Reports on Action Plans

The second day of the conference focused on discussing action plans related to the topics discussed on the first day of the conference. Jim Neal introduced the discussion with remarks as follows:

Some urgency and defensiveness in terms of the future of area librarianship are symptomatic of economic budget challenges we are facing in our universities. Under times of stress and economic duress, ugly things sometimes come to the fore, but also opportunities present themselves, and that is what we are embracing. In this current crisis there are options to create a golden age of area librarianship, which I believe many library directors around the country think is appropriate, relevant, and necessary. We have developed over many years what is clearly one of the world's richest sets of research collections. In many cases, the best collections in a particular language or about a particular geographic area are in the United States rather than in that country or geographic area itself.

With the rapidly expanding volume and diversity of research information which is being produced on a worldwide basis and the sustained extraordinary and increasing cost of that information, we have experienced and face a future of erosion in our collective abilities to develop collections of research breadth and depth. What we've been talking about here is the need to re-think our collection building and resource access strategies and forge more rigorous coordination across our universities. We must coordinate our applications of technology and seek partnerships to define a creative approach to cooperation. Our efforts in this task will be influenced by several critical assumptions:

1. Print-base collections will remain dominant, at least over the next decade, particularly for most of the world areas in which we are involved.
2. Price increases for scholarly information will continue to grow significantly above standard inflation rates.
3. Print collection investment through preservation programs will remain essential.
4. Digital applications will become more relevant and important.
5. More resources will be allocated to electronic information and access services, but this will vary significantly by discipline and by world area.
6. Virtuality will become more relevant.

There is an ongoing need for investment in local collection development, because we cannot lend to or share with other libraries what we have not identified, acquired, and preserved. I call this the "virtuoso" library, and you are the virtuosos in that library environment. There will also be a rapid growth in resource-sharing activity requiring new levels of commitment and capability to identify the availability of and to deliver documents. I call this the "virtuous" library. Virtuality demands virtuosity *and* virtuousness. Collection development decisions will continue to be driven by institutional priorities and faculty research interests. This blocks in some ways our ability to cooperate, but we need to recognize that our vitality, our success, our survival is very much influenced by our ability to support the needs of our local programs and the needs of our own faculty and students. We will need to become more focused on the coordination of our collective programs. Future planning and success will depend on our ability to address three issues:

1. Will campus academic dynamics permit planned rather than ad hoc assignment of research collection responsibilities across our libraries? Can we, in fact, create a planned approach to coordinated collection development?
2. Can we invest at institutional and cooperative levels in technology and staff support needed to permit identification and easy movement of materials across and between our libraries? If we do not make investments in technology and staff infrastructure, all cooperation becomes moot.
3. Can intellectual property right and copyright laws and interpretations be shaped to permit the free flow of information needed by faculty and students across universities? We are going to confront later this summer, I believe, a systematic erosion in the fair use capabilities that were built into the 1976 copyright legislation. We, as a library community, are not well-prepared to respond to these challenges. I think it will be couched in the electronic information rhetoric, but ultimately it will undermine our ability to move materials and to support the type of cooperative efforts that we are talking about.

As background for the discussion of action plans, Mary Krutulis and Jim Neal then provided a brief recap of the discussions held on the first day of the conference. They also stated basic assumptions drawn from the first day's discussions, as background for developing action plans:

1. Area studies programs and international research will continue to be priorities at American universities.
2. Educational programs and research will continue to require access to international resources.
3. Area expertise and experience will continue to be essential for collection development, organization, and servicing of area studies resources.

The ability of area librarians to successfully support high quality teaching and research needs will depend on:

a. an adequate stream of well-prepared new professionals,
b. the continuing development of current staff,
c. the effective application of electronic and network technologies,
d. creative approaches to cooperation and partnerships,
e. the identification of new funding sources.

Conference participants were divided into four groups to develop action plans for:

1. education/preparation for area librarianship,
2. continuing education/professional development,
3. effective application of electronic and network technologies, and
4. cooperation/partnerships. The four groups were asked to present actions and strategies that: 1) address area librarian-specific issues, not general library issues, 2) are measurable, 3) assign responsibility, and 4) assign priority on achievability and impact.

Education/Preparation of Area Librarians

It is assumed that area studies will provide the primary source of recruitment for area librarians and that library schools will not be a primary source of recruitment. It is further assumed that the visibility of area studies on campuses needs to be increased.

A labor market survey, more demographic data, and information on the career paths of area librarians need to be collected to expand the survey data collected by Indiana University. ARL could coordinate this.

1. A list of basic skills and competencies of area librarians needs to be compiled. This can be done by area librarians' organizations.
2. Existing dual degree programs and courses on area librarianship need to be investigated in detail, in order to determine how to expand them by electronic means.
3. More internships are needed for students. The LC fellows program might be expanded; foundations could be approached to support internships.
4. Liaison between area studies associations and library schools is needed. A speakers' bureau of area librarians could be established.
5. University libraries need to develop outreach programs for area studies.
6. A national conference on the education of area librarians with wide participation could be held by ARL or ACRL.
7. Area studies associations could provide their own education programs.
8. A listserve could be developed to communicate with prospective area studies librarians.
9. An ALISE program on area librarianship could be developed.

Continuing Education/Professional Development

1. Language skills development could be provided by intensive summer language programs.
2. Foreign travel support should be provided and international exchanges promoted.
3. Summer workshops could be held which focus on new technologies. Successful workshops should be used as models and tailored to the needs of area librarians.
4. Collaborative collection development institutes that include multiple areas could be held by ALA/CMDS and library schools.
5. Released time is needed to attend courses and sabbatical leaves are needed to develop skills. These can be provided locally.
6. Regional library organizations can provide senior fellow programs with an area studies focus.
7. Grants could be provided for area librarians from smaller institutions to visit larger institutions. These might be provided by Title VI institutions.
8. Special issues of national journals could focus on area librarianship.

Effective Application of Electronic and Network Technologies

1. Area based information fairs should be held at area studies meetings.
2. Criteria for evaluating electronic resources in area studies should be developed. Generic criteria can be used and specifically adapted to area studies resources.
3. Technology-based workshops should be held in countries overseas. USIA and UNESCO are possible sources of support.
4. Electronically distributed descriptions of uncataloged resources should be developed.
5. Area librarians should make an inventory of available area studies electronic resources

and distribute it nationally.
6. User friendly area studies home pages should be developed. Sharing home pages should be encouraged.
7. Digitization should be used as a preservation tool.
8. A status report on the development of Roman scripts for OCLC and RLIN is needed.
9. Status reports on the use of technologies in foreign countries are needed. Area librarians' associations can compile them.
10. There is a need to preserve electronic materials.

Cooperation/Partnerships
1. An assessment of the three ARL demonstration projects on German, Japanese and Latin American materials, their cost, and benefits should be made.
2. A white paper is needed on cooperative collection development projects. Successful projects should be widely publicized and funding sources made aware of the importance of cooperative collection development.
3. The Center for Research Libraries should catalog all of their collections. The area studies microform projects can encourage this.
4. Electronic resources should be shared through natural alliances.
5. Cooperative projects should be developed that focus on specific kinds of resources such as government documents.

Next Steps
Following the presentation of the four subject specific action plans by the facilitator for each discussion group, Jim Neal summarized the next steps for the area librarianship project:

1. Indiana University needs to refine the data collected for the project, publish it, and publicize it by various means including discussion in focus groups with faculty.
2. There is need for interview data with area directors and area librarians to supplement the data collected by Indiana University.
3. Data collected in the project should be used to redefine the positions of area specialists. This redefinition should be brought to the attention of library administrators. The discussion of the redefinition of area specialists' positions should be on a listserve. Someone needs to be found to moderate the listserve.
4. The primary responsibility for disseminating information from the conference lies with area librarians, not library administrators, through communication with their area librarian associations and locally in their institutions. Indiana will send information on the conference by e-mail to participants that can be communicated to appropriate constituencies.
5. A structure is needed for continuing communication among conference participants. Who will be responsible for this?
6. There needs to be future discussion of area studies librarianship within contemporary library environments.
7. There needs to be a meeting of the officers of area librarian organizations to discuss common issues.