

LS 378, Spring 1959
Term Paper
Hazelle Nelson

THE ACQUISITION OF FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS
THROUGH THE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

State Dept. declassification & release instructions on file

THE ACQUISITION OF FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS
THROUGH THE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

It is a well-known fact that, at the outbreak of World War II, this country was largely innocent and ignorant of a large share of the lands and peoples of the world. Suddenly the United States found itself in a war being waged on the continents of Europe, Africa and Asia and on the still more remote islands of the South Pacific. It was immediately vital that our decision-makers have detailed information concerning the social, political, economic, geographic, linguistic and military aspects of many of these areas. A canvass of the resources of American libraries revealed serious gaps in both depth and breadth of subject area holdings required by our government for the prosecution of the war. Emergency action was necessary to close these gaps. The steps taken proved effective. Out of the acquisitions policies and machinery set up to meet an emergency situation grew the present programs for the acquisition of research materials of foreign origin by the Department of State for the three National Libraries and the libraries of other Federal Agencies. Present programs are characterized by coordination

among the participating libraries and centralization of action in the Department of State for the purpose of taking care of those problem areas of foreign publications procurement left unsolved by even the most sophisticated use of traditional methods of library acquisitions. The conception and implementation of this coordinated and centralized activity evolved so naturally from the emergency war-time effort that any presentation of the present must review this activity from the beginning. The Library of Congress, the Department of State, the Armed Services and other Federal agencies faced the same problems. Subject area lacks needed to be determined. There were limitations of time, money, man-power, a decreased publishing activity abroad and the complete closing off of access to some of the major publishing centers. Within these limitations government acquisitions personnel had to establish relative priorities among their subject needs. Various agencies had varying needs, but they now had a common goal, that of the successful prosecution of the war. The fact that certain of the agencies would have precedence over others in the receiving of materials in some categories had to be recognized and respected. To formulate an appropriate acquisitions policy, achieve mutual agreement on subject area priorities, to solve questions of precedence, and to determine acquisitions channels promising

the surest and most expeditious receipt of the needed publications, there was wisely created the Interdepartmental Committee on Foreign Acquisitions. This committee was chaired by the Chief of what was then called the Intelligence Acquisition and Distribution Division of the Department of State. Its membership included representatives from those Federal agencies predominantly concerned.

Both the Library of Congress and the Department of State took action within the framework of their own organizations. The Library of Congress acted by sending out foreign representatives to search and acquire through exchange or purchase. One of these, Mr. Manuel Sanchez, was a member of the Library's own staff. He spent from April, 1943, to May, 1945, in Spain, Portugal, Algeria, Italy and France. The Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 1945, describes in considerable detail this highly successful mission. It is lively reading. Besides, if you remove the bombings, the work by flashlight, the purely war-time coloration, you get a very good picture of the job of the present-day Publications Officer. Though officially a Foreign Representative of the Library of Congress Mr. Sanchez also gathered needed materials and information for the Armed Services and other government agencies. The Department of State, in June, 1943, sent to all its

diplomatic posts located throughout the world, instructions regarding the procurement of publications, emphasizing the role of book materials in the conduct of the war and requesting each chief of mission to appoint an officer to report regularly on the availability of publications from his area. A follow-up instruction was issued in 1944 re-emphasizing the importance of publications. As availability was reported more and more titles were selected and ordered. The Interdepartmental Committee on Foreign Acquisitions had, through the Department, to the foreign service posts, a sure and expeditious purchase channel for the implementing of its acquisitions policy. No small part of the Committee's responsibility lay in the establishment of precedence among the various libraries when titles were received in insufficient number of copies to meet needs. To insure adequate coverage the Committee arranged for the routine microfilming of such items. A partial measure of the activities of the Committee and of the collection work of the Department may be seen in a Library of Congress report of receipts during the last days of the war. In Fiscal year 1945 the Library of Congress received through this channel 145,079 journals and books and 2,854 reels of microfilm.¹ For the

¹ Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1945 (Washington, 1945), p. 28.

Library of Congress alone, the Department expended in this year funds totalling \$33,574.² Of this acquisitions activity on the part of the Department of State the Librarian of Congress said, "The full meaning of the cooperation provided by the Department could be disclosed only by the comparison of the contents of the Library's shelves with those of less fortunate institutions. The scholars of tomorrow will have good reason to remember the debt owed to the Department of State for its part in acquiring for us the intellectual record of the war."³ It can be seen from the foregoing that, by the end of World War II, a coordinated inter-agency foreign publications procurement program centralized in the Department of State had become a working reality.

When the war was over and the necessity for cooperation to reach a common goal no longer existed there might have been a return to the pre-war status quo with each agency and library again attempting to be self-sufficient in the meeting of its foreign publications acquisitions problems. Thanks to commendable foresight on the part of members of the staffs of both the Library of Congress and the Department of State, this did not happen. While it was realized

² Ibid., p. 26.

³ Loc. cit.

that, with the stabilizing of publishing around the world, the various Federal libraries would resume reliance on the traditional channels of acquisitions to the fullest extent possible, it was also realized that there would be a continuing need for a considerable use of supplementary channels of foreign publications acquisition if the Federal libraries were to have anything like full coverage of the requisite research materials. With the exception of the Library of Congress, the collections of Federal libraries are more akin to those of "special" or "technical" libraries. The need is extensive for directories of all types, for economic and commercial guide books, for the publications of private institutions and societies. Also, it is vital that information sources be current for use in meeting current operational problems. Those Federal agencies relying heavily on foreign source material need coverage from remote areas of the world where bibliographic reporting is meagre or non-existent. Most require materials from the U.S.S.R. and the Soviet Bloc countries. Pre-war acquisitions practices had proved inadequate for these special needs. It is true that, occasionally, an agency had the services of a travelling agent, but such service was too sporadic to be any solution. Consequently in vital areas of need, materials often were identified late, if ever, and might be received only after a lapse of months

of time. The use made during the war of the Department of State channels had revealed a machinery for the solution of these special problems. The Department of State's own library has always been in a position to supplement the usual channels of library acquisitions by reliance on this machinery of the foreign service. For non-book-trade publications and for those covering areas where publishing is undeveloped they have had the world-wide disposition of foreign service posts to contact for bibliographic information and to depend upon for last-resort procurement action. It is interesting to note here that a recent check of their holdings against the Union Catalog revealed that 35% of their titles do not appear there.⁴ This is not just evidence of the unusually wide scope of their publications requirements; it is also evidence of the effectiveness of the foreign service posts as supplemental sources of materials not easily available thru the usual channels of library acquisitions. It was this very proved potential which the staffs of the Department of State and the Library of Congress felt should be continuously available to other Federal libraries.

With the idea of strengthening and perpetuating these services the Division of Research and Publications of the Department of State recommended that the Department assume

⁴Mr. Fred Shipman, Director, Library Division, Department of State.

a larger responsibility in aiding other agencies of the Federal government. This recommendation was accepted. A plan was worked out to assign full-time Publications Procurement Officers⁵ to publishing centers abroad. It was determined further that these officers would be fluent in the language of the area to which accredited, and be area specialists as well as competent bookmen. Their job would be: (1) to develop and maintain comprehensive bibliographic information sources including directories, economic and commercial guides and the publications of private institutions and societies; (2) to procure publications through purchase, gift, and exchange. The first full-time Publications Procurement Officer was sent to the field in the spring of 1945. In the meantime, the Library of Congress, realizing that the post-war demands upon its resources were going to be broader in scope than ever before, had established resident Foreign Representatives. The Library lent further support to the Department's program by releasing for assignment to the foreign service its representatives in Paris and Rio de Janeiro to become two of the first four full-time PPO's. The Paris representative was none other than the capable, energetic and experienced Mr. Sanchez. By

⁵This title has recently been changed to "Publications Officer," and what was formerly referred to as the PPO Program is now the PO Program.

the end of 1945 there were Publications Procurement Officers in London, Paris, Berlin and Rio. The Department of State had gained a good idea of the scope of such a program through the work of the Interdepartmental Committee on Foreign Acquisitions. Such an activity, they realized, should be backed by a well-coordinated acquisitions policy. The Library of Congress was asked to explore the idea of a means of insuring a continuity of acquisitions policy among the interested agencies. Informal discussions were held with the result that the Librarian of Congress requested that the Secretary of State set up a permanent interdepartmental committee. This request was granted. Such a committee was created and continues to meet regularly. With the passage of the Foreign Service Act of 1946 the obligation of the State Department to aid other Federal agencies became law. Section 311, Part B, states, "Officers shall as prescribed by the President, perform duties and functions in behalf of any government agency or any other establishment of the government requiring their services including those in the legislative and judicial branches." This simple statement of law constitutes the basis for the programs for the acquisitions of research materials of foreign origin within the Department of State and for the benefit of other Federal libraries.

The original planning for full-time Publications

Procurement Officers envisioned a complement of 35 to 40.⁶ But this ideal, due to continuing budgetary limitations, remains the Federal librarian's dream. The table below shows the ups and downs of field coverage in the years since 1945. The number of full-time posts at least has doubled, and with Moscow newly-made a two-man post, the number of full-time officers has increased from four to nine. That it not only has survived threats of curtailment from lack of sufficient appropriated funds, but has managed growth, is undoubtedly due to the staunch pleas on the part of participating libraries attesting to the efficacy and importance of the program.

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLICATION OFFICERS⁷

| <u>Full-Time Posts</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--|--------------|
| 1945 - London, Paris, Berlin and Rio | 4 |
| 1946 - Madrid, Moscow and Rome | 7 |
| 1947 - Cairo | 8 |
| 1948 - Rio discontinued | 7 |
| 1950 - New Delhi replaced Cairo | 7 |
| 1952 - Hong Kong, Tokyo | 9 |
| 1953 - Madrid, London, Rome discontinued | 6 |
| 1955 - London reopened | 7 |
| 1957 - Cairo reopened | 8 |
| 1958 - Moscow becomes 2-man PO post | 9 |

⁶ Richard A. Humphrey, "Procurement of Foreign Research Material," Department of State Bulletin, XIV, No. 341 (Jan. 6-13, 1946), 24.

⁷ Chief, Foreign Procurement Branch, ICD.

Presently, then, the full-time posts comprise Paris, London, Berlin, Moscow, Tokyo, Hong Kong, New Delhi, and Cairo. Coverage is still lacking from important areas, noticeably from Southeast Asia and Latin America. All concerned have hopes for extended coverage in the not too far distant future. The unique and most valuable service of the full-time PO is that of selection. The full exploitation of the publications resources of his area and the on-the-spot selection and procurement for the Federal libraries he represents saves many acquisitions man-hours and contributes to the fullest possible enrichment of their collections. This selection function is the very heart of the PO program. To extend this beyond the limits of eight areas, part-time Publications Officers have been designated from the regular staffs of various others of the remaining diplomatic posts located throughout the world.

The following table shows, by the sharp increase in the number of these part-time Publications Officers, the value placed upon the selection function.

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLICATIONS OFFICERS⁸

Part-Time Posts

1945/1946 - 0

1947/1948 - 1

1949 - 2

1

3

(ctd.)

⁸Loc. cit.

| | |
|-----------|----|
| 1950 - 3 | 6 |
| 1952 - 11 | 17 |
| 1953 - 3 | 20 |
| 1954 - 3 | 23 |
| 1955 - 2 | 25 |
| 1956 - 2 | 27 |
| 1957 - 2 | 29 |
| 1958 - 42 | 71 |
| 1959 - 4 | 75 |

An indication of essential elements in the modus operandi of the PO program follows:

Administration: Overall plans and policy rest with the Chief, Division of Intelligence, Collection and Distribution. Responsibility for implementing the program rests with the Chief, Foreign Procurement Branch, ICD.

Funds: Participating agencies and libraries have made funds available to the Department of State in various ways, on a transfer basis, on a reimburseable basis with quarterly billing, or, in instances of limited participation, on a reimburseable basis with billing for each shipment. The methods used have proved adaptable to the varying fiscal procedures among the participating agencies. Each participant determines the amount he wants allotted to

the full-time posts (and to appropriate part-time ones) as blanket funds to be used at the discretion of the Publications Officers for selections. An unallocated balance is kept to cover cost of purchases made in response to specific orders directed to the non-PO posts. PO posts periodically report on the status of funds. Foreign Procurement Branch maintains records of overall fund status for each participant.

Operations: Guidance is provided the selection officers through: (1) collection guides prepared within each agency or library; (2) oral briefings of newly appointed PO's and of existing ones home on leave; (3) supplementary written instructions and selection evaluations sent them from time to time. All collection guides, instructions, and specific orders conform to standard Department of State formats and pass through the geographic area coordinators of the Foreign Procurement Branch for forwarding to the field via the Department's established channels of communication. The area coordinators form an important link in the acquisitions chain. In addition to the usual acquisitions procedural responsibilities their job includes aid to the participating libraries: (1) by arranging for filming of important titles received in insufficient

number of copies to supply all requestors; (2) by alerting acquisitions librarians concerning the availability of publications of possible interest; (3) by the selecting and forwarding of bibliographic information, sample copies and other materials sent in gratis from the field; (4) and through their capability and readiness at all times to advise on foreign procurement problems relative to their special areas. Their coordination work effects many economies. The outstanding example is, perhaps, the annual composite single order to the Moscow Publications Officer incorporating the purchased newspaper and periodical needs of a number of the Washington Federal libraries.

The PO Program, in providing a channel supplementary to those normally employed in library acquisitions, has enabled our Federal libraries to broaden and enrich their collections of research materials of foreign origin, materials vitally needed by our government.

There are two additional collection programs centralized in the Department of State which serve greatly to enrich the holdings of other Federal libraries and agencies. These are the Inter-Agency Map Procurement program and the Comprehensive Economic Reporting Program (CERP). Both are next operations as they each deal with a single area of publications. The

Inter-Agency Map Procurement Committee is chaired by the Department of State and membership comprises representatives from those Federal libraries concerned with the procurement of foreign maps. The monthly meetings provide opportunity for the exchange of ideas on foreign map procurement problems, and for briefings by the Department concerning current and projected plans for collection operations in the field, and, occasionally, for briefings by returned geographic attachés. Funds are transferred to a Department of State Central Fund; participants define their requirements; the Department consolidates these for each geographic area and forwards the composite requirement to the appropriate geographic attaché; procurement is effected through exchange arrangements with the mapping agencies of other governments or by purchase. All materials come into a central receiving point from which they are distributed in accordance with registered agency requirements. Once an Agency library has determined its acquisitions policy and can define its wants it can complete its procurement action for a goodly share of the materials received simply by checking a pre-printed form which lists many types and scales of maps, areas and countries of the world and types of related publications such as atlases, gazetteers, bibliographies, railway guides, etc. It would be difficult for the individual participating agencies to cite an instance

matching this one for magnitude of return in relation to a minimal expenditure of acquisitions man-hours. The Map Division of the Library of Congress and the Army Map Service rely heavily upon this activity in building their collections of foreign geographic materials.

The Comprehensive Economic Reporting Program is not an acquisitions program at all, but because its normal functioning results in the receipt in Washington of a quarter of a million pieces a year of published foreign economic literature, it is appropriately included. This program was authorized by Executive Order 10249 dated June 4, 1951, and got under way in the field in late 1952 and early 1953. It is under the direction of the Foreign Reporting Staff. Economic Reporting Officers in designated areas throughout the world (the Soviet Bloc countries are excluded) are required under the program to forward analytical and statistical economic reports. "Economic" is interpreted broadly to include health, education, and welfare. In many countries government departments and private institutions publish just such reports, most of them as serials. Whenever an existing publication meets the economic reporting requirement it is provided in lieu of a specially written report. As in the case of the PO and IAMFC programs, this one too is operated so as to aid other Federal agencies and libraries. From the

lists of available publications sent in from the field a requirement is established for each title selected based on the expressed interests of the various agencies. Composite requirements go to the appropriate Economic Reporting Officers and the publications are then procured in the quantities requested either through exchange or purchase. A complete distribution list of titles selected is deposited with the central receiving point in the Department of State. Here the publications are checked in and disseminated. No fund transfers are involved as the cost of this program is entirely chargeable to field operations. The Department of Commerce is, of course, a large consumer of this material. American business men and special and private libraries which depend upon the Department of Commerce for foreign economic reporting and information services are benefitting from this large annual inflow of foreign economic publications.⁹

Supplemental acquisition channels such as described here would be attractive to private research libraries. A few societies and institutions working in close association with the Federal government do participate in the PO Program. Examples are the National Science Foundation, The American Chemical Society, Biological Abstracts, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Under present

⁹Source for this paragraph - Washington CERP staff.

regulations and prevailing serious under-staffing it is impossible for the Department of State to extend its aid beyond present confines.

There is in the offing an interesting possibility of extension of similar aid to private research libraries under the provisions of Public Law No. 480, 83d Congress, 2d Session, known as the "Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954." Under this Act surplus agricultural commodities have been sold abroad for foreign currencies. These foreign currencies are to be expended in the areas where they accrue. The purposes for which these funds may be used are spelled out in the law. Public Law No. 85-931, 85th Congress (September 6, 1958) extends and amends the basic law. Paragraph "n" extends Section 104 to allow: "For financing under the direction of the Librarian of Congress, in consultation with the National Science Foundation and other interested agencies, in such amounts as may be specified from time to time in appropriation acts, (1) programs outside the United States for the analysis and evaluation of foreign books, periodicals, and other materials to determine whether they would provide information of technical or scientific significance in the United States and whether such books, periodicals, and other materials are of cultural or educational significance; (2) the registry, indexing, binding, reproduction,

cataloging, abstracting, translating, and dissemination of books, periodicals, and related materials determined to have such significance; and (3) the acquisition of such books, periodicals, and other materials and the deposit thereof in libraries and research centers in the United States specializing in the areas to which they relate."

Undoubtedly private research libraries over the country envisioned themselves as the almost immediate recipients of valuable research materials in their areas of concern. However, Public Law 85-931 merely "allows for." No such bibliographic and acquisitions centers can be established unless proposed plans and budget estimates are approved by the Bureau of the Budget and are subsequently supported by specific Congressional appropriations. Immediately upon passage of PL 85-931 The Library of Congress called a meeting which took place on October 1, 1958. It was attended by representatives from selected Federal agencies, the American Council of Learned Societies, The Social Science Research Council and the Association of Research Libraries. ALA has been asked also to designate a representative. Later that same month plans and budget estimates for projects under paragraph "n" for the balance of Fiscal Year 1959 and

Fiscal Year 1960 were submitted to the Bureau of the Budget. Apparently no final action was taken, because, in March, 1959, the Bureau requested submission by April 10 of a re-evaluation of the program. The Library of Congress submitted the re-evaluation and so far as is publicly known, this is where the matter stands.¹⁰ Should favorable action by the Bureau and by Congress be forthcoming, we could see set up this year, bibliographic and acquisitions centers in such possible areas as South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, administered directly by Library of Congress personnel or under contract with a local library or learned society. The Department of State, through its responsibility for U. S. personnel and missions abroad, would serve in an advisory capacity and have overall cognizance of operations. The Library and the State Department have long shared the task of enriching the collections of our research libraries. This new program would further these cooperative efforts and result in extension to private libraries of such aid as the three National Libraries and those of other Federal agencies now receive through the generous assistance of the Department of State.

¹⁰ Mr. Lewis Coffin, Deputy Chief, Processing Department, LC.