

# International Cooperation to Preserve Historical Source Materials<sup>1</sup>

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**I**N a civilized society the protection of its heritage of cultural resources concerns all thinking persons. In particular it concerns the custodians and the exploiters of that heritage. At the risk of inducing tedium and introducing repetition of accepted fact, let me labor briefly the subject of the familial relationship between archivist and historian. I shall not review the transition from diaries, memoirs, journals, and the like to the basic documents, the deeds, the correspondence, the official memoranda, to which the historian turned only after the French Revolution set the pattern of availability of archives. Nor shall I review the opinions on the subject held and widely publicized by the distinguished Belgian archivist, Joseph Cuvelier, who pleaded so earnestly for internationalism. Nor shall I refer to the reports of the Archives Commission of the American Historical Association, the first of which appeared more than a half century ago. I shall, however, quote some remarks of M. Jaime Torres Bodet, Director General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the First International Congress on Archives, held in Paris in August 1950.

Archives — so far as they are made available for consultation — play a part in ensuring the conscious continuity of human society, and it would be wrong to regard your written records in their shelves or your collections of microfilms as no more than vast cemeteries in which that society's experiences, adventures, risks and dramas are for ever buried. Whether it be for the historian making past ages live again, for the man of action wishing to base his decisions not merely on his appreciation of the future but on the lessons both of the present and of the past, or for the moralist seeking a concrete basis for the assessment of human conduct, the archives are the repository of the object-lessons of life itself. . . . [These are] the documents and manuscripts which offer the very essence of history, stark, unadorned, but irrefutable, to those who can bring to

<sup>1</sup> This paper, in slightly different form, was read at the luncheon meeting of the Society of American Archivists during the sessions of the American Historical Association in New York, December 28, 1951. The author is Secretary General of the International Council on Archives.

their examination the enlightened compound of objectivity and imagination needed to see the past as it really was.<sup>2</sup>

Let us consider briefly another indisputable point — the disastrous results of unenlightened nationalism. Closed borders, whether physical or mental, restrict the outlook of the scholar; their end product is bias. From bias, the transition to biased nationalism is relatively simple. Archivists must be aware of ideas, must be ready to exchange ideas and materials with their colleagues in other countries. Historians must have the compelling desire to employ in their studies the archival resources of other lands; they must have free access to those sources, wherever they may be, within the legitimate limits set by the requirements of national security.<sup>3</sup>

Truth is good, Plato has taught us. Truth can be achieved only through knowledge. And knowledge, so etymology gives us to understand, is one and the same with history; that is, *historia*, in the original Greek, first means "inquiry," then "systematic (scientific) observation," and finally knowledge so acquired. Thus through history, whether with the intervention of archivists who are the custodians of its basic elements or with the assistance of historians who are the practitioners of interpretation, we should arrive at sound information. This information should lead to better understanding. Understanding should lead to international good will and mutual respect — and that is good. What has all this to do with my subject, "International Cooperation for the Protection of Historical Source Materials?" In my opinion, it is of the essence. Before there can be cooperation in a physical enterprise, there must be understanding. Therefore, the first step in cooperative international enterprise with respect to historical sources must be mutual agreement as to the desirability of ultimate goals.

I should like to cite as an example to the point the arguments ad-

<sup>2</sup> Message from M. Jaime Torres Bodet, Director General of UNESCO, to the International Congress on Archives, UNESCO House, 21 August 1950 (D G/86). 3 p. Processed.

<sup>3</sup> The case for accessibility is eloquently self-stated in the evidence offered by Ernst Posner in his paper, "Unesco's Concern with Archives," published in *Indian Archives*, III (January-December, 1949), 48-51. In a recent letter urging consideration of international exchange of archivists, the writer based his case essentially on this paragraph: "Libraries by their nature are repositories of international scope. Custodians and users of libraries are free to be narrow, but at least they have at hand a non-nationalistic assemblage of recorded materials. This is not true with respect to archives. By their very nature archives are nationalistic, their staffs are specialists in national material, their users may be concerned only with research within national bounds. Foreign scholars often are limited in or prohibited from using the materials. The setting is perfect for the development of that form of nationalism which leads to self-aggrandizement, prejudice, propaganda, and distrust."

vanced by the Library of Congress in favor of international co-operation in a program to copy on microfilm the bibliographical tools such as catalogs, guides, calendars, inventories, lists, indexes, and the like and perhaps, as need demands and funds permit, not only these keys to the original sources but also large bodies of the actual sources themselves. The proposed plan contains many features that should prove advantageous both to the United States and to other nations.

From the point of view of the United States the proposed project would serve three purposes: it would increase the bibliographic resources of the Library of Congress; it would enable individual scholars to select with precision particular manuscripts, documents, and rare books that they require; and it would establish a medium through which the Library of Congress might obtain microfilms of required items under favorable local auspices. The advantages of these points to scholarship in the Western Hemisphere hardly can be exaggerated. The advantages to the foreign partner in the project certainly would include international good will; the establishment of a second depository, located in another hemisphere, for important records as protection against total loss; an assured source from which microfilm or paper copies subsequently might be procured to replace in regular use original material endangered or damaged by excessive handling or normal deterioration; the diffusion throughout the civilized world of increased knowledge of its historical and cultural source materials; a firm basis upon which its archives and libraries might initiate requests for microfilming of materials relating to its history that are located outside the country; and demonstrated leadership in the present efforts (e.g., those being made by UNESCO) to liberalize the understanding between nations and thereby to provide a firm basis for a lasting peace.<sup>4</sup>

These arguments were advanced in the cause of scholarship, and in them the role of protection was reduced to a secondary position. In my opinion this is as it should be. Protection of those segments of the cultural heritage of man that have originated or are located within the boundaries of a sovereign state is a responsibility that rests squarely and unequivocally upon the state. On the other hand, acceptance of what already has been said on the matter of internationalism makes it impossible for those outside a state to sit idly

<sup>4</sup> The fact that this proposal has become bogged down, in one country, in a series of referrals and committees in no way lessens the validity of the arguments that were advanced for the project. It does, however, illustrate all too clearly the obstacles in the way of international cooperation on large-scale projects.

by, not to stimulate a quiescent or engender a hitherto nonexistent sense of responsibility on the part of those responsible, not to proffer advice where such advice is needed and requested, and not, within the limits required by circumstances, to render physical aid. The problem is diplomatic as well as scholarly.

The matter of protection may be approached from several diverse but mutually complementary routes. We may discuss protection in time of peace and in time of war. We may argue that the only true basis for enduring protection is the absence of war. We may disregard or even discard this idealistic view and argue that, since war appears to be a concomitant of civilized society, protection may be achieved by evacuation, by reproduction in multiple copies, by promulgation of solemn obligations related to the rules of warfare.

Let us consider first the active, physical measures. "Time and accident are committing daily havoc on the originals deposited in . . . public offices. The late war has done the work of centuries in this business. The lost cannot be recovered, but let us save what remains: not by vaults and locks which fence them from the public eye and use in consigning them to the waste of time, but by such a multiplication of copies as shall place them beyond the reach of accident." These are the words of Thomas Jefferson, written in 1791.<sup>5</sup> More recently, January 1949, the Committee on Renaissance Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies reported that it was the duty of responsible scholarly organizations to help protect irreplaceable materials against the hazards of the future. Since a complete microfilming of entire collections of records or of manuscript books is not feasible, on account of their bulk, it is important to select those pieces that really are important and irreplaceable. The report goes on to add that cooperation with European governments, institutions, libraries, and scholars should be emphasized and would be mutually advantageous. "In this way, the plan will not present itself as an act of interference on the part of American scholars, but as a kind of Marshall plan in the world of scholarship."<sup>6</sup>

We Americans should have no illusions about the reception of American plans and proposals, even of American money, in Europe. I shall not make the mistake of risking a generalization. I shall say only that views differ widely, and that not all are friendly. There-

<sup>5</sup> The passage is quoted as printed in *Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, V (September, 1942), 130.

<sup>6</sup> William A. Jackson and Paul O. Kristeller, Committee on Renaissance Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies, Conclusions, dated January 17, 1949. 2 p. Processed.

fore, I venture to suggest that not all his Continental colleagues will share the enthusiasms of the director of the National Library of Ireland or will subscribe to his suggestions for an international microfilming program.<sup>7</sup>

The United States of America is heir to the traditions of Western civilization in as full a degree as is Europe. If the European tradition of scholarship and learning is to survive in succeeding generations it will be, in large measure, on the American Continent. It is an inescapable fact that the advancement of knowledge, the development of the arts, the appreciation of the higher values, the growth and spread of culture depend on the level of general prosperity. In view of this the future of learning is going to depend more and more on the procession of events in America than in Europe. Those who value scholarship must welcome increasing American interest and participation in every field of study. In Europe we must be prepared to share the treasures of the past with the scholars of the future. We must realize that in America the scholars are available, but much of the basic research material for the humanities is not. It must be made available in order to win back towards the humanities the American universities which are definitely turning away from them. American institutions must be persuaded and helped to microfilm on a vast scale the manuscript collections of the libraries and archives of Europe. A nation which is about to exercise the greatest material influence in world affairs must be permeated with a sense of history and continuity in the European tradition.

If there were no reasons such as those outlined above, it would, none the less, be desirable that the photo-copying of the source material of Western civilization should be undertaken immediately to ensure its survival through the next cataclysm. Its survival through the last War was largely adventitious and we have been lulled into a false sense of security by our good fortune. The cost of rapidly arranging for its duplication is so great that only with considerable American assistance could it be achieved. Who can say how much time remains for European and American scholars to come together and plan a scheme for saving the basic records which are the title deeds of Western civilization?

The War Emergency Program for Microcopying Research Materials in Britain, also known as the ACLS British Manuscript Project, was conceived from the start as an attempt to rescue from possible destruction certain of the literary treasures of England. It also probably is the first rescue operation of such magnitude ever attempted in the history of scholarship. In its inception, the plan was broader; namely, to copy the basic cultural treasures of a documentary nature in Western Europe. Whether such a plan would have been practicable no one now can say. The outbreak of active

<sup>7</sup> Richard J. Hayes, "Future of the Humanities: the American Contribution," *Studies*, XXXIX (June, 1950), 154-58. The passage quoted immediately below in the text occurs on p. 158.

combat on the Continent forced the limitation of the plan to the British Isles. This project, which has resulted in the acquisition of 2,652 rolls of microfilm, bearing the facsimiles of 15,497 separate items, is the product of a committee under the chairmanship of Keyes D. Metcalf, Director of Libraries at Harvard University, and under the imposing name of Joint Committee on Microcopying Materials for Research of the National Research Council, American Council of Learned Societies, and American Council of Education. A subcommittee, of which Herbert A. Kellar, Director of the McCormick Historical Association, was chairman, made the actual selection of materials on the basis of recommendations of the scholars who had responded to the request. The plan was conceived in the summer of 1940; its execution was not completed (after interruption during some of the war years) until the winter of 1948. The cost was well over \$100,000.<sup>8</sup>

The program planned by the Committee on Documentary Reproduction of the American Historical Association is infinitely more ambitious than that just described. In its origin the committee goes back to 1942 and results from the inspiration of Professor Edgar L. Erickson, who still is its chairman.<sup>9</sup> The numerous subcommittees have varied greatly in their activity, but the sum of their studies and recommendations for specific countries would result in the availability in the United States of entire series of the most important source materials from the accessible countries of the world. It also would result in the expenditure of a staggering sum of money.

Let me cite only two illustrative examples. The Finnish Committee has estimated that the relatively small resources of Finland would occupy the time of 2 camera operators for 1 year. If we presume a working year of 50 weeks (without added holidays) and a working week of 5 days and if we further presume an average daily production of 2,000 exposures with each camera, we arrive at an annual output of 1,000,000 exposures. If we continue our hypo-

<sup>8</sup> Information on this project may be found in several sources; e.g., D. H. Daugherty, "The Current Microcopying Program in England," *Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, IV (December, 1941), 207-11; Eugene B. Power, "The Manuscript Copying Program in England," *American Archivist*, VII (January, 1944), 28-32; Faustine Dennis, "American Council of Learned Societies, British Manuscripts Project: the Collection in the Library of Congress," *American Documentation*, I (August, 1950), 130-32.

<sup>9</sup> Edgar L. Erickson, "A Program for Microcopying Historical Materials," *Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, V (March, 1942) 3-29. Progress of work sponsored by the committee is shown in the annual reports of the chairman published in the annual reports of the American Historical Association. Some of the data in the next paragraphs of this article have been taken from unpublished committee papers.



theses and postulate a medium charge of \$.03 per exposure, we discover that our hypothetical year's work will cost a minimum of \$30,000. The story for France is quite different. The French subcommittee has estimated that 2 operators would be required for 1 year on each of the 26 classes in the Archives Nationales in France. On the basis of the hypotheses just assumed in the case of Finland, we arrive at a cost of \$780,000. And this is the cost for but a single institution in Paris!

Recently, when I was in Vienna in connection with a matter not completely unrelated to the subject here treated, the director of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv supplied me with data on the unpublished finding aids of the five institutions that compose the General State Archives and of the seven provincial archives. This material amounts to about 250 linear meters. If we assume an arbitrary average of 300 pages per inch for these registers and then round off the result, we have 11,000 pages per meter, or a grand total of 2,750,000 pages. Since it is quite usual to copy two facing pages on a single exposure, we may say that the copying would require 1,375,000 exposures. At \$.03 per exposure the cost for this material alone would amount to \$41,250.

Now let us approach the problem in another way. It has been estimated that there are extant approximately one million manuscripts which antedate the sixteenth century. Let us assume (although we know our assumption to be without justification) that all are worth copying. Let us assume further for each of these manuscripts a modest bulk of 100 folios. Then let us continue as before with our computations: 100,000,000 folios result in the same number of exposures, which at \$.03 each, require an expenditure of \$3,000,000. To all such programs must be added a reasonable sum, let us say ten percent, for administration; that is, planning, supervision, travel, equipment, and shipping charges. Finally, from some source, must come funds for accessioning, cataloging, and servicing the collections of films that result from the field operations.

Somewhat later than the proposals sponsored by the AHA came a proposal developed by Sargent B. Child, then Adviser on Archives and Libraries, Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.). This proposal, which was intended as an extension and expansion of the ACLS project never, so far as I know, has appeared in print, although it has been the subject of debate on occasions such as the Conference on International Cultural, Educational, and Scientific Exchanges held at Princeton University in November 1946. Mr. Child proposed that the United States Government initiate an ex-

tensive program in Europe to obtain by photographic reproduction valuable cultural, scientific, historical, and other research material located in recent enemy countries, enemy-occupied countries, the countries of our allies, and recently neutral countries where cultural cooperation could be established. The multicopies were to be delivered to the United States Government and to allied governments for permanent deposit, exploitation, and study. It was further proposed that, as a form of reparations, Germany, and possibly her recent allies, be required to supply cameras, film, photographic laboratories, and technical labor. This program, which was planned for a twelve year period, would have cost an estimated \$125,000,000. And that estimate was made in December 1945, when costs were much lower than those in December 1951.<sup>10</sup>

Let us consider now the proposals to achieve protection through agreement. The provisions of the annexes to the Hague Conventions of 1897 and 1907 are largely negative in that they are stated as prohibitions. The case for archives is not too well stated. For this the fault perhaps lies with archives, for these are both a cultural property and an administrative property. The draft proposals developed by the office of the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation between the years 1933 and 1939 on the protection of historic buildings and works of art in time of war and on the repatriation of objects of artistic, historical, or scientific interest now serve negatively as examples of work that was done too late and positively as prototypes for the recent drafts prepared by UNESCO.

The work now in progress under the auspices of UNESCO is authorized by a resolution of the Third Session of the General Conference in 1948, amplified at the Fourth Session in 1949, which directed that attention should be given to the protection of monuments and all objects of cultural value, such as those kept in museums, libraries, and archives, against the consequences of armed conflict. This directive was extended still further by the Fifth Session in 1950, which authorized the Director General to prepare and submit to the member states a draft for an international convention for

<sup>10</sup> The concern of some American scholars for the security of manuscripts in the monastic libraries of Austria should also be noted, as should a project, still in the developmental and discussion stages, of medievalists for copying medieval sources of all kinds. The Bavarian State Library in Munich is microfilming its manuscripts and is considering making positive copies of the films available for international exchange. Very probably this example is not unique. Of primary interest to historians of art is the scheme, repeatedly rumored but, so far as the writer has been able to learn, never explicitly phrased, to copy all miniatures in illuminated manuscripts.



the protection of monuments and other objects of cultural value. Under date of March 1951 this draft, with extensive comments, was circulated to member states, which were asked for advice and comment.<sup>11</sup> A revised text is the object of a second scrutiny, the results of which UNESCO hoped to receive as soon as possible after January 1, 1952. The General Conference will consider the draft at its next session, in November 1952.

The Fourth Session, already mentioned, likewise instructed the Director General to encourage the establishment of repositories in which reproductions of the most representative and the most vulnerable cultural objects might be assembled. Subsequently the Director General requested four states — Australia, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States — to furnish, free of charge, to each member state an area of approximately 5 to 10 cubic meters that would provide safety from the dangers of damp, fire, theft, or bombardment, in which microfilms might be stored. On the same date, November 30, 1950, the Director General also informed all member states (now 60) of this plan so that those who wished to deposit reproductions could start their arrangements to have microfilm reproductions made. No results are yet public.

These efforts of UNESCO are not, of course, the only contemporary efforts. Perhaps the best known of recent conventions now in effect is that commonly called the Roerich Pact, which was signed in Washington on April 15, 1935, by members of the Pan-American Union, for the protection of artistic and scientific institutions and historic monuments. In the several treaties of peace, such as that with Italy, at the conclusion of the last war are sections that secure the place of cultural properties. There have been assembled at the Department of State the basic materials for a compilation of treaty obligations, agreements, and policies of the United States Government respecting the international protection of works of art and cultural property. The table of contents, which fills 7½ legal-size typewritten pages, lists the pertinent proclamations, laws,

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO, CL/484, Annex, Preliminary Note on the Preparation of a Draft Convention for the Protection, in Case of War, of Objects of Cultural Value. 34 p. Processed. This draft also was one of the items on the agenda of the International Committee on Monuments, Artistic and Historical Sites and Archeological Excavations, established by UNESCO, which held its first session in May and its second session in October of 1951. The United States is represented on this seven-man committee by John O. Brew, Director of the Peabody Museum in Cambridge. By invitation the writer had the privilege of attending both meetings, in the status of an observer, as the special advocate of the case for archives and as the most accessible former Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives officer.

regulations, handbooks, manuals, and similar items issued in connection with the war in Europe as well as many more usual titles.

In this connection I should mention also the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas (the Roberts Commission), which, though distinctly a national entity, engaged extensively in international liaison with appropriate foreign agencies. This Commission, established by the President on June 23, 1943, furnished to the Army the names of museum officials, art historians, and archivists who were available so that, so far as was consistent with military necessity, works of cultural value might be protected in countries occupied by the Allies; compiled lists of structures and collections to be protected; prepared lists of cultural properties appropriated by the Axis forces; urged the restitution of such properties; sponsored lectures at the Military Government School on the care and preservation of works of art, monuments, and records; formulated instructions for publication on these same subjects; and advised "MFA and A" officers in the field. To the work of this Commission the National Archives contributed materially.<sup>12</sup>

The International Council on Archives, founded in 1948 under the auspices of UNESCO, lists among its objectives the promotion of all possible measures for the preservation, protection, and defense against all hazards to the archival heritage of mankind; the facilitation of the use of archives and their more effective and impartial study by making their contents more widely known, making reproductions more readily available, and encouraging greater freedom of access; the cooperation with all organizations concerned with the documentation of human experience and the use of that documentation for the benefit of mankind.<sup>13</sup> Recently the ICA has established a Committee on the Accessibility of Archives, on which the United States has a member, and a Committee on the Protection of Archives in Time of War, of which the member from the United States is chairman.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Report of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas* (Washington, 1946). See especially pp. 1-5, 41-44.

<sup>13</sup> For a brief sketch of this relatively new international organization, see Herbert O. Brayer, "Report on the Meeting of Professional Archivists . . . June 9 to 11, 1948, Paris, France," *American Archivist*, XI (October, 1948), 325-31; Lester K. Born, "The International Council on Archives," *Journal of Documentation*, VII (March, 1951), 15-17; *idem*, "The International Council on Archives," *Bulletin of the Union of International Associations*, III (March, 1951), 1-4. The last articles are identical only in title.

<sup>14</sup> Both committees result from resolutions introduced by Wayne C. Grover, Ar-

When the second Archivist of the United States, Solon J. Buck, enumerated in November 1946 the most urgent archival problems that required international cooperation, his list contained 12 items.<sup>15</sup> Of these 4 related to protection, preservation, or rehabilitation; 2 related to reproduction and distribution; and 2 related to information on existing material. To greater or less degree progress has been made toward a solution of each of these problems; for none of them, however, has a definitive solution been achieved. Not all protective measures require the imminence of war to inspire them. For the establishment of lists, which are prerequisite to planning for any purpose, for microfilming, which serves several purposes well, and for the coordination of large-scale, multipurpose international programs, perhaps more effective use could be made of the committees of the International Council on Archives; perhaps, too, the good offices of UNESCO could and should be invoked.

Unquestionably the best interests of civilized society will be furthered by adherence to the principles set forth in the international convention now in draft form. But, as its drafters realize very clearly, "respect" and "immunity" are in time of war, especially in the actual theater of operations, less likely to be effective than "defense." Therefore the immediate reconstitution of national and international commissions on the protection of cultural sources is, in my opinion, not only urgent but overdue. Not only must professional archivists — that is, those primarily concerned with the problem — lobby for the peacetime activation of elements in the United States Army that can prepare for the wartime implementation of careful plans and directives, but likewise they must lobby for the establishment of a high-level position in such a headquarters as SHAPE for planning, liaison, and coordination with civil and military establishments in many countries.<sup>16</sup>

chivist of the United States, at the meeting of the Constituent Assembly held in Paris, August, 1950. The reports of the committees will be presented at the time of the second congress, which is scheduled to meet at The Hague in 1953. Persons concerned with the problem of security will be interested in the annotated bibliography of some 350 entries which has been prepared by the Library of Congress: Nelson R. Burr, *Safeguarding Our Cultural Heritage: a Bibliography on the Protection of Museums, Art Galleries, Libraries and Archives in Time of War*. Although this item is in no sense international in its sponsorship, it definitely is international in its coverage and includes reports, studies, plans, and evaluations published in a number of countries.

<sup>15</sup> Solon J. Buck, "The Archivist's 'One World,'" *American Archivist*, X (January, 1947), 9-24. The passage referred to is on p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> On this point see Lester K. Born, "Archives and War," *Indian Archives*, IV (July-December, 1950), 150-59; and also UNESCO, CL/561, dated October 31, 1951, Annex I (draft convention) and Annex II (comments), especially p. 33, end, and note 1 to that page in the comments: "It is clear that this special service should be part of

the General Staff, and that the officers of which it is composed should have a fairly high rank." The note to this passage says, in part, that "the personnel of the service for the protection of cultural property should consist, in equitable proportions, of specially recruited individuals having the necessary qualifications in the various fields covered by the service, viz. Archives, Libraries, Museums, and Monuments. They should have received, in peace-time, such technical and military instruction and training as will give them the required capacity and authority for performing their duties in war-time. To that end, the members of the service should attend special courses, undergo technical and military training, and be provided with a rank sufficiently high to give them adequate standing with the military authorities. . . . Provision for the work of the service for the protection of cultural property should be made in separate regulations. . . . Provision should also be made in good time, and for each military unit, for the material equipment requisite for the end in view, so as to ensure that this equipment (e.g. more particularly transport and material for restoration, preservation etc.) is available as and when needed. . . . It would be essential, as part of the service's organization, that the information material—such as maps of monuments, of places sheltering cultural property, etc.—to be distributed to the armed forces and to other services concerned should be prepared by specialized personnel, which should itself be called upon to put into effect the protection plan drawn up."