in developing countries needed to be aware of new ideas about library services and practices, and this was one way of creating a modern profession and a modern library. A range of material was published that sought to help in training and knowledge transfer which also helped to identify and articulate the problems and issues faced by libraries and offered (and framed understandings of) solutions. Unesco, for example, produced a number of manuals for libraries that collected information about library development (and adult education, an allied concern) and made this knowledge available for librarians and other professionals around the world. The first Unesco manual was J. Periam Danton's *Education for Librarianship*.¹⁰¹ It was followed by Lionel McColvin's *Public Library Extension* and a number of others.¹⁰² British librarian Edward Sydney argued that all these manuals were invaluable and had 'made available, in a number of key languages, the latest ideas, theories, policies and practices of librarianship to many who have hitherto had little or no access to this information. The literature of public librarianship, in default of a market, is seldom translated and published, and the dissemination of information outside the English-speaking world has been, hitherto, severely limited'.¹⁰³ Access to library literature was difficult for emerging countries, who struggled to even fill their libraries with books. Unesco's manuals and other such information helped make available a professional literature that could support the development of libraries and the training of librarians, through such publications methods and approaches central to the profession was disseminated globally.

A variety of techniques and methods were introduced and encouraged in libraries in developing countries. Bibliographies were promoted as an essential means of developing collections, making collections accessible and useful, and as essential to modernization itself. Unesco argued that bibliographies 'underpinned scientific and social development'. 'The role of international bibliography is to create a genuine bibliographical universe', it was stated, and it was necessary to try and 'invent a common language of bibliography – terminology, classification, description'. Without bibliography, Unesco argued, 'the records of civilization would be an unchartered chaos of miscellaneous contributions to knowledge, unorganized and inapplicable to human needs'.¹⁰⁴ In 1956, on the 10th anniversary of Unesco, Julien Cain noted the value of documentation

and bibliographical work. ‘It is now universally recognized that documentation is necessary to technological progress, that it is, to some extent, a factor in productivity, ... [and] the handmaid of all the scientific disciplines’.¹⁰⁵ Efforts relating to bibliography included working toward the standardization of bibliographical techniques, work undertaken by Unesco in conjunction with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). ISO reported to Unesco with recommendations for an international code for the abbreviation of titles of periodicals, bibliographical citations, and bibliographical references.¹⁰⁶

American librarians similarly argued for the importance of bibliography. Cecil Hobbs of the Library of Congress argued in 1968 that bibliography was ‘the keystone to solid, lasting research’, and effective communication was essential to ‘better international relations’. Books, periodicals and newspapers, he argued, ‘bring the world closer together, and make for a more intelligent place in which to live’. He expressed concern about the fact that national bibliographies were lacking in many of the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.¹⁰⁷ A number of countries began to work toward developing national bibliographies to better document their publications and to make other countries aware of these publications. A committee to develop an Indian National Bibliography was formed in 1955, which Indian librarian B.S. Kesavan noted as ‘a universal book of reference for books published in India on all subjects and it should have a national and international currency’.¹⁰⁸ Indonesia set up a National Bibliographic Centre, assisted by Australian and New Zealand ‘experts’ through the Colombo Plan.¹⁰⁹ An Iranian Bibliographical Centre was established at the University of Tehran in 1965.¹¹⁰ Bibliographical conferences also helped to further efforts at compiling and exchanging bibliographies. In 1967, an International Conference on Bibliography was held in Africa to deal with African bibliography, supported by the International African Institute and the Ford Foundation.¹¹¹

A variety of other efforts helped to work toward greater standardization, documentation, and exchange. For example, methods were developed for standardizing library statistics internationally.¹¹² IFLA worked toward progress in cataloguing and exchange, including helping to develop an agreement regarding international interlibrary loans in 1954 and holding an International Conference of Cataloguing Principles in Paris in 1961.¹¹³

The limitations of available cataloguing classification schemes, such as the Dewey Decimal System, were sometimes noted. One observer commented that the existing classification schemes had ‘not enough room for Africa’.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, there was a push on the part of Anglo-American librarians to introduce these systems of classification. Lorraine Mathies, an American librarian, went to work in Lagos in 1962. She reported to Lester Asheim that she was the only American librarian there and requested some kind of simple manual on library organization and copies of the abridged Dewey classification, as she was often called on to help organize small libraries, including school collections.¹¹⁵

While automation would become more important from the 1970s onward, the mid-century decades saw an experimentation with a variety of technologies to try and address the problems faced in the world of information. One of the central issues was how to handle the explosion of information, as well as to make sure that as much of this information could be shared as widely as possible posed significant challenges. Australian librarian Dietrich Borchardt mused in 1962: '[W]e ask ourselves how we are to cope with this bibliographic avalanche which sooner or later will meet us at our doorstep'.¹¹⁶ By the end of the 1960s, Unesco was increasingly turning its attention toward the issue of documentation and dealing with the exponential growth of information, especially in the areas of science and technology. Its aid increasingly turned toward ways of facilitating documentation, such as using microfilm, to deal with this challenge and helping countries begin to develop not just libraries, but also archives.¹¹⁷

Unesco thus actively promoted microfilming and microfilm use in libraries. In 1950, it worked with IFLA to undertake a survey to help produce a directory of existing microfilm and photocopying services.¹¹⁸ The Unesco Mobile Microfilm Unit was established in 1954. The unit aimed to copy material considered as 'special cultural or scientific value, or endangered by the deteriorating effects of time, humidity, fire or any other destructive agency'.¹¹⁹ Unesco went on to support through the 1950s and 1960s a variety of microfilming projects across the world. In the first five years of the work of the Unesco microfilm unit's work, nearly two million pages were copied from across eight countries.¹²⁰ In 1959, for example, microfilming projects were undertaken in Barbados, Chile, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Peru.¹²¹ In the early 1960s, microfilm work was undertaken in the Middle East.¹²² In 1963, more than 900,000 pages were microfilmed in the United Arab Republic, including over 300,000 pages from the Zahariye Library in Damascus, Syria.¹²³ In 1964, attention turned to Asia.¹²⁴ By the end of the 1960s, there was even more demand from member states for the use of Unesco's traveling microfilm units, particularly in Asian countries.¹²⁵

Financial support for all of this kind of work was very variable. One of the roles the ALA's IRO played was to help philanthropic foundations decide which projects to support and advice was often given to suggest where funding should be best spent. After visiting Africa, for example, Lester Asheim recommended to the Ford Foundation that they help to fund photoduplication equipment for the Nairobi Science Teaching Centre.¹²⁶ The Asia Foundation helped to fund the microfilm lab and facilities at the Dacca Central Public Library in Bangladesh.¹²⁷

Making collections

Building a library was one thing, creating collections to make the libraries of use to their communities (whether school children, university students, or the general reader) was another. A major ongoing challenge for libraries in

emerging nations was the lack of adequate book stock. Associated problems included the cost of importing book stock from overseas and the issue of not having much (if anything) published in a relevant language or languages or on topics relevant to the emerging nation. A University of Lagos librarian, O. Jegede, noted the difficulties of acquiring library material due to the distance from traditional book markets and the cost of books; furthermore, there was a lack of material relevant to Nigeria.¹²⁸ The Tanzanian Library Service similarly complained of a lack of appropriate reading material, with many of the books that could be useful for underpinning development being written in English, a language not all Tanzanians spoke or read.¹²⁹

Publication exchange was one important means that was turned to in order to try and boost collections. Libraries developed this in part as a means of managing the cost of building collections – for example, government publications from one country would be exchanged with those of another. Extending publication exchange as far as possible was one goal in international library development work. One of Unesco's goals was to help countries develop publication exchange programs.¹³⁰ It saw this as part of a broader brief of working toward greater global understanding, especially between 'East' and 'West'. Alice Ball, writing in *Libri* in 1954, argued that exchange was 'a natural means for the polite interchange of knowledge between bodies'; praising the work of Unesco in promoting publication exchange, Ball also commented that with the enormous increase of publications, the rise in price of publications, and limited funds, exchange was vital. 'In addition to the economy they offer', she argued, 'they also continue to aid in the cultural interchange which is the life-blood of civilization'.¹³¹

The ALA's International Relations Office also assisted in recommending how philanthropic foundations should allocate funds for building up collections, and this was one way philanthropic funds were used for library development. The Ford Foundation helped to build the collections of the libraries of the Dar-es-Salaam and Kampala Technical Institutes.¹³² The Ford Foundation and the ALA also worked to help supply and organize the library collection of Haile Selassie I University in Ethiopia as part of a two-year project.¹³³ The ALA purchased material with funds supplied by Ford; University librarian Rita Pankhurst helped to identify material and develop bibliographies, as well as try to encourage greater use of the material by allowing for open book stacks.¹³⁴ Pankhurst developed the collections through participating in a USAID-sponsored Science Book Program that made books in the sciences and social sciences cheaply available to institutions in developing countries obtained gift books donated from the Peace Corps, USAID, and from American university presses through a special project and also received donations from Australia, Canada, and some European countries.¹³⁵

Efforts were also made to make publications more easy to purchase and import, especially for countries who struggled with the value of their currency, especially against the American dollar. Unesco was instrumental in getting the Florence Agreement promulgated – an agreement between

numerous nations of the world that saw the abolition of customs duties on ‘educational, scientific, and cultural materials’.¹³⁶ The USA also introduced the Informational Media Guarantee (IMG) program that allowed selected countries with soft currencies to purchase American books – this both benefited the USA commercially and guaranteed more American printed material circulated the globe.

It is clear that collections as they were constructed in this period were very much a reflection of the Anglo-American publishing world. Books were nearly always from British or American publishers, as local publishing in many countries was not adequate (or, in some cases, even existent) for publishing the kind of material deemed suitable for developing nations. While programs such as the IMG program assisted in the import of books from overseas, they also allowed for imported books to dominate the books that circulated. And, importantly, this was a time of considerable commercial expansion for British and especially US publishers. American educational publishers grew enormously in the postwar decades, fueled by the baby boom, but also by the growing international market for educational books.¹³⁷ Unsurprisingly, there was a desire to get this product into libraries globally, not just domestically.

The USA actively worked in these years to try and make inroads into the developing world book market, often using government cultural diplomacy and development projects as a means to get into markets that were otherwise difficult to gain a foothold in. Without active intervention, it was hard for American books to enter the market in some areas of the world, especially Africa, many countries of which were dominated by British publishers even after independence. Americans visiting the continent frequently commented on the dearth of American books, and the dominance of British books in collections and British publishers in the market. Lester Asheim, visiting Africa in the early 1960s, believed it was important for American books to become more available.¹³⁸ American librarians thus assisted in a broader commercial and state push to circulate American books in the developing world; similarly, British librarians assisted British Council efforts to support the ongoing presence of British books and publishers in areas of the former empire.

While some British publishers concerned themselves with publishing African writing – for example, Heinemann’s African Writers Series that published books such as Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* – these publishers remained firmly committed to British control in the market. The impact of such publishing efforts was to bring African writers to the attention of the world but had the negative effect of causing African publishing to remain underdeveloped and meant African countries continued to be dependent on imported books.¹³⁹ Efforts were made to ‘Africanize’ operations in African-located British publishing offices in the 1960s, but this had limited impact on improving local publishing.

Language was clearly another issue in all of this. As we saw with some of the stories of individual library projects, collections and the building of a user base was hampered by the lack of material in vernacular languages. This was a major issue for the development of libraries in many countries, as well as in

the development of a broader book and publishing industry. The question of translation was a fraught one. Britain continued to support the teaching of English (primarily through the British Council). Unesco worked in this period to promote translation of material into various languages but had limited funds to support major translation and publication efforts.¹⁴⁰ The American government supported translation programs but primarily to buttress its cultural diplomacy program. But again little of all this did much to ensure the development of local publishing in any serious way, especially in languages with smaller readerships.

Library collections in developing nations thus continued to contain many books in English, typically published in Britain or the USA. Library collections were also shaped by the particular funding, support, and expertise that a library had. Foundation funds, for example, were seen to sometimes lean too much toward specialized collections for universities, while basic material was lacking.¹⁴¹ However, there were some efforts, however partial, to develop the book industry in places. For example, a 1967 meeting in Tokyo discussed book development in Asia and highlighted the importance of developing publishing and the book trade, as well as libraries. Examples of efforts included the establishment of a National Book Development Board in India and a National Book Council in Afghanistan; the National Book Centre of Iran brought together government officials, publishers, booksellers, and writers and conducted book exhibitions.¹⁴²

International library development work had the effect of making librarians in the library nations aware of the insular nature of their own collections. The Second World War led American librarians to be concerned with promoting knowledge around, and collections about, areas of the world such as the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The Cold War and involvement in decolonizing areas of the world similarly prompted an interest in what became known as ‘area studies’. Academic study of, and interest in, particular areas of the world increased, and this required better collections to undergird such research.¹⁴³ Area studies were supported through foundation grants, as well as institutional and government support.¹⁴⁴

American libraries thus expanded their collections, not least in order to match the USA’s increasing involvement in global affairs. A Committee on World Area Research was established in 1946 by the Social Sciences Research Council that undertook important surveys and studies of various parts of the world such as the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.¹⁴⁵ Universities became important sites of research, often supported financially by both government and foundations, including the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation.¹⁴⁶ From 1958 the National Defense Education Act also helped to provide federal financial support for language and area programs that helped to support the acquisition of significant specialist library collections at selected universities.¹⁴⁷

In 1969, Lester Asheim noted that exchanges with, and professional relationships with, Asian librarians had been critical in the development of

Asian collections in the USA, as well as in helping to promote the idea of a global profession. ‘Without the aid of Asian librarians, few if any of our Far Eastern materials would ever have been started or expanded’, he wrote. ‘We have relied heavily on scholars and librarians from Korea, China and Japan to assist us in obtaining and selecting materials, cataloging and classifying them, and special services’. He noted the problem of language – more Koreans spoke English than the other way around – but observed that American librarians would have to learn the language and with that would ‘be able to take advantage of the knowledge, background and experience that study, observation and even work in Korea can provide’. He hoped that they all shared his belief in the ‘one-world of librarianship, and in the possibility that we can learn from each other across national boundaries’.¹⁴⁸

Despite financial support, the demand for collections to support area studies posed challenges for university libraries: These challenges included the need for language skills, financial strain, and the need for specialized training for librarians.¹⁴⁹ Few librarians were equipped, especially in the early years after the Second World War, to deal with issues of selection and procurement of material for the collections that were aspired to.¹⁵⁰ Other issues included the problem of a lack of national bibliographies in countries from which material was to be acquired, poor quality printed material, and a poorly developed book trade.¹⁵¹ By the middle of the 1960s, microfilming had become an important technology for the reproduction and expansion of collections, helping to address at least some of the issues relating to creating the collections that were needed in a globalized world.¹⁵²

Anthony Olden, in writing about the history of libraries in Africa, has commented on the lack of appropriateness of the Anglo-American public library model for many countries in Africa. Most of the services established in Africa were set up with British guidance, or by British-educated librarians. He notes that many expatriates meant well, but their familiarity with African life and culture was limited.¹⁵³ Mary Niles Maack, writing about library development work in West Africa, similarly observes that external assistance to libraries may have perpetuated existing patterns of cultural dependency, and that ultimately aid could, in a number of instances, be useless or counter-productive.¹⁵⁴ Hector J. Maymi-Sugrañes, in writing about Latin American libraries, has queried the imposition of the American library ‘modernizing’ model on societies for which they were not suited and which often did not have the resources to properly maintain them.¹⁵⁵ And Basil Amaeshi queries the British-style library model imposed in Africa that was not very relevant for African contexts.¹⁵⁶ Many agree, then, that the Anglo-American library was not necessarily the ideal model for developing countries to follow, or have imposed on them, and that it may even have had a detrimental effect on a country’s culture.

In his book *Librarianship in the Developing Countries* (1966), Lester Asheim reflected on his work with the ALA’s IRO by querying whether anyone really

wanted the help of Americans in their library work, when it was clear some American methods just did not work in other national contexts.¹⁵⁷ He still thought there were principles and methods that could be usefully exported and continued to support American involvement in international library development, but he also shows some awareness of the flaws in the system.

P.J. Mhaiki, director of the Institute of Adult Education at Dar es Salaam, declared in 1971 that ‘the time has come now in Socialist Tanzania, where we believe in the dignity of man, in the equality of all men and in the right of all men to be educated, not to allow books to be status symbols for the privileged few only but to spread books and disseminate knowledge in the cities and in the rural areas for the development of all the citizens’.¹⁵⁸ He also stated: ‘A reading nation is a well-informed nation. It cannot be easily cheated or exploited. Education is a human right, and socialistic governments have the duty to exploit all possible means of educating their people ... The development of this country will be brought about by an enlightened people released from the shackles of illiteracy and general ignorance’.¹⁵⁹ Mhaiki’s words were powerful and attest to the value of books, libraries, and education for everyone. Yet they also must be set alongside an awareness of the power structures and mindsets that were placed on developing countries as a result of midcentury aid and development efforts. Development projects were often well-intentioned and were often welcomed by many in developing nations, but as we’ve seen in this chapter, they were also the products of particular attitudes, beliefs, and were sometimes part of broader political, commercial, or cultural agendas.

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4 Making the modern librarian

In the American Library Association (ALA) archives sit a number of visitor books. These books contain the signatures and details of visitors to the ALA's International Relations Office (IRO), and they testify to the great diversity of librarians and others who visited the IRO's office. The names and signatures of librarians and visitors from countries such as Japan, Nigeria, New Zealand, Indonesia, India, Thailand, South Africa, Tanzania, Mexico, Iran, Ghana, Czechoslovakia, and Korea are recorded in the visitor book from 1965.¹ The international dimensions of librarianship in this period are revealed here, as these books provide traces of the many visitors from abroad who traveled to the USA for the purposes of library education and training in the 1950s and 1960s.

As emerging nations began to develop library infrastructure, they sought to establish a cohort of trained library professionals. The lack of qualified librarians was frequently mentioned as a major obstacle to the development of libraries in many countries. In 1967, the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* devoted an entire edition to the question of training for librarians and regarded the lack of qualified librarians as one of the 'main preoccupations of the library profession in all countries'.² This chapter therefore considers various issues around training librarians, including the establishment of library schools, the role of overseas training opportunities, and the development of a professional infrastructure – in particular the making of library associations – to facilitate and develop librarianship in developing nations.

Librarians – the actual people who worked in libraries and connected readers with books – became an important means by which Western (British, American, and European) models of librarianship and thinking about the book, reading, and information could be transferred to developing nations. Arnold H. Green, writing about the Arabic world, has applied the idea of 'diffusion' to the spread of librarianship globally, arguing that Arab librarians who were trained in European librarianship programs became 'principal agents' of a diffusion process, taking Western systems of classification, cataloguing, bibliography, and professional practice to Arab libraries, which had a long but different tradition of librarianship.³ The diffusion idea is one that can perhaps be usefully applied to the way Western models of

librarianship were taken up in different parts of the world, through the means of library training.

Training librarians: Establishing library schools

Training librarians became an essential part of international library development work. Various training opportunities allowed librarians from around the globe to develop and improve their library skills. In 1948, it was noted by one British librarian that '[s]uccessful international library relations can succeed only ... if we carefully select and train the people who are to make them work ... We must train librarians for early and life-long international friendships by creating machinery, as soon as possible, whereby they may gain the necessary experience and aptitudes'.⁴

The 1953 Unesco Seminar that concentrated on library development in Africa argued for the importance of developing library schools and providing opportunities for increased training and education of librarians. But it was a slow and partial process through the postwar decades. In 1965, Unesco noted the need for qualified librarians as 'one of the biggest obstacles in the development of library services throughout the world'.⁵ This was considered 'the most difficult and sometimes the most costly to solve of all the library problems; it takes longest and is the most urgent, it is the least spectacular and yet is the most lasting in its effects'.⁶

Library training courses, from short courses to postgraduate studies, were seen as essential in the making of a cohort of librarians that could help to create library infrastructure for the modern nation. Both the USA and Britain were very involved in planning and developing such library training and education – with occasional disputes over whether the British or American approach to library training was the more appropriate for developing nations. Professionals from both countries played an active role in helping to set up library training schools and courses and assisting with convening and teaching these courses.

For emerging nations, library training was a priority. Few countries found anything desirable in a long-term reliance on outside expertise or even studying abroad. As American librarian John Dean noted about Africa, 'the training of African librarians for Africa can be better accomplished within Africa than outside'.⁷ In a report on Pakistan by the head of the Unesco Libraries Division, E.J. Carter, Carter noted that '[t]he organization of a national library school with recognized academic status is a first and fully recognized need, not only to equip the libraries with the staffs they need but also to assure for the librarians the status and salaries which their national service justified'.⁸ Carter's observation underlined an important point: Library training was about training nationals for the work needed, but it was also part of developing a professional class with appropriate status and skills.

British librarians were involved in the establishment of some of the first library training schools established in West Africa, which predated

decolonization. In 1945, the British Council, along with the colonial governments of the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, financed a library training school at Achimota College in Accra. This was the first such school in West Africa, and its student body consisted entirely of Africans. It was run by a British librarian, Ethel Fegan, formerly Librarian to Girton College, Cambridge. The school only lasted a year, however.⁹

Subsequently, a library-training course was established in 1950 at the University College at Ibadan, run by British-trained librarians Joan Parkes and John Harris. Through the 1950s, the Eastern Nigeria Library Board was also very active in training activities.¹⁰ In 1960, a proper library school, the Institute of Librarianship, was finally established at Ibadan. This school partly resulted out of recommendations made by John Harris and was supported by funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.¹¹ Indeed, the Carnegie Corporation helped to support the University of Ibadan's Institute of Librarianship through much of the 1960s.¹² A report on the Institute drafted in 1965 by John Dean, its director, noted that in its first five years of existence it had 'contributed increasingly to the development and expansion of libraries in Nigeria'. It had also helped to raise the status of librarians in Nigeria and improve the acceptance of libraries as a 'vital service'. The report noted that it was essential in the future for the Institute to be integrated into the University of Ibadan and to develop research programs. Dean also stated as a future goal that the Institute would attract students from other African countries as well.¹³ The Ibadan school was one of the most active in West Africa and a center for much professional library activity. In the late 1960s, another library school was established in Northern Nigeria with the establishment of a Department of Librarianship at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria.¹⁴

After Nigeria established its school, Ghana felt that it should follow suit, and in 1961, the Ghana Library School was established. John Harris, often referred to as the 'father of West African librarianship' due to his importance in pushing for library services in the region, was also involved in the establishment of Ghanaian library training. After the establishment of the Ghana Library School, he served as its director from 1960 to 1965, retiring in 1968.¹⁵ Between 1961 and 1965, 48 qualified librarians graduated from the Ghana Library School, and in 1965, it was integrated into the University of Ghana.¹⁶

The ALA was an active supporter of library training efforts abroad and especially sought to support the establishment and growth of library schools in a number of countries. One of the first library schools they supported was the Japan Library School, opened in April 1951. The school was part of the work undertaken in Japan to 'reorient' (as it was described) the Japanese population after the war, and the school was co-sponsored by the Reorientation Branch of the Department of the Army and the ALA. It was taken over by the Department of State in 1952 and later given funding by the Rockefeller Foundation.¹⁷ But through the 1950s and 1960s, the ALA turned to assisting the development of library schools (often on the American model)

in the developing world as part of the broader brief of development aid and modernization.

Indonesia established its first library training school in 1952 in Jakarta. After independence, Indonesia developed a strong interest in mass literacy, education, and library programs as part of a broader effort to develop industry, increase nationalism, and become a stronger country. The Indonesian government recognized the value of training librarians in Indonesia but faced significant challenges. One challenge identified early on was the issue of language: Foreign language books still predominated, and language skills placed an extra demand on both librarian and library user.¹⁸ In 1958, a report on Indonesian library training to Unesco noted the ongoing problem of a lack of material, including textbooks and teaching materials. Indonesian library training was supported by Australia and the USA, and books were provided through agencies such as the United States Information Service (USIS), the British Council, the Asia Foundation, and the Australian Embassy.¹⁹ Lester Asheim of the IRO traveled to Indonesia in 1964 to investigate how the library school could be further assisted, as it was still the only one in the country. He called for greater American support for Indonesian library training and recommended that the US Agency for International Development (USAID) assist visiting professors from the USA to go to Indonesia to improve the quality of teaching.²⁰

Southeast Asia was generally an area of considerable development in library training through this period. Aside from Indonesia, Malaya (Malaysia) was identified as an area in need of qualified librarians in a Library Association (UK) survey of 1961.²¹ From 1957, short training courses had been run by the Malayan Library Group (a professional association). Other short courses were conducted by visiting scholars.²² In 1963, the country gained its independence, and while discussions about a library school continued, nothing was done immediately. American library advisors suggested that Singapore was the best location for a library school, but the University of Malaya had space and money and so was chosen as the preferred location. Singapore subsequently seceded from Malaysia in 1965 to become an independent country. Library training in the region continued to be supplied through short courses and finally through some university courses from the end of the 1960s.²³ As with Indonesia, however, progress in developing library training infrastructure was slow.

Thailand was another country of interest for American library development work; the nation was of some strategic interest to the USA and had a considerable US cultural diplomatic presence. Chulalongkorn University of Thailand began offering some library training from the early 1950s with support from the Fulbright Foundation.²⁴ Five American professors visited over five years under Fulbright support: Frances Lander Spain, Ruth H. Rockwood, Nancy Jane Day, Arnold Trotier, and Alice Lohrer. Over these five years, 207 students enrolled in training courses, with 77 completing the six basic courses offered and receiving a certificate in library science.²⁵ The

USIS library in Bangkok played the role of a demonstration library for these courses, with students touring the library to see ‘the characteristics of modern libraries in practice’.²⁶ A Department of Library Science was established at the University in 1955.²⁷

Similar support was given to the development of a library school in the Philippines. From 1961 to 1965, the ALA assisted with a project to improve library training through supporting the establishment of a graduate degree program at the University of the Philippines. The ALA assisted with the appointment of visiting professors to help establish the program and develop a curriculum, supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Funds were also used for helping to build the resources of the library science library.²⁸ Sarah Vann was the first librarian to go to the Philippines as a consultant under this project. She wrote to Raynard Swank from the Philippines to say that it was a ‘rare and rewarding adventure’.²⁹ The librarians that followed her found that progress was slow, and the politics of the Filipino library scene inhibited any great success. Lester Asheim recommended that the third of the grantees to travel to the Philippines should be a man (the previous two recipients were women) and should be ‘a person who could carry enough authority to gain respect for his recommendations and suggestions, but he should be sufficiently discreet and mature to avoid falling into the traps laid by the faction which makes an issue of foreign interference’.³⁰ He noted the importance of the right personal qualities because of the tricky nature of the politics of the issue. Indeed, Asheim even expressed that he believed that ‘the sending of a third grantee would be a waste of the expert’s time and the foundation’s money’ but eventually was encouraged that the University still wanted the expert and the right person could help improve the situation.³¹

Asheim’s comments suggest some of the issues around gender and the ‘expert’ librarian, as well as the frustrations some librarians experienced in their work. James Marvin was the next grant recipient to go to the University of the Philippines.³² It was noted in the final report on the project that James Marvin had ‘clearly made a strong impact upon Philippine librarians and provided an outstanding demonstration of effective public relations and field work’. Lewis Stieg of the ALA noted that there were ‘serious and complicated problems’ in the program of education for librarianship, but thanks to the ALA ‘very real and very important progress … as a result of ALA’s involvement in this effort’.³³ Marvin’s final report also acknowledged that both Sarah Vann and Mare Grieco had made a lasting impact on the country and its teaching of librarianship.³⁴ He wrote when he left that ‘the Filipinos were wonderful to me and my family and we did not leave the country dry-eyed’. He also thought that there was hope for public library development in the Philippines, although he was not entirely convinced that the Institute for Librarianship was the best means for this development.³⁵

As is clear from the above examples, philanthropic foundations played an important role in supporting efforts in library training. The Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, and the Carnegie Corporation, were all active in

this area, and the Asia Foundation also provided support. In 1960, the Ford Foundation helped to fund a graduate summer library-training course for school librarians run by the Iranian Ministry of Education and the National Teacher's College.³⁶ In India, the Asia Foundation was active in supporting both library training programs and library travel grants in the early 1960s.³⁷

Regional cooperation was another important factor in developing adequate training infrastructure for librarianship in this period, because it was sometimes difficult for individual countries to sustain adequate training and educational infrastructure. For example, the American University of Beirut served as an important regional center in the Middle East for library training.³⁸ A regional center for the training of Anglophone librarians from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika was established in Uganda in the early 1960s; this was the East African School of Librarianship at the University of East Africa in Makerere.³⁹ The School received support from Unesco, funds which in part helped to support Unesco-appointed experts to assist the school.⁴⁰ A regional center for training librarians for Francophone Africa was also established in Dakar, Senegal, around the same time.⁴¹

The question of which particular model of library training to establish in these countries was a vexed one. British and Commonwealth librarians saw their model of librarianship as being much admired around the world, and the British model was held up as a standard.⁴² Many training courses focused on preparing students to take the Library Association examination, following the British model of training librarians, which was focused on practical on-the-job training and experience, along with examinations. This approach was often adopted in countries of (formerly) British Africa and parts of Asia that had been part of the British Empire. It was noted (usually by American librarians, unsurprisingly) that the entrenchment of the British model of training made it difficult to develop any alternative model of library training. When Lester Asheim visited Singapore (where an Australian librarian, Jean Waller, was working as the librarian at the University of Singapore), he observed that plans for a library school were being inhibited by what he described as the 'British prejudices' of the administrators.⁴³ American librarians naturally supported their own model of library training (although it involved considerable years of graduate study). As time went on, however, there was also the issue of the actual appropriateness of either the British or American model and how and in what ways library education could be 'indigenized'.⁴⁴

In some cases, library training in developing countries evolved in a way that took on elements of both American and British methods of training. Prior to the establishment of the Institute of Librarianship, library training in Nigeria followed the British pattern of in-service study and undertaking Library Association exams.⁴⁵ The 1960s saw a shift to a postgraduate education model that more closely resembled the American pattern of library training. From 1961, the University of Ceylon offered a postgraduate Diploma of Librarianship, and the Ceylon Library Association, formed in 1960, offered a library examination program. The syllabus of the postgraduate course

was based on that of the University of London's Diploma in Librarianship. But the course and library training in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) more generally had American and Canadian influences. Donald A. Redmond, who spent a year in Ceylon under the Colombo Plan, had run a training program that preceded the establishment of the degree; the postgraduate course was under the direction of a Ceylonese librarian, K.D. Somadasa, who had studied at Columbia University. Others who taught in the program had degrees from the University of London, and an American Fulbright lecturer taught during the 1964–5 term. Students could do field work in libraries including USIS and British Council libraries. The syllabus of the library examination program run by the Ceylon Library Association was based on the Library Association's but was modified to suit indigenous needs.⁴⁶

British librarians sometimes worried about the influence of American librarians and their model of library education. In 1957, the *Library Association Record* noted that a new library post was being created in Iraq and would be chosen by the US Librarian of Congress. It also noted the appointment of American librarian Harold Lancour to study libraries in West Africa. The British periodical observed that these announcements were 'a further indication of the way in which the influence of American librarianship is spreading overseas'. It was a fact that Britain had 'contributed a good deal to the growth and development of world librarianship through the work of the British Council, and in Unesco pilot projects', so the *Record* suggested that there was 'perhaps cause to wonder why British librarians are not being invited to fill these important new posts in Africa and the Middle East'.⁴⁷ As we've seen, rivalry in book and library matters is a theme that runs through the story of the 1950s and 1960s, and is well-illustrated again here.

National rivalry notwithstanding, librarian training remained a major ongoing issue for Africa, and most accounts of the time reveal that the question of the right kind of model for training was a real one – it was unclear what worked best in the conditions of developing nations. In addition, there were also ongoing issues related to the need for standards and accrediting agencies.⁴⁸ In 1962, at a regional seminar run by Unesco Bryan Hood reported on the training going on across Africa. He noted the 'enormous increase in library activity in Africa', to the extent that it was hard to get up-to-date information because of the rapid developments.⁴⁹ Hood concluded that the 'general pattern of training is uneven, and the most successful ventures have been in those countries where library schools have been established'. He also noted that the Library Association courses, which had been the norm in many places and still continued, were 'not the answer' and the real need was for the countries of Africa to have their 'own national schools'; 'some had already got off to a good start'.⁵⁰ However, it was also clear in Hood's report that there was not complete agreement on how best to set up library courses – for example, as postgraduate or undergraduate courses and how much access to in-service training was available if a student was unable to go overseas.⁵¹ Hood's report included a number of recommendations for

the future, including the need for more research on libraries and reading in Africa; the employment of indigenous teachers; and that wherever possible, library training should be attached to a university.⁵² When Lester Asheim visited Kenya in 1962, he spoke with D.A.R. Kemp, librarian of the Royal College. Kemp complained of the issue of librarian training, which he saw as the ‘central problem’ for East African librarianship. He argued that a ‘full-fledged library school in East Africa is essential’ and also believed that the Library Association exam did not adequately take into account the particular needs of Africa.⁵³ Many of these problems around library schools remained an issue well beyond the period under examination here, but important steps were taken to build library schools, providing an important educational infrastructure for the profession into the future.

Training librarians: Study abroad

Travel for study was not uncommon in the years before the war, but became much more so after the war. Many librarians sought out overseas study and training opportunities, and through the 1950s and 1960s this included librarians from emerging nations as well. Training and study could consist of full degrees undertaken abroad, as well as attendance at summer schools, short courses, and internships. Such opportunities were important in exchange and diplomacy (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6), but they also played a vital role in training librarians for their professional future. While it was generally acknowledged that it was better to establish library schools and library training courses, overseas training could be of benefit. Studying abroad – for entire degree programs or for short training and study tours – was necessary for the development of a cohort of trained librarians in a time where library schools were still being established.

Unesco offered a variety of training opportunities in the area of library work. Its first summer school, organized in collaboration with IFLA, was held in 1948 and consisted of 50 librarians from European nations attending the school in Manchester and London.⁵⁴ Teachers included Norwegian librarian Arne Kildahl (who convened it), American librarian Leon Carnovsky (from the University of Chicago), and Indian librarian S.R. Ranganathan.⁵⁵ The *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* noted that the gathering was ‘a heartening demonstration of international understanding and co-operation’.⁵⁶ The school was the first of many and demonstrated how international travel and study could be a means of developing the profession. Unesco also offered fellowships for study abroad: In 1967, for instance, fellowships were awarded to librarians from countries such as the Central African Republic, Israel, Lebanon, Singapore, and Tanzania.⁵⁷

Britain and the Commonwealth offered a variety of opportunities for travel and study, including internship opportunities. From 1958, the Library Association provided internships for students from other countries, but even before this had offered places for library students from different parts of the

globe.⁵⁸ In the Pacific region, the South Pacific Commission, which was active in assisting the development of librarianship and libraries, supported several students to undertake training abroad. Salim Baksh, a Fijian librarian, traveled to the National Library in Australia for 12 months training; he later compiled numerous bibliographies of Fijian-related material.⁵⁹ The Commission also sponsored training courses for library assistants in Guam in 1964 and Western Samoa in 1966.⁶⁰

The US State Department supported a variety of programs that brought overseas librarians to the USA: For example from 1956 to 1957, they supported 12 Indian librarians to travel there on observation and study visits.⁶¹ They also ran annual programs that brought librarians to the USA. One of the most significant library training programs they ran in this period was one run by the Department of State that brought library specialists from overseas to the USA for a year; it ran from 1956 until the end of the 1960s.

The 1962 version of the program was assisted by the Library of Congress and the Washington DC Committee of the ALA and Special Libraries Association. In this program, visitors spent seven to ten days in Washington and 11 months in a sponsoring American library. Thirty days of travel were also included.⁶² Foreign librarians were expected to undertake full duties but were not recommended to take on supervisory roles. It was noted that year that 46 libraries across the USA had indicated that they were keen to host librarians under the program. Librarians who participated came from a number of countries, including Vietnam, Spain, Brazil, Israel, Sweden, Peru, India, Japan, Argentina, Cambodia, and Belgium.⁶³ The objective of the program was

to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and those of other countries, and to promote the development of the library profession ... It is hoped that while he is here, the grantee will be able to talk about his own country and its place in world affairs with his American friends, and that when he returns to his home, he will be able to interpret this country more accurately to his fellow countrymen and colleagues, and to help correct any misunderstandings regarding the United States and its policies.⁶⁴

Recipients of support received a grant for 370 days, a round-trip economy ticket to the USA, money for 30 days travel while there, and a maintenance allowance. Grantees were also expected to attend an orientation period in Washington.⁶⁵

A report on the program was made in the journal *Special Libraries* in 1966. It noted that the first librarian to go to an American library under the program was Vietnamese librarian Nguyen Thi Cut, who went to work at the public library in Brookline, Massachusetts. The article noted that

[t]hose American libraries that have participated in the program have had a unique opportunity for offering and receiving the benefits from contacts with libraries abroad. Grantees came from all over the world. One of the benefits of the program was the opportunity to work, not just to visit or study. The program also allowed an opportunity to see the USA, an opportunity to talk about their countries, and at least two librarians had married an American as a result'.⁶⁶

Katalee Sombatsiri, librarian for the Bank of Thailand, spent her year at the Economic Growth Center Library at Yale University. She was reported as having contributed 'much both professionally and personally to the Americans with whom she lived and worked'.⁶⁷ Douglas Koh of the National Library of Singapore was another librarian who worked in the USA under the program, spending his time at the Flint Public Library in Michigan. In concluding reflections on the program, it was noted that the program had 'been able to develop an intensive and personalized relationship among professional librarians around the world. Each of the communities in which one of these grantees has lived has also been enriched'.⁶⁸

The Department of State also ran, in partnership with the ALA's IRO, a program called the Multi-National Group Librarians (MNGL) Program, which brought overseas librarians to the USA and which included librarians from Europe, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It began operation in 1961, receiving funds from the Department of State.⁶⁹ The MNGL Program workshops took librarians to libraries and other institutions across the USA. After candidates were selected for the program, they went to the USA, spent a week in Washington DC, three weeks at a library school undergoing a training course, and six weeks working in a library as an intern. After this, they spent six weeks traveling around the USA to inspect libraries suited to their professional interests. At the end of their program, they met as a group at the ALA conference and attended an evaluative session.⁷⁰ Typical participants varied considerably, but the 1967 program noted that most of the attendees that year were women in their 30s, most of whom were middle managers of large libraries or chief librarians in smaller institutions. Few had previously visited the USA, and most spoke a reasonable amount of English (although English language skills (or lack thereof) was one of the issues identified as hindering the effectiveness of the program as a whole).⁷¹

The 1963–4 MNGL program included 12 librarians from nine countries, including Argentina, Ethiopia, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, and Syria. Their visit started in Washington DC with a week-long 'indoctrination' program run by the Washington Hospitality Center, with a second week spent visiting libraries and government offices. The Washington DC program included visits to Mount Vernon, Arlington National Cemetery, and the Lincoln Memorial. Talks given to them included 'The Land and People of the USA', 'Civil Liberties and Race Relations in the USA', 'The Family and Community', and 'Religious Life in the United States'.⁷² The group then went to the

University of California, Berkeley, for a two-week teaching seminar ‘to provide the participants with a comprehensive overview of the major aspects of American librarianship’. The seminar was reported as ‘highly successful’.⁷³ Visitors followed the Berkeley seminar with a visit to Yosemite National Park, ‘unanimously reported by our guests to have been not only a highlight of their experience in the US, but also a high point of their whole lives’. The visitors went on to undertake their internships, which were seen to be ‘exceptionally successful and profitable’. The rest of their time was spent in various cities visiting relevant libraries.⁷⁴

The report on the visit noted that participants had enjoyed themselves, had ‘obtained a helpful picture of the United States and American librarianship’, and that their internship experience ‘would be of genuine professional help to them in their own countries’.⁷⁵ Some concerns were expressed about the varied levels of experience of participants. Language was also an issue, with not all participants having what was considered to be a suitable level of English.⁷⁶ Other communication problems appeared. Marion Milczewski reported on the internship of a Miss Sabri at the University of Washington library. Sabri was located in a women’s dormitory and spent time in various departments of the library, but he reported that there had been some miscommunication as to whether she was there to ‘work’ or ‘observe’; she was under the impression that she was just there to ‘observe’.⁷⁷ Additionally, one supervisor commented that they didn’t think what she learned would be very applicable to her work at the University of Damascus Library, although Sabri was very keen to learn.⁷⁸ Dorothy Cooper, chief circulation librarian and another of Sabri’s supervisors, was impressed with her work and enthusiasm, also noting with admiration that Sabri had taught herself English through books in French.⁷⁹ There was unanimous agreement that the internships were the ‘most rewarding’ for participants.⁸⁰ ‘If one objective of a program of this kind is the fostering in some small measure of international good will’, declared the final report on this program, ‘it may be claimed that, in this respect at least, the 1963–64 program was an outstanding success’.⁸¹

Reports on internships were made by some of the participating librarians. Mr Alemu Tokla Mariam undertook his internship at the Hayward Public Library in California. The report noted that Alemu had technical competence and undertook repetitive tasks such as checking catalogs, filing, listing, and typing. While he was reluctant to deal with the public, Alemu was considered to be ‘willing and affable’, and the library noted that ‘the good will created by a visit of this kind transcends in value any technical competence that might be acquired by the intern’. They also hoped ‘that he will report to his fellow countrymen that the Americans he met and worked with were not entirely as pictured by the Moscow propaganda apparatus’.⁸² Alemu reported that he had enjoyed his time ‘and learned a lot’, noting that he had ‘got more knowledge about library work in the seven weeks than I can get by reading books for seven months’.⁸³ Mr Daghir from Lebanon worked at the San Mateo Union High School District and Capuchino High School Library. He

reported his experience as ‘very valuable’.⁸⁴ He wrote in a letter to librarian J. Periam Danton that he had enjoyed his trip very much, and that since his return, he had put into practice much of what he had learnt in the program.⁸⁵ Brother Johan Nasr, from Lebanon, who undertook an internship at the Richard A. Gleeson Library in San Francisco, wrote to say of his experience: ‘I have had many dreams about the US before seeing it, but now I have more than ever dreamt of the real American people I know’. He also gave lectures on the USA when back in Lebanon.⁸⁶

The 1965 MNGL program was held at UCLA and included librarians from India, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Spain, and Taiwan, among other countries.⁸⁷ Responses to that year’s program were also positive. Miss Loh, from Hong Kong, noted that ‘our eyesight has been opened in the field of Library Science, and part of the world beyond our home country’.⁸⁸ Mr. Goswamy from India believed that ‘[o]ur visits to American libraries will surely improve our abilities to work hard for the libraries in our own countries’.⁸⁹ Mr. Sengar, also from India and assistant librarian at the Jabalpur University Library, noted that he ‘learned many lessons and techniques and acquired a great wealth of professional knowledge’.⁹⁰ Mrs. Robertson from Jamaica observed that ‘[t]he hospitality of the American people, and the opportunity to discuss common problems of particular interest to West Indians were very much appreciated’.⁹¹

Sengar also provided some feedback to the American Embassy in New Delhi, who helped to sponsor his attendance at the program. He noted that the Embassy provided a very good orientation before he left (and he felt that he hadn’t needed another orientation in Washington), and he commented that he would have preferred more time to visit public libraries instead. The program had a positive effect, however. As a result of his visit, Sengar opened a ‘browsing room’ for students to use his library for reading other than their assigned reading, something ‘almost unheard of in Indian university libraries’.⁹²

From 1965, the program was fully administered by the ALA under a contract from the Department of State. The IRO subcontracted a library to provide the seminar, and the Department of State provided around \$45,000 to support the program.⁹³ The 1966 program included librarians from Brazil, Poland, Colombia, Sierra Leone, Libya, Cyprus, and Yugoslavia. Participants included Jonathan Sawyerr, librarian of Bo Regional Library in Sierra Leone; he had attended the Ghana Library School for training.⁹⁴ The 1966 program was organized by Joseph F. Shubert, assistant director of the IRO.⁹⁵ The 1966 seminar was held at Western Reserve University in Cleveland. It was seen as ‘very successful’.⁹⁶ It was noted that the participants were diverse, and some had university education.⁹⁷ Four participants were considered ‘handicapped’ by their lack of fluency in English.⁹⁸ The report concluded that ‘[t]he multi-nationalism of the group is also a value because it opens opportunity for exchange of ideas and experiences among librarians from developed and developing countries in several continents, and is not just a dialogue between

American and foreign librarians'.⁹⁹ The travel program introduced participants to both good standard library practices, as well as 'some advanced or experimental programs'.¹⁰⁰ A number of librarians from the 1966 program reported that they found the program very useful, and most felt that the program and seminars lasted just long enough.¹⁰¹

The MNGL program received considerable support from the US government ensuring that visitors were well-supported in terms of living expenses. Host library schools also received financial support which helped to cover expenses related to things such as transport for visits, tickets to cultural events and sightseeing trips, and so on. For host library schools, there were challenges to running these programs. The University of Wisconsin program, held in 1967, noted that it had been difficult to 'determin[e] the appropriate level and pace of the presentations'. This was due to the great range of backgrounds, experience, and language skills.¹⁰² The University of Wisconsin also noted that it would have been valuable to make better use of the student body of the Library School: 'Our students took pleasure in serving as guides and hosts to the visitors on several occasions, such as an evening shopping tour of the downtown stores and a picnic supper. In return, the visitors afforded our students a unique opportunity to take a wider view of the library world'. The report also noted that the students learned from each other and formed 'warm friendships among themselves'. The report also observed that the visitors received many social invitations but thought that care 'must be taken not to overburden the visitors'. The report stated that 'the returns in satisfaction and human warmth are very great'. Participation would 'widen your horizons. And expect that you will feel considerable satisfaction that you have made sound contributions to international librarianship and international understanding'.¹⁰³

General information provided on the 1967 program noted that participants were chosen by American embassies.¹⁰⁴ Participants included: Patricia Dunn, from Jamaica, who was active in the Jamaica Library Association and had attended the School of Librarianship at Northwestern Polytechnic in London; and Juliana Sackey, Central Librarian with the Accra Central Library.¹⁰⁵ Sackey had worked in the public library in Gary, Indiana, during her time in the USA. She was reported as having been a 'delightful visitor everywhere she went'.¹⁰⁶ David Clift described her as 'an excellent and charming representative of her own country and [had] made an important contribution to the continuing good professional relations that exist between Ghana and the United States'.¹⁰⁷ The *Gary Library Bulletin* included an introduction to Juliana Sackey and noted that she found the 'American people friendly and kind'.¹⁰⁸ Her visit also garnered an article in the local newspaper, with photos of Sackey (who was a woman of color) reading to the American children at the library.

The MNGL program was thus a major means by which librarians could be trained in the USA but by which they also became acquainted with the country, its culture, and its values, and it is also a valuable example of the

kind of cultural exchange and diplomacy discussed further in Chapter 6. Such programs were perhaps even more effective as exercises in cultural diplomacy and forging relationships than they were as library training, but undoubtedly such programs helped to draw librarians from many countries into the American sphere and encourage, if not ensure, that American library methods and know-how were transferred in some form into libraries abroad.

A variety of other programs, many supported by philanthropic foundations, provided financial support for librarians who sought to study American libraries. The Ford Foundation, for example, supported Samuel C. Nwoye, a Nigerian, to study American library methods and techniques in 1965. The IRO helped to develop a program that would meet his needs.¹⁰⁹ Simeon Babasanya Aje also traveled from Nigeria to the USA with the support of a Ford Foundation grant, which allowed him a two-week trip to visit libraries and observe and assess 'modern library practices'.¹¹⁰

From 1960 through to 1968, the Asia Foundation provided funds for students in American library schools from Asia to attend library association meetings.¹¹¹ For example, in 1964, Indian librarian Y.M. Mulay was given funding to cover the expense of a 60-day tour of American libraries.¹¹² In the financial year 1963–4, grants were awarded to students from countries such as Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.¹¹³ In 1965–6, there were some 300 Asian students enrolled in 34 schools across the USA.¹¹⁴ The Asia Foundation also supported the visits of library professions for US study tours. In 1961, Miss Suthalik, Chief Librarian for Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, visited the USA for six months supported by an Asia Foundation grant.¹¹⁵ Other Thai librarians arrived with support from other foundations: In 1963, three Thai librarians traveled to the USA with support from a Rockefeller Foundation travel grant, visiting numerous libraries across the USA and attending the Chicago annual meeting of the ALA.¹¹⁶

The Carnegie Corporation of New York also sponsored visits of librarians from developing countries to both the USA and Canada (support that ended in 1969). A number of African librarians traveled to the USA in the 1960s on Carnegie grants. Adolphus G.T. Ofori traveled under the auspices of a Carnegie grant and was interested in studying library administration, the use of community studies, and surveys as an aid in evaluating and planning services, bookmobile services, and the use of technology to improve library service.¹¹⁷ Ofori reported to the Carnegie Corporation on his 1963 visit. He cataloged the various libraries that he visited, including those of Northwestern University and the Hoover Institute at Stanford. Aside from libraries, he also visited organizations, such as the African-American Institute and the United States Book Exchange, and talked with publishers, including those involved with government such as Franklin Book Programs and Praeger.¹¹⁸ Ofori noted the variations in library services and practices across the various places he visited. He was particularly impressed by the grandness of large city libraries and by the way libraries were using 'mechanical equipment and gadgets'.¹¹⁹ He concluded his observations by talking

about what had been most useful for him. Seeing different systems of library service and talking to many different librarians were, he believed, of most value. He also thought that his visit meant some American librarians now had some knowledge of Ghana's libraries and culture. He returned home with 'great enthusiasm and with definite ideas of what could be done to improve library services in Ghana'.¹²⁰

Another Carnegie-funded visitor from Ghana was David O. Bampoe, who toured the USA in 1968. Bampoe was deputy librarian of the University of Science and Technology's library in Kumasi. The purpose of his visit was described as being to study the administration of university libraries, to become familiar with developments in library service with the view of adapting such knowledge to the Kumasi library, and to visit publishing houses to arrange the ordering of science books directly from the USA.¹²¹ Bampoe had been trying to find a way to visit the USA for a number of years, having contacted the IRO as early as 1962 to ask for assistance in facilitating an exchange so he could work there for a year. He noted that the wife of the deputy American ambassador to Ghana was supporting him personally in his quest to get to the USA.¹²² Nevertheless, it took him a number of years to secure funding. Another visitor from Ghana to the USA and Canada under Carnegie auspices was Andrew N. De Heer, principal librarian at the Ghana Research Library on African Affairs. He wrote that the generous hospitality of Americans through the visit meant that he and his wife 'learnt a lot to modify our image of the American and his society'.¹²³ But not all American librarians felt they had much to offer African librarians who visited the USA. For example, Richard Dillan of the Sutro Library, a branch of the California State Library, noted that they had little African materials in their collections and were therefore 'sometimes at a loss, with African and Asian librarians, to show them areas of their interest'.¹²⁴

A variety of organizations existed in this period to provide support for overseas visitors and to make their experience more positive. One of these was the National Council for Community Services to International Visitors (COSERV), which received funding from the Department of State. Operating from Meridian House in Washington DC and established in 1961, COSERV represented various nongovernmental organizations that were concerned with helping short-term visitors to the USA. It aimed to help improve and better coordinate services. All visitors, regardless of race, nationality, or creed, would be served, and all COSERV members shared 'a desire to increase international understanding among all people'. The board of directors included representatives of organizations such as the International Center in New York, the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, the Overseas Education Fund of the League of Women Voters, and the Pittsburgh Council for International Visitors, among others.¹²⁵ Particular cities established 'International Visitors Centers' (some affiliated to COSERV) that helped to host visitors from other countries as the presence of overseas visitors and students became a more common feature of American life.

Despite these kinds of initiatives, the experiences of individual librarians varied considerably, and some librarians experienced the confronting realities of American race relations. One Nigerian librarian who traveled to the USA in the early 1960s related how he had encountered a ‘nigger hating’ racist at his hotel in New York.¹²⁶ While there are few other such confronting observations, it is likely that this was not an isolated incident, and some librarians of color may well have been reluctant to report on these kinds of incidents to funding bodies and those who sponsored their visits. Betsy Beasley, in examining international students and their experiences in Texas in the 1960s, reveals the complicated racial politics that these kinds of exchange programs engaged in. She argues that hosting international students sent a message of racial egalitarianism that countered the realities of American race relations.¹²⁷ There was also an element of ‘exotic exchange’, with students seen more like diplomats than neighbors.¹²⁸ Education, she argues, ‘sought to soften the hard edge of American global power’.¹²⁹ Yet it also potentially exposed white Americans to an acknowledgment that its race relations were hardly an example for the rest of the world and that there was potentially great hypocrisy in advocating the superiority of American values and culture.

Beyond programs such as these study tours, many students sought to gain an education in American university graduate programs. However, librarians from overseas had difficulty being accepted to US library schools due to the requirements for entry, which usually required an undergraduate degree of four years. The IRO wrote to various library schools in 1964 to ask whether there could be any special provisions made for exceptional students. Of the schools written to (36), 15 said ‘no’, and five indicated that a case might be considered on its individual merit.¹³⁰ English language skills also had to meet American standards. The survey revealed that most graduate programs required the full four-year Bachelor degree and that even establishing equivalence was difficult. The schools mostly had no desire to do anything that would jeopardize the status of their degree, although they were sympathetic to the problem.¹³¹ By the end of the 1960s, it was also noted by the IRO that there was limited funding to financially support students to study in the USA. The situation was observed as being ‘much less favorable than it had been in the past’.¹³² Other problems that dogged visitors and students turn up occasionally in the records: For example, visiting librarians sometimes had considerable difficulty arranging permissions to enter the USA.¹³³

Criticisms were made that American library schools did not adequately cater for the needs of overseas students, especially those from developing countries, who would likely have particular needs. In a talk given in 1966, Lester Asheim noted that current American library education may in fact ‘alienate the foreign student to some extent from his own culture and denationalize him sufficiently to impair his value upon his return to his own country’.¹³⁴ He also observed that American graduate degrees were regarded as too long for those coming from overseas and who had to secure funding. He suggested that

perhaps certain American library schools could focus on education catered to the needs of particular regions.¹³⁵

Ultimately, most librarians probably found their time in the USA useful. Elena D. Ruivivar, a British-trained Filipino librarian, who traveled to the USA in 1967, enjoyed her visit and ‘was very much impressed with what I had seen’. She wrote to the ALA-IRO to tell them that she had been able to ‘pick up some bright ideas in librarianship that are worthwhile adapting to suit our own situation and needs’.¹³⁶ But overseas experience had its own consequences: Archie Dunningham, in a conversation with Lester Asheim, noted that in Indonesia, librarians who had trained abroad were not accorded much status on their return.¹³⁷ This comment underscores once again the importance of developing library schools in developing countries in the effort to build up a professional and trained cohort of librarians and the sometimes questionable benefit of traveling abroad for study.

Making a global profession

For national library associations, the sense of being part of an international profession was strong. In 1960, Britain’s Library Association talked of the ‘one world’ of librarianship. Aiming to publish international news, including from ‘far-flung’ libraries, the editorial from September of that year, commented on how small the world really was. ‘All we who do library work’, argued the editor, ‘are inseparably related’, and the profession was dedicated to encouraging the exchange of idea and the promotion of ‘goodwill and understanding by overstepping the barriers of difference’.¹³⁸ It was also noted in 1960 that British librarians should try and make more of an effort to provide assistance to overseas librarians. Wilfred J. Plumbe argued that it would be consistent with the values of the ‘British way of life’ to do something to help overseas librarians, including providing advice, helping to send teachers overseas, and amending the Library Association’s examination syllabus to better cater for overseas librarians. He argued that this need not be a ‘new manifestation of British “colonial” cultural aggression’ but rather could be a form of technical aid.¹³⁹ L.M. Harrod praised Plumbe’s advocacy of improving British links to overseas librarians, noting the problems of isolation for both British librarians serving overseas, as well as the non-English librarian in their own country who had limited professional support.¹⁴⁰

Building the profession globally was a challenge, not least because of the challenges of training described above. The profession also struggled because it was not held in high esteem in many places. In 1967, it was observed that in Nigeria the popular professions were law, medicine, and engineering – librarianship was looked down on as something that could be done by clerks. There was an acknowledgment that there was a definite need to improve the status of and public opinion toward librarians.¹⁴¹

One way in which the profession’s status could be promoted and lobbied for was through the formation and activity of professional associations. The

International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) was one means of bringing together representatives from across the world's library associations. However, as we saw earlier, it was frequently observed at the time how limited its membership, and its remit, was. An Australian account of the 1963 Sofia meeting of IFLA noted that while the meeting was the largest in the history of the organization, it nevertheless had no delegates from Asia, Africa, or South America. The only countries from outside Europe that had representation were the USA, Canada, and Australia.¹⁴²

Developing countries attempted to establish their own library associations to help nurture and support the profession. In 1952, the Egyptian Library Association was created.¹⁴³ The Thai Library Association was established in 1954.¹⁴⁴ A committee for bibliographical services was created in 1955, with the goal of creating an Egyptian National Bibliography.¹⁴⁵ The Pakistan Library Association, in the same year, launched a journal, the *Modern Librarian Quarterly*, and organized a conference on library development.¹⁴⁶ The same year, a Turkish Librarians' Association was also established.¹⁴⁷

Regional associations were also formed, such as the Asian Federation of Library Associations (AFLA) established in 1957. Its aims were described as 'promoting the library movement and co-operation in Asia' and 'exchanging experiences and information in the field of library service' through such means as meetings, publications, and a journal. The idea for such an organization dated back to the beginning of the decade, when S.R. Ranganathan had called for the creation of such an organization. At a library conference held in India in 1951, he had argued that 'the exchange of library personnel among Asian countries would go a long way to promote a sense of mutual respect and unity'.¹⁴⁸ The President of the Japan Library Association was made president of AFLA (as the first conference was held in Japan). Plans were made to establish a journal and newsletter, to work with Unesco 'to aid the development of library service in the under-developed countries of Asia', and to collect funds for the training of librarians.¹⁴⁹ Exchanges of library personnel were also encouraged.¹⁵⁰

It was hoped that AFLA would help feed into the work of IFLA. However, it was noted that there were significant challenges. This included the difficulty of travel but also the fact that AFLA did not have the participation of Middle Eastern countries or countries 'behind the Bamboo and the Iron Curtains'. Combined with the fact that library services were under-developed, if not nonexistent, in a number of countries, it was difficult to build up AFLA. Despite that, '[t]he present resurgent tide of nationalism in Asian countries, and a supra-national Asian patriotism that is becoming only too perceptible today, is a factor of tremendous potentiality for the future'.¹⁵¹ However, by the middle of the 1960s, the Asian Federation was, according to Lester Asheim, 'dead',¹⁵² and ultimately an Asian regional association appeared unlikely to succeed, at least at this point in time. National associations in Asian nations varied in their activity level. The Indian Library Association struggled, partly because of the strength of some of the Indian regional library associations,

such as the Madras Library Association dominated by Ranganathan.¹⁵³ Other national library associations were established through the 1960s, including the Iranian Library Association, inaugurated in October 1966.¹⁵⁴

The West African Library Association (WALA) was established in 1954, and was another regional association. Its inaugural conference, held in Lagos, Nigeria, dedicated itself to a discussion of the theme ‘the place of the library in fast developing countries’; WALA also initiated a journal for the organization, *WALA News: the Bulletin of the West African Library Association*.¹⁵⁵ However, as with the Asian regional association, it was difficult to sustain this kind of regional association, which was acknowledged as being ‘unwieldy’.¹⁵⁶ Lester Asheim, visiting Ghana in 1962, noted that WALA was not working very effectively for Ghana and Nigeria, because when a conference was held in one or other of the two countries, the librarians from the alternate country could not afford to attend. Ghanaian librarian Victor Boafo observed that the ‘principle of cooperation and communication among the librarians of the two countries, to which he professes devotion, doesn’t carry much practical weight’.¹⁵⁷ WALA continued on for some nine years, however. A successful conference was held in Ibadan in 1959, with over 75 delegates from Nigeria and Ghana.¹⁵⁸

The East African Library Association (EALA) was established in 1956, holding its first meeting at the Macmillan Memorial Library in Nairobi. It survived until 1972 when each of the countries involved established their own national library associations. The first conference of the EALA was held in 1963, and this led to the establishment of the East African School of Librarianship at Makerere University in Kampala in 1964.¹⁵⁹ The *EALA Bulletin* was published from 1962 to 1971.

One of the primary issues for library associations was to develop the profession, contending with the legacies of European colonialism, and finding a way forward on their own terms. The 1950s and 1960s were a period of struggle for many library associations (where they were able to be established). These associations did, however, serve as a valuable recognition and support for the profession. They were essential in raising awareness of the importance of libraries and the problems faced by libraries and librarians. They were also an integral part of claiming a voice for developing nations within a globalized profession.

By the end of the 1960s, as this chapter has demonstrated, library schools had been created, training courses and exchanges were frequently taking place, and regional and national library associations had been formed. All of these things worked to produce a cohort of trained and professional librarians in many countries and contributed to the visibility and status of the profession, as well as libraries generally. However, there were concerns. The 1970s would see political and economic problems that set back many nations and also led to Britain and the USA reducing a lot of its funding for development programs. Progress would not be as rapid as the optimistic decades of the 1950s and 1960s suggested it might be.

The story of library training can provide insight into the cultural diplomacy elements of library training efforts, as well as the educational value of such programs. It is to this element of library development work – library diplomacy – that we now turn in the next two chapters.

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5 Libraries as foreign policy

From the period between the two world wars, libraries were seen as a key means of distributing information and culture across the globe. Much of this activity was motivated by foreign policy concerns – to inform people overseas about the values, character, and ideologies, not to mention economic products and industry, of a given nation and to forge better relations between nations. It is difficult to disentangle international library development work undertaken as ‘foreign policy’ with that undertaken as ‘internationalist’ – that is, much of the work described in preceding chapters might have been supported as ‘internationalist’, but it also often served to buttress the (nationalist) aims of the state.

This chapter specifically focuses on the way libraries acted as a conduit of cultural and foreign policy by focusing on the libraries and library activity of the British Council and the United States Information Agency (USIA; USIS posts abroad). All sorts of international library development work had, of course, foreign policy implications, and much of all the work that was undertaken by the USA and Britain was sponsored in some way through state funding and/or logistical support and thus often satisfied some kind of state goal. Nevertheless, USIS and British Council libraries *explicitly* engaged in foreign policy activity and were thus a unique kind of library that served an important purpose in the Cold War world.

As has already been discussed in previous chapters, it is evident that many countries had few libraries in this period. USIS and British Council libraries often offered the only (or one of the few) library services available, making them of considerable importance in such locations. A 1956 report on Malaya, for example, noted that while there were some subscription libraries (most only open to European patrons), there were few free libraries other than British Council and USIS libraries.¹ A report on Karachi, Pakistan, in 1952 noted that the existing libraries there had either ‘wretched stock’ or collections that had not been properly classified and cataloged, and so books were ‘not readily available’.² As demand for textbooks and information increased with educational expansion, USIS and British Council libraries often were one of the few means by which to support and (partially) fulfill this need. British Council and USIS libraries also functioned as demonstration libraries and library services. In 1960, a report on library services in the Middle East commented that British Council and USIS

libraries provided services that were ‘useful examples of modern librarianship’.³ However, if USIS and British Council libraries assumed *too* many duties as a public library, it was warned at the time, they ran the risk that countries would decide that there was no need for developing libraries of their own.⁴

Before we turn to the work of the USIS and British Council, however, it is worth briefly considering the international context in which all this work took place. By the end of the 1950s, numerous countries that had been formerly part of the British Empire had achieved independence and were asserting their voices in the international arena. The Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955 marked a concerted effort by developing nations to ally themselves separately from the two dominant power blocs of the USA and its allies and the USSR and the Eastern bloc. It also saw these nations assert the importance of recognizing self-determination, the condemnation of imperialism, and the desire to promote economic and cultural cooperation. The conference helped to generate the idea of the ‘Third World’, embraced at the time as a positive and empowering term.⁵

After Bandung, many developing nations moved toward establishing a foreign policy position of nonalignment. Many of these nations also embraced a rigorous program of economic and cultural development that asserted the value of their own cultures and languages over imported cultures. At the same time, they also saw advantages to aid and development as a means to ‘catch up’ with the industrialized world. International development and aid efforts both reinforced foreign policy concerns in this context, generally concentrating on countries that the USA and Britain were particularly keen to cultivate as allies, as well as cut across these concerns, forging relationships and generating knowledge that could work in different ways and challenge the power relationships and hierarchies that aid created.

The story of the USIA and British Council libraries also illustrates the very real competition between the USA and Britain, not just the USA and the USSR, in the decolonizing world as they sought to win hearts and minds and assert their economic and political investment in these countries. This is a story that is less well-documented than the US-Soviet one. In 1959, Stanley Horrocks complained to the British Council in London that one of the most urgent priorities was to combat ‘the spread of American influence through books and libraries in West Africa’.⁶ Lester Asheim frequently observed the dislike and suspicion of the Americans by the British, with the Americans generally regarded as ‘naïve and vulgar’.⁷ Asheim for his part occasionally complained of the ‘British colonial’.⁸ Those from both sides criticized each other on an ongoing basis, as much as they cooperated with each other to improve the book and library situation for decolonizing nations.

British Council libraries and British colonialism

In the interwar period, the British Colonial Office became increasingly concerned with welfare and with finding ways to ‘improve’ and develop the

colonies. Book and library work was one way in which such improvement could be facilitated. British Council libraries served to take British material (and values) to the world, and in the colonies, these libraries also worked with other modernization efforts to help in campaigns to shape the decolonizing reader.

The British Council was created in 1934 and was formally established by Royal Charter in 1940 ‘for the purpose of making known in other countries British cultural and intellectual achievements and activities’.⁹ British Council offices were overseen by the relevant British representative, such as the High Commissioner or Ambassador. The Council was based on earlier ‘British Institutes’, hubs of British studies that sought to ‘interpret’ British culture and ideas to the society in which it was located. Most of these Institutes included a library or reading room.¹⁰ The libraries aimed to not only promote the ‘British way of life’ but also to encourage an interest in reading, something perceived at the time as ‘lacking’.¹¹

Near the end of the Second World War, Council offices were decreed to be ‘cultural centres housing a library’, and these libraries were to be ‘adequate and rounded collections’, available on open access. A Council library was a special type of library, ‘not by virtue of its catering for foreign specialists, but by virtue of its special end’, it was noted. Book stock should highlight British arts and sciences and British institutions, with value placed on classic works of English literature.¹² From 1948, the British Council was active in the colonies and was meant to not only project the British way of life but also to promote ‘closer relations in cultural matters’.¹³ In 1950, there were some 95 Council libraries: 45 in Europe, four in Latin America, three in India, one in Pakistan, nine in Africa, and three in China. By 1964, there were 124 British Council libraries, with 11 in India, eight in Pakistan, 33 in Africa, and 15 in China.¹⁴ Statistics in 1955 suggested that Council libraries held over 750,000 volumes across 50 countries.¹⁵ While membership of British Council libraries was sometimes free, costs led the Council to charge subscriptions for many of them.¹⁶ This affected membership, which varied considerably from location to location.

In countries still under colonial control, the British Council sometimes ran or assisted what equated to a general public library service. In West Africa, the Council played an important role in developing public libraries, helping to establish the Lagos Public Library in 1945. It subsidized the library up until 1950 and then aimed to hand responsibility for the library over to local administration.¹⁷ Council libraries often served as public libraries before actually becoming so; even after becoming public libraries, they could continue to act as Council libraries. The Accra, Gold Coast (Ghana) library was small, only open to those who subscribed and catered to only a small proportion of the local population. As the library grew, it needed more space, ultimately being moved into the Town Hall on the understanding that its collections would be available to all. The colonial government and the Accra Town Council helped to provide additional funds for the library that became the first official

public library for the Gold Coast in 1946. Membership still required a small payment and a deposit needed to be left for books borrowed; British Council members were freely admitted. A children's section was subsequently opened in 1949. Although the Accra library subsequently became a public library, it continued to function as a British Council library and as such continued to undertake information activity, such as showing educational films, and organizing educational activities such as theatrical and musical performances.¹⁸

British Council librarians and 'experts' often played a role in developing general library services. Sidney Hockey was appointed libraries organizer for East Africa in 1960, and in this role advocated strongly for further library planning and services for the region. Subsequently, a Kenya National Library Service Board Act was passed in 1965, with the Board established in 1967.¹⁹ While there were many factors that led to this legislation, Hockey's advocacy and campaigning had an influence. In Nigeria, the British Council also had a role to play in public library development. The head of the British Council library, Kate D. Ferguson, became the first head of the Lagos Public Library, which was run jointly by the British Council and the Lagos Town Council.²⁰ The British Council helped to finance and advise several Nigerian libraries.²¹ It was noted in 1965 that the Council had done much to encourage the development of public libraries, including providing information and advice, putting funds toward buildings and book stock, and helping with the training of librarians.²²

Ronald Forbes Adams, president of the Library Association in 1949, talked of the importance of the British Council libraries in library development. They were important, he argued, to making the colonies 'book and library conscious to a degree unbelievable ten years ago'.²³ Writing a few years later, British library leader Lionel McColvin believed Council libraries had 'done much ... to raise the prestige of librarianship'. He believed that the importance of the Council library was to help other countries 'understand us better' and to promote trade and 'the wider use of British products', but they also helped to 'spread the ideal of the public library'. 'One of the things we must demonstrate everywhere', he wrote, 'is that public libraries – and the British Council libraries *are* within their scope public libraries – must offer a full free opportunity to all who would benefit from them'.²⁴

Council libraries were not without critics from within the professional library community, however. Frank Gardner, who worked as a Unesco library consultant and who had much experience of library development, supported the basic idea of the British Council libraries but believed that they were generally 'hampered and harried by niggardly financial policy'. He lamented cuts in Council library funding that resulted in the reduction of services and the closing of offices. 'All this is distressing', he wrote, 'to anyone interested in the world-wide circulation of British ideas in British books – not as propaganda, but as ambassadors of goodwill and international understanding'. He noted the importance and spread of the English language and saw an important role for English-language books into the future. But he complained

that the lack of hiring of trained librarians meant that ‘the opportunity of demonstrating British library technique has been lost’; as a consequence, governments of developing countries would increasingly look to the USA for training and leadership.²⁵ The problem of having enough trained librarians to staff Council libraries would be a problem that would continue to plague the British Council, even after the increase in budget and services in 1957.²⁶

Gardner flags the issue of language in his comments, and this was an issue for both British Council and USIS libraries. As is clear, the British Council was keen to push for the spread of the English language globally and actively taught classes in English. Council collections were thus mostly in English, with even regulations put in place to prevent books in vernacular languages being included in collections in some locations. Council librarians sometimes objected to such regulations. In Malaya, the librarian argued that as the country gained its independence it was important for the Council to show ‘a constructive interest in the people among whom it works, if its own more narrowly defined objectives are to be acceptable’. Hence, this particular librarian argued, more vernacular books in the collection were necessary and important.²⁷

Douglas Coombs has noted that there was a significant effort to boost British Council libraries after the Suez crisis in 1956 in an effort to counter the negative image that Suez had created. Subsequently, the Council’s activities expanded considerably. This involved not only an expansion of libraries but also a concerted effort to push the commercial presence of British books globally.²⁸

In developing countries, British Council libraries helped to meet a need for libraries where there was often none or limited numbers of libraries of any kind – hence requiring Council libraries to take on a broader community, cultural, and educational role than they did in countries with established library systems and where Council libraries functioned simply as information libraries. The role and function of the Council libraries also shifted as countries gained independence, with the pattern generally being that control of any libraries that functioned as a public library would be given over to local government, although with these libraries often continuing, at least for a time, to undertake the role of a Council library.

British Council libraries and their users

British Council library collections varied considerably. Book stock was chosen to match the needs of particular countries, and choices were made from books authored by British writers and produced by British publishers. ‘From this welter of printed matter has to be extracted a corpus of literature representing British letters and scholarship and interpretive of the civilization, institutions, and achievements in every sphere of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth’. Titles included books by writers such as Shakespeare and George Orwell; the *Dictionary of National Biography*; periodicals such as

the *Illustrated London News*; and nonfiction works such as G.M. Trevelyan's *English Social History*.²⁹ Books were supplied by a Books Department in London, with selections determined both by local needs and preferences, as well as guidance and directives from Britain.³⁰ Keeping collections up-to-date was an ongoing challenge, especially when it came to scientific and technical material.³¹

Reader preferences in Council libraries were noted as generally being for practical and educational reading. In Nigeria, African readers in the 1950s were recorded as seeking out materials in subjects such as political science, economics, law, engineering, business methods, and the English language. European readers preferred to borrow English history, biography, and fiction. If Nigerian readers sought out fiction, it tended to be, according to Council librarians, 'the classics and semi-classics of the late nineteenth century'.³² Popular authors included Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Dickens, and Jane Austen, but there were also readers for Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amos Tutuola's *The Brave African Huntress*.³³ In India, some of the most borrowed books in 1958 included W.W. Bigg, *Cost Accounts*, W.R. Anson, *Principles of the English Law of Contract*, and Harold Laski's *Grammar of Politics*. Popular literary writers included Austen, Dickens, Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence, J.B. Priestley, and George Bernard Shaw.³⁴

Periodicals and magazines were also popular reading choices in many British Council libraries. In Nigeria, illustrated weekly magazines were particularly popular.³⁵ As the 1950s ended, there was a notable increase in Nigerian British Council library users requesting access to technical and scientific periodicals, matching the increased interest and desire to study these areas.³⁶ Popular periodicals in the late 1950s included *The Economist*, the *West African Journal of Education*, *New Scientist*, *The Spectator*, *The Illustrated London News*, and the *Journal of African Law*.³⁷ In India, popular periodicals in the Bombay Council library included *The Economist*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Vogue*, and *The Illustrated London News*.³⁸ A 1965 article on the British Council libraries noted that there was also 'an insatiable appetite for practical manuals written in clear, simple terms on such subjects as engineering and agriculture'.³⁹

In Pakistan, many members of the Council libraries were professors or students. But the use of Pakistan's Council libraries increased through the 1960s, with use of reference and other collections by government officials, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals.⁴⁰ With many Pakistani users being students, preferences unsurprisingly included books on economics, technical works, and works of English literature.⁴¹ Council librarians sometimes lamented the fact that 'Pakistanis do not often read for pleasure'.⁴² The same concern was expressed about readers in Kuala Lumpur in Malaya (Malaysia).⁴³ Few, if any, women were members, although there were some small attempts made to try and attract, and specially accommodate, women readers.⁴⁴

Aside from issues around women readers (or the lack of women using the Council libraries), political and cultural sensitivities occasionally needed to be

taken into consideration in providing library services. In 1966, after increased tensions between India and Pakistan, there was a perceived increase in ‘sensitivity on the part of Pakistanis both officially and unofficially to unsuitable books’. ‘Unsuitable books’ included those concerned with Islam, sex, or that were critical of Pakistan. Thus the Rawalpindi Council library noted that books were being checked very carefully, with some being withdrawn from circulation altogether.⁴⁵

The British Council was at least in part to help promote the British book trade globally, especially at a time when the trade was seen to be increasingly challenged by American incursions.⁴⁶ Book exhibitions were therefore another important part of what Council posts organized, to expose local populations to British books and reading. Exhibitions of books and periodicals were ‘specially assembled to suit the country in which they are being shown and ... often timed to coincide with national or international conferences ... Their main purpose is of course to stimulate demand but in addition to selling books they often act as a pointer to the library’.⁴⁷ Pakistan ran a ‘Books from Britain’ exhibition in 1964, which was very popular and which also aimed to help boost the book trade as well as to encourage library use.⁴⁸ Exhibitions using stock from within libraries covered a diversity of topics. A popular exhibition that traveled around India in 1958 was ‘The ABC of Atomic Energy’, which complemented a set of BBC broadcasts.⁴⁹ In Malaysia, book displays in 1967 included ‘Football’, ‘Collecting Arts and Antiques’, ‘Road Safety’, and an exhibition on the Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor film of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁵⁰

Other efforts to promote books, reading, and the book trade were undertaken by librarians: For example in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), the Council librarian persuaded local newspapers to publish articles on British literary figures and reviews from *British Book News*.⁵¹ In Malaysia, a model bookshop was established to help boost the book trade generally.⁵² In India, a ‘Book Corners’ project was set up to take small Council book collections to various institutions. Book Corner collections included fiction, travel and description, history and biography, and plays.⁵³ Another effort was the Textbook Loan Scheme, also implemented in India, which provided (British) textbooks to selected schools and colleges, such as colleges of medicine, engineering, and dentistry.⁵⁴ The use of these books varied considerably, but the scheme demonstrated an effort by the Council to actively support educational development while also promoting British textbooks (and, arguably, values).

All of this was about promoting British books as both cultural and commercial product in these countries. One report on Indian British Council libraries in 1957 noted that the libraries were ‘now more than ever a principal source of British reading material in this country, and their importance should be recognized’.⁵⁵ American inroads into British book markets were a recurring concern in a number of places of the former empire. The 1950s and 1960s indeed saw American publishers attempt to move into what were formerly

British markets; while this was only partially successful, British Council librarians expressed concern over this. For example, in Malaya in 1962, the presence of many Peace Corps volunteers who were introducing American books and textbooks into schools was seen by the British Council to be aiding the spread of American books, and hence influence, in the country.⁵⁶

Libraries offered important physical spaces for people. As one comment on a Nigerian council library suggested, the library functioned not only as 'a place to return and borrow books, but ... a place to study and to meet'.⁵⁷ But using the library also provided an opportunity for librarians to try to discipline the library patron. In Pakistan, for instance, the librarian of the Council Library prosecuted a 'vigorous campaign ... against loud conversation, sleeping with feet on the table, and similarly unliterary proclivities' in order to create 'an atmosphere conducive to study'.⁵⁸ Readers, however, could subvert the purpose of the library on occasion. Loss of book stock was identified as a problem in Pakistan's Council libraries, with students providing fictitious names and addresses and then stealing books and selling them.⁵⁹ Missing books from the Lahore Library in 1960 included Bertrand Russell's *Hopes for a Changing World*, Noël Coward's *Nude with Violin*, and A.L. Rowse's *Spirit of English History* – but whether these volumes were stolen for sale, mislaid, or otherwise disposed of remains unknown.⁶⁰ Books stolen from the Penang, Malaysia, Council library included *The Observer's Book of Automobiles*, *Land, People and Economy in Malaya* and *Journalism as a Career*.⁶¹ Complaints were also made by Council librarians in Pakistan about the 'infuriating habit of many readers to mark the book in ink or coloured pencil'.⁶² In Malaya, too, it was noted that texts in the junior library were often marked, sometimes 'vulgarily'.⁶³

What of the librarians who worked in British Council libraries? Some libraries were run by professional librarians, others by officers with no professional training.⁶⁴ Librarians to the British Council were posted on year-long contracts and were expected to learn the language of the country where they served (if necessary) and to be 'fit' to represent Britain. It was expected that British Council librarians would spend time after work attending official functions and lectures and in other ways be active within the British community abroad.⁶⁵ The Council librarian was expected to be a 'library ambassador', often being the only librarian in an area and needing to provide advice and training whenever required.⁶⁶ Council librarians also toured public libraries in many places to cultivate relationships with other librarians.⁶⁷ They provided advice and support for the development of other libraries, for the training of librarians, and answered bibliographical and reference inquiries for institutions. In India, for example, the Madras British Council Library answered bibliographical queries on topics as varied as space flight, the production and distribution of gas for domestic use, engineering photography, and blood banks.⁶⁸ Librarians were also expected to attend all book exhibitions by foreign or local authorities and to report on these 'for the benefit of the British trade'.⁶⁹

The librarian had considerable latitude in terms of selecting material and running the library: Using the Dewey system was obligatory, but things such as charging subscriptions or fines were at the discretion of the librarian. One British Council librarian commented: ‘The British Council librarian is in charge of a special library system with its varying interests and problems; he sees the world as no other librarians possibly can, he has friends and professional contacts of all nationalities, colours and creeds, while his numerous extra-mural activities keep his spare time fully occupied’. Librarians could be moved every three to four years. The librarian would also be responsible for making reports on the libraries of a country, paying particular attention to the ‘presence and use made of British books and journals’.⁷⁰

British Council librarian Geoffrey Glaister reported to the Library Association on his time as a Council librarian, having been posted to Turkey and later to Austria. In reporting on his experiences of Turkey, Glaister reported that the libraries established there during the war years had not been run by professionals and reorganizing had taken place after a review by a British librarian in 1947–8. Glaister, a professional librarian, then took up the post. He learned the language, something he believed was ‘worth the effort’. In 1949, he helped organize an exhibition of British books. The exhibition held in Istanbul attracted some 16,000 people to view an exhibition of 2,000 books; the exhibition also toured Izmir and Ankara.⁷¹

In Turkey, Glaister reported, the emphasis was on teaching English, something he reported the Turkish population was very keen on learning. A library service was deemed essential to support such teaching. The Council supplied copies of simplified readers to schools and supervised the printing and distribution of specially written conversation books. The library was also the venue for holding lectures, film shows, discussion groups, and other activities, with the librarian often being involved in this activity.⁷² Glaister’s work in Austria was somewhat different, with less basic library work and much of the activity aimed at fostering cultural relations and designed to serve ‘specialist academic groups and research workers rather than the general reader’.⁷³ He noted that a Council librarian often spent his time on postal and telephone queries, often received from government departments. Work as a British Council librarian was, he concluded, ‘quite unique’. While the librarian may bring with them experience from the public or university library sector,

[t]hese traditions can only be the basis of their new work, which demands ... an ability to build and develop a library service from its foundation, to be resourceful and inventive, to learn many tongues, to be tactful and sympathetic to the hosts of foreigners with whom they will always have to work, and lastly, to be something of an ambassador for the country they represent and serve.⁷⁴

Another British Council librarian, John Makin, described his experiences as a Council librarian in India in the early 1950s. Makin saw the function of the

Council librarian as being to fulfill two purposes: one was to provide a library service and the other was to provide an example of British librarianship in practice. Makin saw this as a ‘considerable responsibility’ and an important one. He noted that Indian library services at the time in general fell short of the ideal, and he thought it was especially important that he provide guidance on librarianship to Indian librarians. To that end, he spent a lot of time ‘propagating [an] ideal of an efficient library service by writing, touring, lecturing, films, film strips, photographic displays, lending textbooks and journals on librarianship and by an active participation in Library Association affairs, both national and regional; ... and to explain, by as many means as possible, visual and audial, our British library services so that they might perhaps serve as an example’.⁷⁵ He also copied a British training practice of holding a ‘weekend’ of library training, which he did for librarians in Bombay (Mumbai). Using the British Council rooms, he was able to put on exhibitions of British books, cataloguing, photographs of British libraries, library equipment, and films on librarianship. The event also saw Indian speakers addressing issues such as ‘the value of libraries to the community’ and the playing of recordings of talks by British librarians well known in India, such as Edward Sydney and Frank Gardner, as well as sessions on library administration.⁷⁶

The British Council therefore had a considerable role to play and had considerable influence in library development in a number of countries. In all of this library work, however, it needs to be remembered that British Council libraries still primarily aimed to promote British interests and values, as well as collections that included largely British-authored and British-published volumes. They clearly served the interests of British foreign policy, as well as commercial imperatives, and this shaped the nature and aims of their work.

Libraries and American statecraft

Information became an important tool in foreign policy in the years before the Second World War, used perhaps most effectively by the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and the USSR. During the Second World War, information work increased in importance, with many nations engaging in propaganda activities as part of the war effort. The US Office of War Information distributed books and magazines, among other cultural activities; the Voice of America radio station was launched in 1942. By the end of the war, as Nicholas Cull has noted, the USA ‘had a global apparatus of advocacy and cultural projection’.⁷⁷

After the end of the Second World War, the USA initially dialed down its efforts at overseas information work. As the Cold War took off, efforts were renewed. Information work was to help to communicate American values and priorities to a global audience and was believed to help to counter the communist influence. The USA feared that countries in the developing world, especially those in the process of decolonization, would be particularly susceptible to the allure of communist-based development. Information

and culture became tools and weapons in the Cold War battle for hearts and minds. It also aimed to contradict misconceptions put forward not just by Soviet propaganda but also as conveyed by the British and French textbooks and publications that often made up a significant portion of the print material available in former colonial possessions.⁷⁸ By 1950, as Frank Ninkovich states, American cultural programs of all kinds were deeply committed to waging the Cold War.⁷⁹ Scholars have also noted how the State Department and the USIA moved toward a more aggressive one-way informationalist (or propagandist) approach as time went on rather than an approach that prioritized cultural exchange.

Books were generally regarded as an important means for spreading American ideas and values – cultural programs saw the translation and publication of American books, the promotion of book exhibits, and book gift programs. Information libraries and reading rooms also became a central feature of US cultural and informational diplomacy work. In 1949, in a report on ‘International Educational and Technical Exchange’, US libraries were, it noted, ‘chief outlets for American thought and culture abroad’.⁸⁰ USIS libraries and reading rooms were central to the ‘public’ face of US foreign policy but also served as important locales for people to engage in reading and other cultural activity. In 1952, Luther Evans commented in a speech that he saw the USIS libraries as being set up as ‘model public libraries, to show foreign countries how American libraries are run, and also as reservoirs of information about the United States’.⁸¹ Henry James noted that these libraries ‘represented a novel, democratic concept of free dissemination of culture’ in many places.⁸²

The American Library Association (ALA) actively supported the US State Department (and from 1953, the United States Information Agency) in its library and reading room work. In 1946, president of the ALA Ralph Ulveling praised the libraries of the State Department, which he described as ‘the buttresses of a friendly diplomacy’. ‘In key cities on every continent’, he wrote for his ALA readership, ‘American information libraries equipped with books devoid of propaganda purposes are expanding in numbers and giving substantial promise of becoming the real genius of our foreign representation’.⁸³

The US government actively courted librarians through its relationship with the ALA. In 1947, Carl Sauer addressed the annual meeting of the ALA to outline the provisions of the new Smith-Mundt bill that would, among other things, provide support for information work abroad. Sauer told his audience that the Department of State recognized that ‘in the question of the increase of mutual understanding among peoples’, the book and the library were essential. The Department had supported the exchange of librarians, distributed thousands of American books across the globe, and had established American libraries abroad. The government had set up, since the end of the war, a Division of Libraries and Institutes, and, Sauer continued, two basic principles would govern the operation of this division: ‘[t]he first is that a United States information library abroad should be exactly what its name implies, namely, that place in any community to which anyone turns for the

answer to any question dealing with the United States', and the second principle was that these libraries would be 'entrusted to professional American librarians'. Sauer concluded his address by calling for ongoing support for US information libraries abroad, and especially for qualified librarians to consider working for a period in such libraries.⁸⁴

Books arguably had their 'heyday' in the USIA during the 1950s; from the 1960s onward, other media forms such as radio, television, and film were given greater emphasis. The library remained important but became less important over time.⁸⁵ By the 1970s, cultural diplomat Richard T. Arndt concludes, the USIS libraries had 'withered away'.⁸⁶ Yet for a period of time they had a significant impact not just as a method of cultural diplomacy in action but also as a type of library that had a global presence and impact.

USIS libraries in action

By 1948, there were US information libraries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and the Pacific. The USIA regarded books as a major conduit for information about the USA.⁸⁷ By 1962, there were 176 USIS libraries in 80 countries, with over two and a quarter million volumes being accessed by some 26 million people.⁸⁸ In 1967, it was estimated that there was a total of more than two million volumes across USIS libraries, with about 20% of these collections being in local languages and the rest in English.⁸⁹ By the 1980s, the USIA maintained libraries in around 88 countries, with over 1.6 million books.⁹⁰ These libraries were essential conduits for US information work and cultural diplomacy. But they were not without controversy.

As the Cold War heated up, information work abroad accelerated. But the USIS libraries also quickly became controversial at home in the United States. As discussed in Chapter 1, intellectual freedom was a key tenet of American library ideology. The Cold War placed pressure on this ideal, requiring librarians to reassert their commitment to intellectual freedom and to redefine their relationship to intellectual freedom.

During the McCarthy 'Red Scare', fears about communist infiltration and influence in the United States reached hysterical proportions. Libraries were not immune to what was happening. The State Department generally was targeted as allegedly being 'pink' – that is, full of liberals with sympathies for socialism and communism. McCarthy subsequently denounced USIS libraries as full of books written by communist authors. As a result of the controversy, books were withdrawn from USIS library shelves. In 1953, ALA librarians responded to this action by defending the USIS libraries, declaring that these libraries 'have been organized throughout the years with a single-minded devotion to the interests of the United States'. They argued:

With many impartial observers, we believe that they are among the most effective weapons possessed by the United States in the battle to preserve

freemen and free minds from the enslavement of Communist political and intellectual tyranny. We know that their effectiveness has depended on the conviction among foreign users that here was a free and open source of truth to which they could turn with confidence for information and enlightenment.⁹¹

Librarians expressed their dismay at the attacks and any removal of books as a consequence – USIS libraries should, they argued, contain whatever books were deemed useful. They also spoke of ‘responsible freedom’⁹² that entailed giving people the freedom to read what they liked and to exercise their own judgment on what they read and what they chose to believe in.

William Dix, chairman of the ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee, while fully committed to the idea of intellectual freedom, did observe, however, that any position taken by the ALA on overseas libraries had to be somewhat separate from other, domestic, concerns with intellectual freedom – the overseas libraries were part of government policy and not directly concerned or involving the rights of American citizens.⁹³ What Dix touched on here is something that defines the story of US efforts to undertake library work within the ambit of foreign policy: the dilemma of the subordination of other concerns to the overriding demands of foreign policy (Cold War) interests. For patriotic American librarians, there was a tension between their support for US national interests and their internationalist commitment to intellectual freedom as expressed in librarianship. There thus remained ongoing concerns over the way the USIS libraries worked through this period. For the ALA, the USIS libraries were, as the government conceived of them, propaganda agencies. In 1960, the International Relations Committee of the ALA expressed concern that while the USIA paid ‘lip service’ to libraries, they did little to improve library services and felt that the USIS libraries had become ‘expedient propaganda agencies’, with a decline in qualified librarians running them.⁹⁴ This led the ALA to look for support from agencies such as USAID, whose efforts in the early 1960s promised ‘American libraries abroad without the limitations of the USIA’.⁹⁵

USIS book and library programs were focused on achieving what were described at the time as ‘program aims’ – that is, the focus toward books that would be circulated (whether through libraries or through publishing programs) was on anti-communist and pro-American content. From the beginning of the USIA’s creation in 1953, USIS libraries’ selection of material was undertaken by USIA staff, not the ALA.⁹⁶ Nor were book selections much driven by local requests, needs, or preferences.

Typical USIS library collections included books, magazines, and daily newspapers. Popular magazine selections included *The Nation*, *Reader’s Digest*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*.⁹⁷ Books were to provide what the USIA considered to be a ‘balanced reflection of American thought and life’, although, as Jody Sussman has pointed out, collections more often tended ‘to reflect the political ideology of the USIA director and, to some extent,

the President'. Sussman cites the example of Edwin O. Reischauer's book *Beyond Vietnam: The United States and Asia* (1967), a book by a former US ambassador that explained how the USA became involved in Vietnam, as being prohibited from USIS collections by President Lyndon Johnson due to controversy over the war.⁹⁸ Under Nixon's administration, collections moved further to represent conservative political thought and viewpoints.⁹⁹

Special programs within the USIS sometimes had an impact on book collections and reading activities promoted by them. In the late 1960s, the USIA attempted to promote the role of women in global political, economic, and social change. One program, piloted in Kenya, involved the establishment of a 'Ladies Reading Club', where serious reading about development and modernization was promoted through featuring titles such as Gilbert Highet's *The Art of Teaching* (1950) and Margaret Mead and Muriel Brown's *The Wagon and the Star: A Study of American Community Initiative* (1966).¹⁰⁰

USIS work in promoting American publications – as was the case with the British Council and its libraries – was motivated at least in part by a desire to promote American books as commercial and cultural product at a global level. Joseph Privatera, who worked in the Office of Private Co-operation within the USIA, wrote to American publisher R.R. Bowker in 1963 to follow up on their gift of 100 subscriptions to the publishing industry's periodical *Publishers' Weekly* for Indian libraries. Privatera argued that because British books dominated in India, there was a growing market for English language publications, and so it was essential to find ways to make American books more available and better known.¹⁰¹ American publishers frequently donated books to USIS collections, not just as an act of patriotism within a Cold War context but also to promote their own commercial products.

Language was an issue for cultural and information work abroad, as we saw with the British Council. It was also an issue for the USIA. In some locales where it ran USIS libraries, there was a need for works in translation because not enough of the population spoke or read English. By contrast to the British Council which concentrated on the promotion and teaching of the English language, the USIS engaged in a variety of translation and publishing programs to promote American books in translation, recognizing the value of working in vernacular languages where possible (although still insisting content be American).¹⁰² Translation and publication programs became an important part of their cultural information work, therefore, but results varied from place to place. Despite an active translation and publication program in Iran, for example, the local USIS library in Tabriz lacked enough books in translation, especially fiction, to help cultivate a local readership.¹⁰³

The US government believed that USIS libraries were popular, certainly through the first decade or so following the end of the Second World War. Reports on USIS libraries' success would tell stories such as one about an Indonesian woman who had used the library to obtain recipes for American food and then convinced her husband that cheeseburgers were great.¹⁰⁴ This same commentary on USIS libraries in Indonesia praised the way that USIS

libraries benefited Indonesians who sought ‘anything that can give them a picture of life in the United States’.¹⁰⁵ The picture on the ground, however, leads to a more mixed view of the activities pursued by the USIS libraries and their role in their local communities.

Users of USIS libraries were often students, both for the collections and for the space afforded for study.¹⁰⁶ Many libraries were well attended, especially in places where they offered one of few library services or where collections were useful for educational and study purposes. In some places, such as in Madras, India, the USIS library’s reference collections were used by local government.¹⁰⁷

The ALA’s International Relations Office (IRO) worked with USIS libraries and traveled to them regularly to report on and participate in their activities. Lester Asheim, for example, visited USIS libraries while on his survey and advisory trips, and librarians occasionally gave lectures through the USIS when traveling.¹⁰⁸ Overall, while he had praise for individual USIS libraries, he expressed concerns about the approach that the USIA was taking toward libraries. In 1964, he wrote to a fellow IRO librarian that in his opinion most readers did not use USIS libraries to read up on the USA, as was the intention of the libraries. He argued that the ‘USIS would actually accomplish its aims better if it concentrated on giving a bang-up library service representative of what libraries in the United States provide, instead of being so flat footedly a propaganda outlet for books favorable to the USA or by US writers only. It is a very strong belief of mine that we convince more people by what we do, than by what we say we do’.¹⁰⁹ Some years later, David Donovan of the IRO complained that USIA officials ‘have always dug in their heels when efforts were made to broaden the purposes of the USIS library overseas. The fast-media concept of propaganda is too well-entrenched’.¹¹⁰

The quality of USIS libraries varied considerably. Lester Asheim’s tours of these libraries give some insight into what the different libraries were like and some idea of how they were used. In reporting to the USIS in 1964 after a tour of Asia, he reported on a number of USIS libraries there. He observed that the Delhi library in India was ‘one of the best’. He noted other USIS libraries in India were good, and the Calcutta one was very heavily used. He was also impressed by the Madras library which was, he thought, ‘designed to attract users’. The Bombay library enjoyed ‘a tremendous rush of business’.¹¹¹ While the Indian USIS libraries were well developed and well used, USIS libraries in other countries in the Indian subcontinent did not get such glowing reviews. The Peshawar library in Pakistan still needed ‘a lot of work’: It had no reference service, no translation program, and an ‘unimaginative’ presentation program. Asheim also observed ‘considerable anti-American feeling’ in Peshawar.¹¹² Indian librarians too expressed some of their doubts about the USIS libraries, with S. Bashiruddin of Aligarh Muslim University writing that the people in charge of his local USIS library

seem to lack imagination, drive, and will to achieve something in their mission. Worst of it all, they seem to be poorly educated folk drawn to

the job by the glitter of better emoluments and the romantic pull India has for foreigners. Some of these were able administrators, but lacked the academic background, which a visitor to his library expects in the librarian.¹¹³

Other issues affected the USIS libraries that Asheim observed while on his Asian tour. In Afghanistan, for example, there was a good library, but due to what he considered to be 'extreme sensitivity' on the part of the Afghanistan government, they wanted 'no consorting', and this discouraged the local population from using American libraries.¹¹⁴ Asheim also expressed his criticism of the USIS libraries that have generally 'so completely ignored the young audience' and felt this ignored the fact that it was essential to cultivate young readers in order to have an adult audience.¹¹⁵ Language was for USIS libraries also an ongoing problem that he identified. In many places, English language skills were limited, and there was a definite need for books in vernacular languages.¹¹⁶

Asheim also reported his observations of USIS libraries in African countries. The USIS library in Ibadan, Nigeria, held a collection of 4,000 volumes and had a typical patronage of over 2,000 people. It also ran a program whereby book lockers of 100 volumes were sent out to regional libraries. Most of the users of this USIS library were students, who, he observed, preferred the 'practical, technical stuff'. Inclusion of anti-communist material in the collection was 'not well received'.¹¹⁷ Use of Nigerian USIS libraries increased considerably through the early 1960s – the Lagos branch had over 15,000 people attend it in July 1963, for example.¹¹⁸ Asheim's observation was that the preference in Nigeria was overwhelmingly for practical rather than recreational reading. Yet book selection was of political significance. While USIA directives ensured that books in the collection were to represent certain ideas about American values and thought, some evidence suggests that the lack of material on African American life, for African readers, could be an issue. While in Kano, Nigeria, Asheim visited the Kano Regional Library after the USIS library and discovered that titles that would never be found in a USIS library, such as Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944) and John Dollard's *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (1937), were on the shelves. Both of these were British editions of important books on American race relations.¹¹⁹ In the Lusaka USIS library, which was 'crowded with Africans', he noted that the USIS library had gone against official policy to purchase useful, non-American books.¹²⁰

The USIS library in Accra, Ghana, was, as of 1962, described as being in a poor location: It was located 'in the heart of a crowded market area'. Asheim visited this library during a tour of Africa in 1962. The heat and the noise made a negative impression; there was no place to sit and read, and the 'dirt and dust of the market' affected the collection. He believed the library gave a poor impression of American librarianship, but it was noted that a new library in a new location was going to be opened: 'I hope so, I'm afraid that

USIS can't accomplish much in Accra under such a handicap'. Advantages for the library over the main public library in Accra was that it was free (compared to an annual subscription of four shillings at the Central Library) and that, according to the USIS reference librarian Victor Boafo, American books were 'more practical and written more simply'. Nearly all of the users of the library by Asheim's observations were reading magazines, including *Ebony*, *Time*, *Life*, and the *NAACP Journal*. Otherwise, the preferred reading material was 'practical technical and science textbooks'.¹²¹

The extent to which USIS libraries met local needs thus varied considerably, and sometimes clearly fell short. In Sudan, the USIS aimed to build up its collections in Arabic to cater for a population that resisted 'foreign interference', but many of whom were interested in American publications.¹²² This move in North Africa was necessary to try and meet an increasing push for what the Americans called 'Arabization' in countries like Sudan, Egypt, and Libya. Collections were also criticized for being old-fashioned in content: A British woman who staffed the Tripoli USIS library complained about the lack of fiction that represented contemporary American life while there was far too much stock of the 'James Fenimore Cooper type'.¹²³ In her opinion, there might be more success in attracting readers if the stock was more interesting and relevant.

That USIS libraries were viewed with some suspicion is clear, but this did not necessarily prevent people from using the library for their own purposes. Robert L. White, who worked in the USIS office in Nyeri, Kenya, noted that the USIS library was popular, provided box libraries to about 30 schools, and was not viewed with 'much suspicion on the part of Africans about the propaganda nature of the library'.¹²⁴ Lester Asheim, when visiting Ethiopia, visited a Soviet Information Center, which Asheim thought 'no better and no worse than the USIS or British Council installations'. He wondered whether Ethiopian readers believed what they got from these places, or if they were just as suspicious of the Soviet propaganda as they were of that of the West.¹²⁵

USIS libraries also, as mentioned earlier, functioned as demonstration libraries. The USIS library in Bangkok was used as a demonstration library for library training in Thailand. It also was very active, with three trained American librarians and a staff of 15 Thai people; it had a collection of nearly 10,000 books and sent book packets out into provincial areas.¹²⁶ Library training was also provided by the USIS in Burma.¹²⁷ In Malaya, a major focus for the USIS library in the early 1960s was to help promote school librarianship and to encourage teachers to support the idea of the library.¹²⁸ USIS posts were also used for a variety of programs involving books beyond the library and reading room. Notably these included translation programs and presentation programs. In Hong Kong, for example, the USIS officer, Earl Wilson, sought to develop a program of translation to counteract 'the anti-American propaganda that funnels through this port'. Lester Asheim believed that such a program could have 'an important effect'.¹²⁹

What of the librarians who worked in these USIS libraries? Numbers of trained (American) librarians working in these libraries remained fairly steady, with about 400 US librarians working in overseas USIS libraries in the decade 1946–55, and 337 in the period 1956–65.¹³⁰ It was noted that successful USIS librarians typically needed language skills, stable, outgoing personalities, a sense of public relations, and experience with American libraries and publications.¹³¹ USIA officers who were responsible for overseas library operations were often ‘career employees’ who had been with the program from the mid-1940s. The USIA was involved in library training, with in-service training provided both to USIA librarians and local librarians.¹³² When first calling for librarians to serve with the USIS libraries, it was noted that qualities required might include ‘poise, adaptability and a variety of interests and culture, initiative and resourcefulness’. Essential qualities included ‘general knowledge of history, politics, economics, and culture of the United States’, and it was desirable to have some knowledge of the language and culture of the host country.¹³³ In the early 1950s, librarians who went to work for the USIA received a short training course that ran for seven weeks, which included two weeks at the Foreign Service Institute, two weeks in Washington, and one week at the New York Service Section. Librarians were explicitly made to understand their role in combating anti-American feeling.¹³⁴ Writing about librarians in the USIS, Henry James Jr. acknowledged the propaganda element of the work but also observed that the library was not suitable ‘to be used as a blunt propaganda instrument’ and wouldn’t act as such.¹³⁵

Recruitment processes was just one area that highlighted the instrumentalist goals of the USIA. Robert W. Roehr interviewed for a job as a USIS librarian in 1966, which included an interview by three senior foreign service officials. He was asked the question ‘What do you think about recent happenings in China?’, a question Roehr described as more appropriate for an ‘informal social situation’ than as a genuine test of an applicant’s knowledge and understanding of current affairs. The interview process made it clear to Roehr that the USIA was really just a propaganda service and its objectives were ‘directly opposed to the philosophy advocated by American librarianship’.¹³⁶ He subsequently withdrew his application.

Personnel for USIS libraries was an ongoing issue, and USIS libraries were staffed by Americans, British, and local nationals. The Lusaka library (then in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia) was staffed by Hastings A. Hojane, who came from Nyasaland (Malawi); he had no library training.¹³⁷ The Khartoum, Sudan, USIS librarian was Mrs. Klontz, a trained librarian from Alabama who was the wife of a visiting professor.¹³⁸ Sometimes political sensitivities made it necessary to choose staff carefully. In Hong Kong, for example, Americans were not permitted to work in the USIS library, only Chinese or local personnel.¹³⁹ In Indonesia, there were sensitivities over who should work in the USIS libraries due to anti-American sentiment and political upheaval as a result of ‘Konfrontasi’ (the Indonesian-Malaysian conflict).¹⁴⁰

Datus Smith, who worked with one of the USA's Cold War book translation and publication programs, Franklin Publications, commented on USIS libraries in the Middle East in 1955. He acknowledged the importance of USIS librarians as being 'of substantial help in seeking to train librarians and develop the concept of librarianship in the local countries'.¹⁴¹ However, many USIS libraries were staffed with locals, who may or may not have any prior training in librarianship and who rarely had the opportunity to gain much more than on-the-job training. A letter from David Donovan in 1970 addressed the ongoing issue of providing library training for USIS workers. He noted that the USIS provided training in the USA, but there was no funding that could actually bring librarians from overseas to the USA for such training.¹⁴²

By the end of the 1960s, the ALA was expressing increasing concern about the quality of USIS libraries as libraries, but the USIA explicitly articulated their foreign policy goals as expressed through the libraries; this was their purpose. Herbert Fredman of the USIA addressed the ALA in 1967 to explain that the agency was increasingly focused on a policy of 'selective patronage' of those who could best use the information USIS libraries supplied. He acknowledged that the USIA was 'increasingly aware of the need for more adequate supervision of our local library operations by competent American professional librarians'.¹⁴³ He also declared that

USIS libraries have become highly visible symbols of the US government and the principles for which it stands. For this reason they are subject to rough treatment at times. They are the lightning rods which sometimes attract the wrath of foreign nationals who disagree with US policies. Many have been pillaged and burned because people oppose our policies or our actions in Viet-Nam or the Congo or the Panama Canal or the Middle East. But I find it encouraging that our government is symbolized abroad by a free, open democratic library, which carries the American message of liberty, freedom and equality, even if stones are aimed at it occasionally.¹⁴⁴

Wilson P. Dizard wrote in 1961 that 'USIS offices and libraries are the best known and the most conspicuous official symbol of America in many foreign cities' and thus were targets for demonstrators.¹⁴⁵ Edward R. Murrow (director of the USIA from 1961 to 1964), talking to the American Council of Education in 1961, was frank about the fact that USIS libraries were being targeted by protestors in many places around the globe, including Bogotá, Baghdad, Athens, Beirut, Algiers, Calcutta (Kolkata), and Taipei. He argued that there were a number of reasons for this, including 'nationalist outbursts' and communist-fomented attacks. But he also commented that 'their very concentration upon our posts shows the enhanced position of the United States in world affairs and the potency of the ideas and ideals we have to offer'.¹⁴⁶

By the 1960s, there were reports of how USIS libraries had become a symbol of US power abroad and so had become the target of anti-American protests.

Between 1945 and 1965, there were 68 separate attacks on USIS libraries ranging from minor damage to complete destruction.¹⁴⁷ In Algiers, the USIS library had been bombed three times by 1964.¹⁴⁸ These attacks demonstrate just how powerful a symbol the USIS libraries were. While they functioned as libraries and raised all sorts of questions around library methods and the cultivation of readers, they remained part of a cultural apparatus tied closely to Cold War foreign policy.

British Council and USIS libraries were instruments of foreign policy in a period of decolonization and Cold War. Their policies and practices need to be viewed through this lens. Yet they also could function in a variety of ways for their users. Students used them to study and improve their future, technical manuals assisted in practical tasks such as car repair, those who sought out books on the USA might have gained insight into a country they loved or hated. In addition, individual librarians could use their position to undertake work that did not necessarily further or assist foreign policy aims, such as advising other libraries on their practices. These libraries were an important part of the global development and presence of libraries. But as this chapter has argued, their story also testifies to the powerful political forces that shaped international library operations in these decades.

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6 Library diplomacy and exchange

In 1968, American librarian Lewis F. Stieg declared that the traveling American librarian derived his or her greatest satisfaction from ‘establishing and reorganizing libraries, from spreading the gospel of library services as he knows it, and from initiating programs for the training of librarians’.¹ He argued that librarians who worked overseas were engaged in what he described as – borrowing the description – ‘an experiment in transnational intellectual communication’.²

Previous chapters have considered the broader activities of the USA, Britain, and Unesco in promoting international library development and examined some of the ways in which this work was shaped and structured by the demands of the period and by contemporary ways of thinking. We have discussed the importance of the training of librarians, as well as the librarian as traveling expert. This chapter further examines how librarians engaged in library development activity on the ground through working abroad. What motivated these activities? What did this activity mean to those who participated? And how did it help shape library development and the making of a global profession?

Librarians were often encouraged by their professional associations to consider service abroad, and IFLA also worked to promote the importance of professional visits and connections, helping the profession to think of itself as operating at a global level. Such work was often couched in terms of being of service to one’s country, as support for international ideals, and/or as an opportunity for adventure and experience abroad. It enabled the construction of the ‘library expert’ who was assisting in the development process, but it also facilitated more reciprocal types of international experiences and exchanges that shaped views and lives. David Donovan, who worked for the ALA’s International Relations Office (IRO), noted the considerable challenges of working in another culture but believed it vital to ‘break out of [one’s] own limitations of cultural heritage and thought’.³

International connections were significant to the library profession as it evolved through the first half of the twentieth century and became even more essential in the postwar years. Librarians regarded themselves as an international profession – conferences then, as today, brought together

professionals from various countries to discuss common problems and learn from each other, and professional visits, study tours, and exchanges were important to promoting and developing librarianship. These relationships and the sense of the profession that emerged from this international vision was an important shaping factor for the profession and an important part of the ethos and values of librarianship.

Yet such internationalism also operated within a process of technical transfer and cultural imperialism as has already been argued. Mary Niles Maack has pointed to the importance of external aid in assisting ‘technology transfer’ in West African libraries, while also arguing that the transfer of practices, processes, and ideas are not always applicable to (or desirable in) other contexts.⁴ Foreign librarians brought technologies, processes, and ideas with them, enabling fundamental aspects of technology transfer to take place. So one of the contexts for understanding the experiences of librarians is to consider the role they played in perpetuating or alternatively helping to undermine colonial power relationships through the period of decolonization and Cold War.

Librarians abroad: Exchange programs and study tours

Exchange and study programs were essential to library work in this period. They served as an important means of training librarians as we’ve already seen and were an essential part of library diplomacy. Programs like the Multi-National Group Librarians (MNGL) initiative (discussed in Chapter 4), which brought librarians from around the globe to the USA, played a role in cultural diplomacy as well as facilitating library training. Aside from the MNGL Program, a number of other exchange programs were undertaken to help with efforts to promote international relationships. Many of these came under the Exchange-Visitor Program that operated under the US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 administered by the Department of State.

American state library associations set up foreign exchange committees to support and supplement the work of the IRO. For example, the Illinois Library Association set up a Foreign Exchange Librarians Committee in 1965. This Committee helped to facilitate overseas and American librarians to spend a period of time, one to two years, working in each other’s libraries. The Committee established minimum criteria for librarians from overseas and assessed their qualifications and experience for participation in the program.⁵

The New York Library Association (NYLA) also participated in the Exchange-Visitor Program to have librarians from overseas to work in New York libraries. Visitors took on full professional duties and were given a monthly allowance. The visiting librarian was required to assume responsibility for all travel costs to and from the USA. Participants had to return to their own country at the end of the program, as it was ‘not meant to be used for the purpose of immigration to the United States’. Its primary intent was to

'provide practical experience' for qualified librarians, and it was not designed for people who wanted to pursue further study in the USA. The criteria for successful selection for the exchange program was considerable and included the equivalent of 13 to 14 years of US education and at least one year of formal training in librarianship and two years of full-time library work experience. People eligible to come to the USA under this program included those from Britain, Scandinavian countries, West Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Japan, India, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Thailand, South Africa, Bermuda, West Indies, and Indonesia. It was noted that most exchanges under this program, as of the mid-1950s, had been made with English-speaking librarians due to 'language problems'. Under the program, American librarians from New York State could work in overseas libraries for one to two years.⁶

From 1965, the California Library Association (CLA) commenced an exchange and visitor program, modeled on that of the New York Library Association. They wrote to various California libraries that year to ask them to consider hosting a worker from overseas or for California librarians to travel and work abroad. In the documentation circulated, it was noted that the host library must offer the visiting librarian 'the same opportunities and benefits to which a regular employee would be entitled'. The purpose of the program, they declared, was 'to further international understanding, both in general, and specifically in librarianship and the role of the librarian'.⁷ In a meeting of the CLA held on November 6, 1963, some concern was expressed that many libraries were already struggling to support staff and that training a librarian from overseas might be too much of a burden.⁸ Lois Huish, chairman of the CLA's Committee on Foreign Exchange and Intern Librarian Program, wrote a short article for the *California Librarian* in July of the following year that described the development of the program, which had been first championed by State Librarian Carma Leigh and former CLA president Bertha Hellum.⁹ Following advice from the NYLA program and responding to concerns over the 'burdens' of the program, Huish noted in her article that a host library 'must show that it is able to afford the extra time necessary to orient and train the foreign librarian, to guide him in the ways of American librarianship, and to give him a fair chance to experience different types of library duties during his stay in the United States'. 'Obviously, the program is not intended to provide a refuge for misfits from other countries, a method of engaging "slave labor" for understaffed American libraries, or a free European vacation for American librarians', Huish declared.¹⁰

Special programs were also run for librarians from particular countries. In 1959–60, a program was run for Indian librarians, sponsored by the Department of State and the ALA. Librarian Laurence Kipp helped to design the program, with the visit starting at the Washington International Center and continuing with tours of significant federal libraries. The visitors then went to New York to tour various libraries and publishing houses. They spent time at libraries of particular individual interest and also met with

various ALA members and others ‘to exchange information and to determine means of increasing and improving relationships between Indian and American librarians’.¹¹ Participant librarians included Sham Sundar Lal, assistant librarian at Punjab University Library, who was noted as being ‘particularly interested in services provided to readers and in labor-saving devices and ideas’, and Shiva Narain Mathur, assistant librarian at Rajasthan University, who was particularly interested in learning more about audio-visual aids.¹² Other visitors on this trip included Patnayakuni Satyanarayana Patnaik, assistant librarian at Sri Vankateswara University, and Champaklal Pranshanker Shukla, university librarian at the University of Baroda.¹³

Other librarians visited and interned in the USA through more general visitor and exchange programs. Des Raj Kalia, noted Indian librarian, traveled to the USA under the International Visitors Program (IVP) in 1966. He visited a number of US libraries and agencies. Swaran Kumari, from Delhi, worked as an intern at the Rochester Public Library in New York State. Commenting on the exchange-visitor program, Kumari described the program as ‘wonderful’ and talked of the importance of the exchange of ideas. She also noted that visiting the USA had ‘been the fulfillment of my dream’ and that it had been like a second home.¹⁴ But not all such experiences were as positive. Another Indian librarian who visited under the program was P.N. Kaula, head of the Department of Library Science at the Banaram Hindu University and a Unesco consultant at the University of Havana in 1967.¹⁵ Obtaining funds for Kaula’s visit proved difficult due to his not-always-friendly attitude toward the USA.¹⁶ He eventually went to the USA under the IVP in late 1967 and early 1968. That sometimes visiting librarians had difficulty arranging permissions to enter the USA is evident in the archival evidence.¹⁷ Thus funding, language barriers, education and qualifications, and permissions all made working in or visiting the USA a challenge.

Librarians also traveled to Britain on exchange and to help build professional relationships. In 1956 and 1957, noted Indian librarian S.R. Ranganathan undertook a study tour of British libraries, and as part of that, he gave over 50 hours of lectures and participated in 20 hours of discussion talks with British librarians.¹⁸ In July of that year he published a paper in the *Library Association Record* called ‘Library Service on the March’, based on an address he gave to the Association in December of the previous year. Here he addressed the way in which library service was developing across the globe and spoke to the importance of the librarian in shaping the reader’s relationship to books. While librarians should not ‘regulate reading’, they equally ‘should not reduce [themselves] to mere automaton[s]’.¹⁹ He also spoke about politics, noting the international situation of tensions between nations brought about by suspicion and ignorance – librarians had a role to play, he believed, in helping to bring about better communication between nations.²⁰ Although Ranganathan’s speech was international and global in scope and vision, he spoke as a professional librarian to others – there was nothing to suggest that Indian library service was anything but the equal to British

library service. The British Council also supported the visits of librarians from various countries to Britain to study libraries. For example, in 1958, R.S. Goyal, the chief technical assistant from the Delhi Public Library, did a study tour of rural libraries in England, as well as libraries in Leyton, Luton, Bristol, and Manchester.

All of these activities of exchange and travel helped to forge professional relationships and to reinforce the cultural diplomacy so critical to global development in this period. At the conclusion of a Thai Library Project involving some librarians from Indiana University who had helped to develop a library school in Bangkok, the librarians argued that 'a firm bond' had been established between the Americans and Thais involved in the project, and they hoped that the 'services, the books, and the libraries furnished under these contracts will be effective ambassadors and interpreters of our American way of life'.²¹

Librarians abroad: Working and traveling overseas

For American librarians traveling abroad to undertake work, such as survey work, exposure to foreign cultures brought challenges and what we would call 'culture shock'. Attitudes toward developing nations varied considerably, but there was often an indication that Westerners did not always believe that developing populations were ready for full modernity. Experiences of working and traveling overseas for American and British librarians varied enormously, but they also reveal the on-the-ground experiences of development work and the attitudes that many librarians took with them (and encountered) and provide an insight into the developing world in a crucial period.

In his 1962 trip to Africa as IRO director, Lester Asheim arrived in Dakar, Senegal, and observed, 'black skins everywhere now, in positions of authority as well as menial. And the costumes one has learned to expect from the movies and the National Geographic'. Accra, Ghana, looked, he wrote, 'like all our uninformed stereotypes about Africa'. Lagos in Nigeria was 'exotic and exciting'. Nairobi, Kenya, he found 'civilized' despite his hotel room being infested with locusts. But when he was in Sudan, he described the local people as 'ludicrous-looking' and resembling 'genial Djinn[s]'.²² In a different trip to Asia, Asheim, talking to expatriates in Ceylon who were advocating that the local population was not yet ready for democracy, observed that while his first tendency was to resist the argument, 'some of what he says makes uncomfortable sense'.²³ These brief observations, committed to the pages of Asheim's travel diaries, reveal a man of his time and is a reminder of the attitudes that many (white) Americans took with them on their travels into the developing world in this period. But Asheim was not without some self-awareness, and his experiences led him to reflect in 1963 on the fact that traveling abroad could make one 'see one's own country in a sharper light'.²⁴ In particular, he reflected on Americans potentially being shocked by race relations in some other countries (like South Africa), yet, he wrote, 'we must acknowledge that

our own country harbors every one of these practices'. It was unacceptable to argue that 'things were changing' – 'the indefensible ... cannot – by definition – be defended'.²⁵ Elsewhere, Asheim mused that international experiences could help 'us realize how we are biased by our backgrounds'.²⁶ His complex responses to his travels reminds us that there was no simple exercise of racial privilege or power in library development work, although we can certainly discern elements of these things.

Many librarians were keen to take advantage of opportunities to work abroad, and were sponsored by a variety of means, including through government, Unesco, universities, and philanthropic foundations. American librarians could work, for instance, for the Armed Forces, the USIS, or for voluntary services.²⁷ In 1956, a roundtable on library service abroad was held at the annual ALA conference. Marie V. Hurley, chair of the roundtable and who had at one point served with a USIS library in Sydney, Australia, actively encouraged American librarians to consider service abroad. Various opportunities were on offer in the 1950s and into the 1960s, she observed, as international demand 'has grown for American library ideas and methods'.²⁸

In 1968, Lewis F. Stieg estimated that over 1,000 American librarians had some kind of overseas experience.²⁹ This only constituted 3% of the ALA membership, but it was, nevertheless, a significant percentage of the profession. Each year, over the decade, 1946 to 1955, an average of 200 American librarians were serving abroad in some capacity. Over the next decade, this figure rose to an average of 290 librarians per year. Many of these librarians worked for government agencies, such as USAID and the USIA, but also included those who worked for foundations, Unesco, and religious organizations. About a third were working in an overseas library or educational program for training librarians.³⁰

Comparable figures are not available for Britain, but British librarian Wilfred J. Plumbe noted that in the 'two or three decades following World War II about 55 men and women librarians from Britain occupied substantive posts in tropic libraries for periods of not less than one year, most of them for three years or more'. His figures do not include British Council personnel, which included a significant number of professional librarians.³¹ John Holford, in commenting on British involvement in mass education efforts in British colonies and former colonies in the postwar period observes that during this period many Britons were drawn to work in Africa by the spirit of postwar development and independence.³² Librarians were no doubt some of those so inspired.

Numerous American librarians can be traced as actively pursuing a continuing career overseas. Katherine Smith Diehl taught at the University of Dacca in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1959, sponsored by the Fulbright Foundation. She later took on a job as bibliographer with Serampore College in West Bengal from 1961 to 1962. Library science was taught at this university through the United States Education Foundation in Pakistan.³³ In the ALA's report of 1967–8, several American librarians were noted as being in

jobs overseas. They included John F. Harvey, who was directing the library school at the University of Tehran in Iran, and Mabel E. Willoughby, who was working at Pahlavi University, also in Iran. George Boon had just accepted a two-year position as professor of library science at the University of Delhi in India.³⁴

What do we know of librarians' motives in wanting to work abroad? American librarian Ruby Vesta Martz worked in a variety of jobs in the USA and overseas, with much of her work focused on teaching librarians and teacher-librarians. Her great interest was Africa, and she spent time in both Zambia and Tanzania before applying to work in Ethiopia. Lester Asheim, in writing a recommendation for Martz to work in Ethiopia, noted however that one problem she would face would be the 'clash of cultures' between Ethiopia and 'Black Africa', with Martz, he believed, having 'strong emotional and psychological ties with Black Africa'.³⁵ She nevertheless went on to work at Haile Selassie I University heading up the librarian-training program.³⁶

At the time of her application to work in Ethiopia, Martz was 49 years old and single with a master's degree in Library Science from the University of Illinois. From 1965 to 1968, supported by the African-American Institute, she taught at the Nkumbi International College in Kabwe, Zambia, a school for refugee students from southern Africa and Zambia. Martz described her work at Nkumbi as including working as a 'chaplainess', as she helped to organize weekly Protestant church services. She listed her interests as including 'photography, music, sewing, gardening, and especially religious work'.³⁷ In her application, Martz described her reasons for wishing to serve overseas and cited the importance of contributing to the 'development of an exciting new country'. 'I enjoy the "pioneer spirit" of a new nation, having been born in Oklahoma one generation too late to experience it there. Freedom from materialism and mechanized living has been rewarding'.³⁸ In a letter of recommendation from the African-American Institute, she was noted not just for her professional library skills but also her efforts in forging relationships with students. E. Jefferson Murphy, who wrote the recommendation, noted that Martz had 'acquired a deep love for working in Africa' and believed that she would 'make a first-class contribution in virtually any kind of library assignment she might be offered'.³⁹

Bertha Parker was a New York children's librarian who was keen to work in an African country, prompted in part by an identification, as an African American, with Africa. She noted:

My professional duties have required extremely close work with children and their parents. It is because of these experiences, and frankly, to broaden my base of experiences that I desire to go to Africa. To work in Africa would also provide me with an opportunity to learn more about the people, their culture, and my heritage, and at the same time feel that I am making a worthwhile contribution to African children and toward

building bridges of friendship and understanding between Africa and the United States.⁴⁰

One overseas job could sometimes lead to another. Thomas Bloch and his wife were both librarians who worked at the Haile Selassie I University in Addis Ababa. Bloch had also previously worked as assistant librarian at Pahlavi University in Shiraz, on an USAID contract (1965–7). They were looking for more overseas work when they wrote to the IRO in 1968. Bloch noted that they found ‘working in developing countries a stimulating and rewarding experience’. Bloch went on to have a notable career in librarianship in Latin America.

In 1968, Morris Gelfand reported on his library work in Thailand, work that reflected his particular expertise and experience. He had originally spent three months in 1962 as a Unesco expert helping to develop a diploma course at the library school at Chulalongkorn University; he had also helped to reorganize the National Library and advised the government in drawing up a plan for developing libraries and for training librarians. Gelfand had prior experience in Burma that, he argued, reminded him of the importance of approaching any overseas assignment ‘with an open mind and sensitive awareness of the attitude and social and cultural background of the Thai librarians and officials’. One of the priorities for Gelfand was to develop relationships with Thai colleagues, as well as the Thai government.⁴¹ He observed that the experience of working overseas

demonstrates the significance if not the importance of good preparation and an open-minded and sensitive attitude by the consultant; of establishing definitely at the outset of a mission clear and feasible terms of reference; of opening and maintaining effective communications not only with counterpart personnel but also with high-level officials who have policy-making and budgetary powers; of completing and distributing a draft mission report before the departure of a consultant; and of creating, if necessary and possible, an appropriate agency to study the report and advise about its possible implementation.⁴²

British and Commonwealth librarians also developed long records of overseas work, including with Unesco. British librarian Wilfred J. Plumbe, who began his career in English public libraries, helped to build up university libraries in Nigeria, Malaysia, Malawi, Guyana, and Papua New Guinea.⁴³ Plumbe believed librarianship to be ‘international – or universal – in time as well as space’.⁴⁴ He wrote and spoke extensively about international librarianship and libraries in the development of countries such as Malaysia and Nigeria; these writings were informed by his experiences in these countries. Harold Holdsworth, another British librarian, worked in South Africa, Jamaica, and Uganda, and he became librarian of the new University College in Dar es Salaam in the 1960s. He later served as librarian of the University of the

South Pacific in Fiji.⁴⁵ Mrs. H. Fischer worked in Ghana as librarian of the National Central Research Library of the National Research Council. Evelyn Evans spent three months in Liberia advising on library development.⁴⁶

A library expert who spent a significant period of time working overseas was A.G.W. (Archie) Dunningham. He was a New Zealander who worked for Unesco in Indonesia. Dunningham was attached to the Indonesian Ministry of Education from 1953 to 1955, and he used his experience of New Zealand library development (and experience from touring US libraries in 1934) to inform his work in Indonesia.⁴⁷ He worked there again from 1959 to 1963.⁴⁸ Dunningham's work included undertaking library surveys, assisting in the establishment of branches of the library association, and establishing small model libraries to assist in training librarians and to expand library services.⁴⁹ He also assisted in the creation of an Indonesian Library Board.⁵⁰ In working in Indonesia, Dunningham made serious efforts to learn and use Bahasa Indonesia and to try and understand Indonesian culture, involving himself in local cultural and social life.⁵¹ His approach to aid work was to 'advise, motivate, and instruct' rather than to actually take on the work himself, and Dunningham was later noted for the respect he showed to his Indonesian colleagues.⁵² He was, according to Lester Asheim, 'THE moving force behind almost every constructive move in librarianship in Indonesia in the past five years' and had a 'real devotion to the Indonesians and to the cause of library service'.⁵³

For some librarians, there was a concern as to whether overseas work would ultimately help or hinder their career. L.E. 'Gene' Palmieri took on a three-year assignment in Tanganyika (Tanzania) as librarian of a teacher-training project sponsored by USAID.⁵⁴ Lester Asheim warned Palmieri that if he stayed away from the USA for too long there was a danger that he would 'get so far removed from developments on the American scene that you may find it difficult to get back in when you wish to do so. American hiring authorities are often not as intelligent as they should be about the values and the pertinence of an overseas assignment to work in the United States'.⁵⁵ John Smith, who had worked in Tehran and then went to Karachi, worried about arriving back from a two-year contract at the age of 46 without a job.⁵⁶

Professionally, experiences could undoubtedly be mixed. American librarian Robert Bruce, formerly of Rutgers University Library, went to work as a library advisor at the Kabul University Library. He noted of his experiences in Afghanistan that it had been frustrating because he had not been challenged enough. He also noted that lack of funds (partly due to 'the Vietnam crisis') meant very little material could be acquired for the library. He commented that 'quite frankly [I] don't know how I can put this experience to the best use'.⁵⁷ Harry Crosby, who worked with the US Air Force, was assigned as director of studies at the Pakistan Air Force College, and one of his responsibilities was the library. On his arrival in 1960, he recognized that there was a 'lot to be done', but he believed that improved library services would have a 'liberalising and internationalizing' effect on a country that was

dominated by military figures in the leadership. He wanted to both order and expand the library collections to make them usable.⁵⁸

Some librarians became expatriates, choosing to spend much of their careers abroad rather than returning to their home countries. A number of these librarians became very influential in the library world of their adopted countries; they spent significant periods of time in particular locations, influencing the development of libraries in important ways. One such was John Harris. Harris was born in New Zealand in 1903, studied at Oxford University, and returned to New Zealand as librarian of the University of Otago from 1935. In 1948, he went to Nigeria to lead the library of the newly established University of Ibadan. Harris is often called the ‘father’ of Nigerian librarianship. His initiatives included the establishment of a university press; the creation of Nigeria Publications, a forerunner for the National Bibliography of Nigeria; helping to establish the West African Library Association, of which he was made the first president; and significant work in building up the university library. He also helped to build the library profession in West Africa, directing the Institute of Librarianship at Ibadan that was established to train librarians.⁵⁹ Harris retired in 1968 and died in 1980.

Harris noted the professional isolation he experienced when he first arrived in Africa: ‘Although the work of building up a new library proved extremely satisfying, I did feel strongly the lack of what I had got used to in my own country, professional colleagues whom I could meet at Conferences and on Committees for the discussion of common problems’.⁶⁰ For librarians like Harris, there were significant professional challenges in working in a country with limited existing professional infrastructure, and in some respects such librarians were ‘pioneers’. Librarians from Western countries encountered all sorts of challenges and practical problems, some of which they were not prepared for. Bob England was an American librarian who went to work in Kampala, Uganda. Soon after arriving there, he realized he needed a car, which he could not afford, and so he had to ask the ALA for a loan.⁶¹

H. Vail Deale, director of libraries at Pahlavi University in Shiraz, Iran, was an American librarian who reflected at length on his experience of working overseas. He felt the experience of working in Iran was ‘wonderful ... and I wouldn’t have missed it, but I expected more leisure for myself’.⁶² On his arrival, Deale found Pahlavi University ‘like a growing adolescent ... still experimenting and improvising’. While there were good people working there, he observed ‘they have much to learn about American efficiency, administrative know-how, and ways of communication. Accomplishing anything is usually a slow and painful job’.⁶³ He also expressed frustration at the ‘penny-pinching’ around library services, and he noted the drying up of funds with the closing of a USAID office. US assistance programs were increasingly ‘frustrated and discouraged’.⁶⁴ Deale came to Iran with his wife and daughter, taking up residence in an eight-room house with a garden and pool and enjoying the services of a cook-houseboy. The family (probably wife Jane) described daily life:

Each day has brought new experiences, new knowledge, and a greater appreciation of the problems of the Middle East, and especially of this fascinating, fast-developing country which is one of the few non-Arab nations of the Middle East. Modern Iran, formerly Persia, is a land of contrasts: ancient ruins and modern buildings; colourful nomadic tribes and smartly dressed men and women; bleak mountains and barren deserts in the south, and verdant forests and grasslands in the north on the Caspian border. ... The government is a benevolent dictatorship, which has made much progress in technology, sanitation, transportation and education under the present Shah.

Another American librarian who worked in Iran and reflected on her experiences was Margaret Hopkins. She had many friends in the region and returned to work there in 1965 at the Central Library of University of Tehran, supported by the Fulbright Foundation under the United States Commission for Cultural Exchange with Iran. She lived in Tehran, in a house she described as having gorgeous mountain views. She enjoyed having servants and not having to work in the kitchen, which was 'not adequate by American standards'. She forged a close community with the 'Fulbrighters' (academics there under Fulbright Foundation grants) and thought the Peace Corps people 'a terrific bunch'. It was possible for Americans in certain jobs to buy whatever one wanted from the American commissary, suggesting the benefits and advantages of being an American in a country like Iran. She and one of the Peace Corps girls had 'become real addicts to the local bazaars. We wander through their labyrinthine alleys gazing, entranced at the sights and sounds and smells of a fascinating institution of Middle East life'. She also wrote of her life in Iran:

Almost every Sunday I attend services at the American Community Church. Immediately after the early morning service, I return to my work at the University of Tehran, a Muslim institution. I have, therefore, a foot in each of two worlds. I find this experience interesting, satisfying, and rewarding. It is not an accident that the three great monotheistic religions of the world had their origin in the calm desert country of the Middle East. Here one finds peace, quiet and contentment more easily than in the frantic cities of the West.⁶⁵

American librarian John Urquidi met both personal and professional challenges while working in Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia, and his story also provides a glimpse into the sometimes extraordinary experiences of librarians abroad, as well as some of the bureaucratic difficulties of working within government and foundation-sponsored programs. In his work in Tunisia, he met with professional and institutional frustrations and challenges. Urquidi was 'loaned out' at the request of a USAID Education Officer to provide advice on the Faculty of Law library in Tunis, where Urquidi consulted to

help build up the collections. Overall, Urquidi found the project ‘most frustrating and the most uncoordinated project I have ever seen’. One of the main frustrations was USAID’s insistence that Urquidi purchase books in English, and he complained back to the ALA about the limitations this imposed on the collection being of real relevance. David Donovan replied to Urquidi that he agreed with the argument: ‘If the publications are to be of use at all, they should be in the language in which they can be read’. But the money came from USAID and therefore the books had to be of US origin.⁶⁶ Urquidi aimed to try and advise on ways to improve library service, and he recommended that young Tunisians be more exposed to modern library practices. This, he believed, would help modernize the library system as a whole. But he also commented that: ‘We have to accept the fact that we cannot impose our system on an educational system that is oriented in a different direction and will probably remain under the influence of the French university system for a decade or so’.⁶⁷

Life abroad had its personal challenges as well. During the Arab–Israeli War, Urquidi was forced to depart Algeria. In June 1967, Urquidi, who lived on Boulevard Mohamed V in Algiers, handed over his keys to the police and state security agents, and he and other Foundation employees left for Rome. He returned to Algeria in October, but his apartment was now occupied having been declared state property.⁶⁸ Urquidi asked what his insurance coverage was. While he knew he enjoyed most privileges of Ford Foundation employees, he sought clarification as to whether he had the same insurance benefits.⁶⁹ He subsequently claimed insurance on a number of goods that were lost, including sheets, towels, curtains, throw rugs, Danish glassware, an American coffee pot, a Danish stainless steel cutlery set, books, and some clothing.⁷⁰ The following year, Urquidi sustained a back injury (herniated disk) from picking up a carton of books while working at the University of Algiers library. Again, he queried the insurance situation, which was never very clear for those serving in such jobs overseas.⁷¹

In June 1969, Urquidi provided a final report to the Ford Foundation on the ‘reconstitution’ of the University of Algiers library, his primary reason for being there. The project had been initiated after the French OAS destroyed a number of Algerian national institutions after Algeria gained its independence, including the University of Algiers Library, which was burned down on June 7, 1962. Over 500,000 volumes were destroyed. Plans were made for the reconstruction of the library. A worldwide appeal was made to help rebuild the collection, and a request for aid was made to the Ford Foundation. A grant of \$132,500 was given. The IRO used the money to recruit a librarian for a period of two years and administered the grant. Commencement of the project was postponed until 1967. The grant supported the purchase of books and other library materials, as well as the services of a professional librarian. Urquidi listed some of the objectives that had been achieved during his time there: These included the acquisition of 5,000 titles and over 200 serial and periodical subscriptions; the building up of a basic reference collection (most

volumes in French); the compilation of a union list of all scientific periodical and serials compiled; and the setting up of an efficient ordering system.⁷²

Urquidi noted what a terrible state the building had been in when he arrived. Problems in the library were compounded by the lack of ‘competent personnel’. Algerians had generally been excluded under French rule and only allowed to perform menial tasks, leaving few qualified to run the library. He didn’t get on well professionally with the head librarian, although he got on well with her socially: ‘As one of the few women executives in a male oriented society, the Librarian was unusually sensitive to any actions which could be construed as a usurpation of her prerogatives or authority’. She also saw Urquidi as a threat to her position.⁷³

Urquidi reported that the new library building was modern, light, and airy. The reading rooms, which could accommodate 500, were largely occupied. The book collection was significantly updated and increased. He believed the main objective of the grant had therefore been accomplished – the library had been rehabilitated. One thing that had not been done, however, was the modernization of the classification system. Urquidi concluded that his work had been ‘an extraordinary experience. I identified deeply with the Algerians and I truly regret leaving. There is a personal satisfaction in knowing a mission has been accomplished relatively successful’.⁷⁴

A year later Urquidi reported that he was returning to international librarianship as a library consultant in Southeast Asia, working for the Asia Foundation and doing similar work to what he did in North Africa. Writing to David Donovan, he reported that he still heard regularly from the Tunisian librarians he had helped and noted that he thought ‘people were rather appreciative of what we tried to do and I venture to say we were successful’.⁷⁵

Racism was common in expatriate and settler communities, although Lester Asheim noted that Ghana and Nigeria in the 1960s was a ‘a century ahead on multi-racial equality’ compared to the segregation that existed in countries such as South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).⁷⁶ Life in developing countries nevertheless could lead to expatriates adopting a type of colonial lifestyle. Sometimes it could lead to behaviors that they might not have engaged in otherwise. For example, it was not uncommon for British librarians to form relationships with local women, few of which resulted in marriage.

R.C. Benge admitted to his own questionable behavior in his 1984 memoir, *Confessions of a Lapsed Librarian*. Benge, a working-class librarian, served in the British Army during the Second World War. He also held left-wing political views.⁷⁷ Through his political involvement, he became aware of what he termed ‘Third World problems’.⁷⁸ He subsequently went to Trinidad to work for the British Council, and then to Ghana to assist in the setting up of the Ghana Library School. He noted how there was still a ‘semi-colonial ambience’ there.⁷⁹ In 1967, Benge returned to Britain, working in Wales, but returned to Africa to work in Nigeria. Of Africa, he writes that the initial attraction of going to Ghana was because those who went thought that they

'could help Nkrumah in building his African socialism'.⁸⁰ He observed that many who wound up there (including Americans avoiding the draft) were a 'peculiar fringe representative of the typical cultural movements of the sixties'. (However, Benge also noted that radicals from the USA in Africa were generally regarded as agents of the CIA.) These people objected to the University of Ghana aspiring to be like Oxford or Cambridge, seeking a more 'authentic' African intellectual culture. They saw themselves as 'members of an avant garde', but there was little African support for their view.⁸¹ Benge admitted that he found that it was 'very difficult to understand Africa'. He believed that 'native minds [were] thoroughly colonized', and this made it difficult for 'modern liberal-minded foreigners with egalitarian attitudes'.⁸²

Benge went on to describe his own complicity in what he openly called 'sexual imperialism'. He entered relationships with numerous African women and increasingly came to believe that he found it impossible to consider a relationship with a white woman again. His attraction to African women was, he admitted, 'part of my wish to stay there'.⁸³ Benge also admitted that many white men in Africa exploited young girls. His own behavior included a tendency to invite what he described as 'fallen women' to his house. One of these women, Marie, a Fulani girl, ran the others off. He admitted Marie was not her real name, and he neither knew her real name nor how old she was. 'I later discovered that she was very much younger than I imagined'.⁸⁴ He describes his sexual experiences with Marie in some detail, something deeply uncomfortable to read. Benge's frank and disturbing tales of his time in Africa remind us that expatriates and visitors from Britain or the USA were not all high-minded in their intentions; indeed, the exploitation revealed in Benge's story was probably not unique.

Many of these stories of British and American librarians abroad remind us of the privilege that they mostly enjoyed, despite some hardships. Most were only visiting and would return home. While overseas, they enjoyed privileges that residents of the countries did not have, and their complaints about facilities and services (both at work and at home) were realities that residents of these countries lived with on an ongoing basis. Benge's tales of exploiting African women are the most confronting evidence of the exploitation that development and aid work sometimes resulted in, but was probably not exceptional.

By the end of the 1960s, it was becoming harder for American (or British) librarians to secure work overseas, as many countries understandably sought to ensure that they employed their own citizens.⁸⁵ Those Americans with some language skills, especially Southeast Asian languages, were likely to have more success with gaining employment abroad.⁸⁶ US agencies, such as the USIA, were increasingly less concerned with hiring professional librarians due to an increased focus on other forms of communication, and a general paring back and reduction in budget of their activity.

Not all the traffic went one way, and many librarians from developing nations sought employment in American and British libraries, although their

stories are harder to trace. Many librarians from overseas sought work in the USA and frequently wrote to the IRO requesting work, although not many secured employment. What were their reasons for wanting to work in the USA? Muhammad Abdurrahim wrote that he sought to

know how American libraries work. To impart this knowledge to those who are eagerly awaiting to have it with a view to improve their library services and to expand them to meet the growing needs of ever increasing literate population. To provide and strengthen leadership in library organisations. To establish a liaison between the American and Indian librarians through personal contact. To create goodwill and understanding through the media of mutual co-operation.⁸⁷

Librarians from developing countries also gained much through work experience overseas. We have already seen the opportunities afforded by training and visits. Librarians also benefited from longer periods of work experience. In 1967, José J. Ferrer, a Filipino librarian, spent two years in the United States working in both the New York and California Public Library systems. He headed up the Delano branch Library in California, drawn to the area by its similarities in environment to the Philippines.⁸⁸ During his time in the New York system, he worked in various branch libraries, including Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island. The skills he developed in the USA would be used to 'help to extend and improve Philippine library service'.⁸⁹

Librarians and the Peace Corps

The Peace Corps was an initiative of the 1960s that reflected both a people-to-people approach to US involvement overseas, as well as a focus on modernization and development. It was created by the Kennedy administration in 1961 as an independent agency. The idea of the Corps appealed to many, especially young people who wanted to assist the people of other countries. The Peace Corps spoke of idealism and optimism and reflected a desire to help other countries become modern nations, but as Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman has observed, its 'primary contribution to nation building ... was to the United States itself, by confirming its values and sense of mission as the world's first democratic country'.⁹⁰ The Peace Corps recruited volunteers to go abroad and work on projects that could assist developing nations, for example, as teachers. Its numbers declined after 1966, with both cuts to the program under Nixon, as well as the idealism of the Corps being increasingly challenged by the Vietnam War.⁹¹

The IRO saw an opportunity in developing a relationship with the Peace Corps. A subcommittee aimed to raise awareness within the ALA as to the work of the Peace Corps and also argued for better representation of the profession in Washington.⁹² The ALA were enlisted as consultants with the Peace Corps in 1962, providing advice on book and library matters.⁹³ But the ALA

quickly became concerned about the role of library work within the Peace Corps. In 1963, Lester Asheim wrote to Robert Miller, of the library school at the University of North Carolina, expressing his opinion of Peace Corps volunteers. He thought that the participation of librarians in Peace Corps work had 'bugs in it of two different kinds'. Firstly, there was the problem of the nonprofessional being recruited to do professional library work; the second problem was that of well-trained professionals being sent to countries where they 'are expected to do simple minded housekeeping chores under the direction of someone who knows less about librarianship than they do'. There was also the risk that they focused too much on creating sophisticated collections at the expense of addressing real problems.⁹⁴ That same year, Edwin Castegna recommended to the Peace Corps that they appoint a library coordinator. He cited recent 'misassignments of skilled librarians, frustrating and probably damaging incidents involving the use of inadequately trained people, completely unable to cope with their assignments ... and the unrealistic attempts to recruit librarians and to establish library service without proper thought and preparation – these have all been painful to us [the ALA]'.⁹⁵

The ALA believed in the Peace Corps and its potential, so they wanted to continue to act as consultants.⁹⁶ The Peace Corps indicated that they wanted ALA support and also wanted the ALA to help promote the work that the Peace Corps was undertaking.⁹⁷ Yet clearly there were problems, some of which went to the issue of members of a profession working in roles that were designed for volunteers with limited background in the work.

Peace Corps librarians played a small but important role in international librarianship in this period. In Malaysia, for example, Peace Corps librarians taught library courses to teachers.⁹⁸ What was the experience of Peace Corps librarians? In 1962, Jean Ellickson published an article in the *Wilson Library Bulletin* about her experience of being a librarian in the Peace Corps in East Pakistan. She described how the Peace Corps group received training, including in Bengali, and were lectured about aspects of East Pakistan, as well as the problems of adapting to a foreign culture. They spent the first month of their time in East Pakistan living with a local family while undertaking more training. Ellickson's primary role was to try and extend library services into villages. She noted the difficulties of there being a lack of books in Bengali, as well as an absence of a reading habit among the villagers. She was also assigned the task of producing some basic books for newly literate readers. She concluded: 'We have grown very fond of the village people of Pakistan in a very short time and hope that we can do something in return for them'.⁹⁹

But generally librarians did not seem to adjust well to working within the Peace Corps structure. Asheim observed in 1964 that

I don't know why librarians seem to be less able to adjust to the needs of the Peace Corps than other groups; certainly the necessity to do some cataloging should not be considered too great a hardship, when you

consider what Peace Corps volunteers in other fields are required to do. Yet I constantly hear of librarians who throw up the job or require a transfer because they can't stand some frustrations and standard difficulties. I am sure some of the fault lies with the Peace Corps administration itself, but I am afraid that a lot of it lies with us – the librarians.⁹⁹

His comments suggest a certain inflexibility of approach on the part of professional librarians, perhaps, as well as a frustration with the job. In observing that one of two Peace Corps librarians had defected after a couple of months on the job due to doing nothing other than cataloging, he wrote, '[a]nother fine record for librarians in the Peace Corps'.¹⁰⁰

There is no statistical evidence for exactly how many librarians worked as Peace Corps volunteers in this period. The ALA tried to find out in 1965 how many recent library school graduates had enlisted in the Corps. Some schools responded to say that they knew of a few. The University of California (Los Angeles) library school wrote back to say that four of their graduates had entered the Peace Corps: one had gone to Malaysia, one to Jamaica, one was in the Peace Corps Training Service, and one was working with VISTA (a domestic program).¹⁰¹ The library school from the University of Minnesota reported that one of their graduates, Lorelei Sinclair, had served as a reference and catalog librarian at the Federal Advanced Teachers College in Yaba, Nigeria, as a Peace Corps volunteers. Three others had joined the Corps before graduating, including: Esther Leddin Fisher, who taught English and had helped set up a library at Bangphra Agricultural College in Thailand; Mary Lou Horak, who had gone to Malaysia; and Fay Quanbeck, who went to work with the Jamaican Library Service.¹⁰²

What were some of the effects of all this travel, interaction, and exchange? There are a number of impacts that this chapter has tried to uncover. One is that international experience could help bring new knowledge and perspectives to existing problems. Second, while we shouldn't assume that all international experience was necessarily 'enlightening' for those who had it, it often helped broaden perspectives. But we also saw the way in which some librarians, especially those who became expatriates (or lived abroad for a number of years), sometimes exploited the opportunity and took with them prejudices and assumptions.

Some librarians found it difficult to cope with the conditions of another country, and Raynard Swank of the ALA warned a librarian heading off on a two-year contract in Karachi to expect that his work would be 'long range; it moves little by little, but it is cumulative and the ultimate stakes are high indeed'.¹⁰³ The experience of being overseas could broaden the mind or reinforce prejudices. Undoubtedly many librarians experienced culture shock and a lack of comprehension of the complexities of life and politics in the countries they found themselves in. For Lester Asheim, for example, student protests and violence in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1964 made no sense;

comparing it to civil rights unrest in the USA, which he felt he understood, he observed that he ‘plain don’t know what they are striving for in Pakistan’.¹⁰⁴ (It was in fact probably linked to the sectarian violence of that year.) In addition, librarians from abroad did not always improve the situation. In the case of John Harris, while he was an influential librarian and certainly helped to build services in Nigeria, he was also described (albeit by an American) as conservative and a snob. He disliked American reading material and so preferred not to stock American periodicals in the library collections he was responsible for.¹⁰⁵

Library exchange and diplomacy could also have some benefits that went both ways. The presence of international librarians in a country could help to broaden the perspectives of local libraries and their communities, including in the USA and Britain. Visiting librarians and librarians on exchange could help in this through such activities such as ‘unofficial participation ... in local and national organizations promoting international understanding’.¹⁰⁶ In addition, visiting librarians were sometimes interviewed on radio and in local newspapers. All of this helped in making the world a smaller place and helped in the imagining of the world as being ‘one world’ rather than a world made up of differences. This echoed the liberal spirit of the 1950s and 1960s that flowed through a lot of international library work, even as such work was shaped by many different forces, prejudices, and assumptions.

Notes

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Conclusion

In 1981, Adolphe O. Amadi, a Nigerian scholar, published a book on the topic of African libraries. Its subtitle was ‘Western Tradition and Colonial Brainwashing’. Amadi argued in this book that the typical library in Africa, based on Western models, was a tool of continuing colonialism. There was a need, he declared, to find a model of librarianship more appropriate for Africans – one that recognized, for example, the centrality of oral tradition.¹ He concluded his book with the comment:

Any worthwhile efforts toward definitive solution must primarily involve Africans themselves. But as long as the impetus for action, tools, and other resources emanate from sources outside of Africa, the tears, weeping, and gnashing of teeth by the concerned outsiders will not only drown the bereaved themselves, but will drown the very owners of the corpse as well.²

Amadi’s critical words remind us that library internationalism was not always (or often) viewed with favor by those who were on the receiving end of library development work. Indeed, for many in developing nations, libraries were viewed as nothing less than instruments of Western imperialism.

The library struggled to establish itself in a number of countries, particularly in some countries of Africa, despite all the work described through this book. In part, this was due to the library being seen as a legacy of colonialism, if not as an outright means of continuing cultural imperialism. This attitude continued: In 1991, Amusi Odi wrote that the library was still an institution viewed with suspicion in sub-Saharan Africa, and the book regarded as ‘the primary instrument of Western colonialism’.³

Nevertheless, libraries, despite their cultural baggage, were important in the development of education and information infrastructure for many nations at a critical period in world history. While acknowledging the problems that library development work might have had – especially in their assumptions about the typical reader of the developing world and in the imposition of aid and ideas from outside – it is important to acknowledge that many in the developing nations still embraced the fundamental value of education

and information and often used Western aid as a means to an end. Current African librarianship acknowledges the value of libraries, while prioritizing the protection of local languages and preservation of indigenous knowledge.⁴ Readers, too, often embraced the library on their own terms, using the texts contained within them for whatever purposes suited them regardless of the intention of those who created and curated the collections.

Connecting people to books and information was a key issue in the post-Second World War world, a world in which education was seen as the primary way for nations (and citizens) to progress and to participate actively in their communities. Library globalization was seen as necessary to achieve this connection of people and knowledge. Building libraries, training librarians (and training them in common methods and techniques), and creating collections were all ways to achieve this globalization of the library. Yet this work was not without its own biases and conflicts – not least the tensions between the USA and Britain as to which books and which library methods should prevail. That sometimes neither model (nor books from either nation) was reflective of local needs and desires was only occasionally acknowledged.

For librarians from the USA and Britain, library internationalism reflected a cosmopolitan liberal progressivism that marked the 1950s and 1960s. Despite many undercurrents that challenged this, this period was one of consensus, insofar as there was a belief that people were (becoming) more like one another, that societies were becoming more modern, and that there was a shared ‘one world’ of culture and ideas. Libraries were seen as a means of bringing people together to share common ideals; in so doing, there was a chance to achieve a more harmonious world. Librarians articulated an ideal of a world united by books and information, one that was becoming modern, and one that allowed for the full realization of individual achievement. Taking the infrastructure of libraries and librarianship to the globe was a way of helping put these ideals into practice.

Did they achieve this? The answer is ‘to an extent’. While library services developed in many places, it was very slow progress, and often the impetus had to come from within (at least in part) rather than from without. With many competing priorities and demands (especially in countries suffering economic disadvantage and political conflict), libraries were often not adequately supported for a long time. The 1970s in particular was a period of economic and political difficulties that set back international progress in development.

Where library services were or are created, they are not inherently the creators of better or more harmonious communities. But they provide opportunities. Acknowledging what might be lost through the imposition of models of education and cultural products from outside, it is still important to recognize how valuable education and libraries can be for a community. And for many countries in this period, library services could and did make a difference. In addition, progress was made to create a global profession and to use librarianship as a means to forge friendships and relationships across

national boundaries. Librarians participated in a cultural diplomacy that, while inflected with the attitudes and assumptions of Western nations in the mid-century decades, nevertheless had an effect in changing attitudes and creating cultural awareness.

The story of library internationalism, then, is one of contradictions, as this book has tried to demonstrate. On the one hand, librarians worked together to develop library services and to create a global profession; they were inspired by a desire to further the cause of world peace, forge international relationships, and to help developing nations. On the other, this work – as practiced in the 1950s and 1960s – was also fraught because of the complex context in which it took place. Believing the Anglo-American model the ideal, library internationalism was as much ‘library imperialism’ as it was ‘library diplomacy’. It sometimes reflected foreign policy aims; it sometimes reflected individual desires, and it sometimes functioned as a form of colonialism and an exercise in power.

Many more stories remain to be told about library internationalism and international library development work, especially as practiced through the twentieth century. These stories can help us critically reflect on all sorts of important issues, from the way aid and development is practiced to how access to information and information infrastructure is constructed. This book has aimed to be one small contribution to this important aspect of library history.

Notes

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- 2 Ibid., 244.
- 3 Amusi Odi, ‘The Colonial Origins of Library Development in Africa: Some Reflections on Their Significance’, *Libraries and Culture* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 600.
- 4 Archie L. Dick, ‘African Librarianship Rising!’, *Information Development* 29, no. 4 (2013): 291.

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