

# Strategic Planning Report: Area Studies Division

| submitted by Mara L. Thacker | | April 5, 2019



**I** ILLINOIS LIBRARY

## Introduction

The Area Studies Division (ASD) is primarily composed of members of the International and Area Studies Library (IASL) as well as members of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs. IASL is the campus' gateway to information and scholarship related to area, international, and global studies, connecting students and scholars to the knowledge crucial to developing global competencies through the study of distinct nations and regions, as well as transnational issues and global concerns. The Library bylaws indicate that the Division is an educational and administrative sub-unit of the larger whole related by common interests and objectives. The goals of the Area Studies Division mirror those of the IAS Library to enhance opportunities for collaboration and coordination among the Library's area and international studies specialists.

In 2011, the University of Illinois Library formed the International and Area Studies Library (IASL) to coordinate patron and research focused services while continuing to build nationally prominent collections of materials from outside of the United States. This created for the first time at Illinois, one unit that combined the library's strong faculty, services, and collections focused on African Studies; East Asian Studies; European Union Studies; Global Studies; Latin American and Caribbean Studies; Middle East and North African Studies; Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies; and South Asian Studies. The IASL faculty and staff marshal their expertise and the resources of the Library to support its mission by delivering international reference services; engaging the campus community; publishing original research, developing resources and media; teaching; and developing world class collections.

The IASL supports interdisciplinary research that informs and draws upon both area knowledge and transnational connections. To this aim, the IASL faculty teaches and promotes knowledge related to the societies, cultures, and intellectual output of the countries and regions supported by its expert services and research collections. A core service initiative of the IASL is to expand teaching opportunities beyond the traditional classroom setting by drawing upon the expertise of the library's faculty to make international and area studies knowledge accessible, engaging, and relevant to the campus' research, teaching, and engagement

efforts. These activities also support key campus research and teaching missions to promote cultural and international understanding while engaging in dialogue focused on tolerance and diversity within a pluralistic society. IASL's International Teaching and Engagement Committee (ITEC), is the primary organizational vehicle for supporting international engagement activities.

## Strengths

### People/Expertise

- Our faculty and staff have **expertise** in the following **languages**: Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Croatian, Ewe, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Kabye, Korean, Kurdish, Japanese, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Turkish, Ukrainian, and others.
- **Diversity** of staff as well as our patron groups

### Collections

- Our collections are **multilingual** and **interdisciplinary** and support teaching and learning across campus units and beyond
- Excellent, **world renowned collections**
  - Examples of gems in our collections include: West African Arabic Manuscripts (late 18th-early 19th century), the African map collection, the Africana film database, the Conde de Montemar Letters (1761-1799), over 1,250 Mexican pamphlets (1813-1908), the South Asian comics collection, the Yamagiwa Collection, the Ibadi Islam collection, the largest collection of provincial newspapers from the Russian Empire in any U.S. library, a digitized version of the 594-volume *Turkestanskii Sbornik* (1867-1917), the Israel Perlstein collection of interwar Czech bibliophile editions, and the Taiwan Resource Center for Chinese Studies

### Services

- A longstanding commitment to providing a high volume of **quality engagement, outreach** events, and programming that is inclusive of a **diverse** range of perspectives, disciplines, and world regions
- Our world renowned **Slavic Reference Service** provides the highest volume of **advanced level reference services** (on a READ scale of 4 or higher) in the university library

### Spaces

- We have maximized our space to accommodate a range of activities including: **research, quiet reading, collaborative group work, instruction, and events**
- **Exhibit cases** are utilized year round to highlight **international** library materials and special collections in **curated** thematic exhibits

## Opportunities (and Challenges)

- Developing and maintaining strong **international networks and partnerships** to support teaching and learning, and to maximize the accessibility and discoverability of information resources from around the world
- **Funding**

- Reliable funding to support **outreach** and **engagement** activities
- Continued support for **student workers**
- Support for **overseas field work**
- **Discoverability** of collections presents both a challenge and an opportunity
  - In light of decreasing availability of full bibliographic records for copy cataloging there is an increased workload for local cataloging staff who must perform original cataloging. In the absence of increased technical support staff, our collections are less discoverable because the records are not detailed enough. There is an opportunity for increased collaboration between the Area Studies Division and the Technical Services Division to address some of these gaps, identify priorities, and develop strategies to make area studies collections more discoverable.
- Continued **digitization** of resources and opportunities to take on new digital projects
- Support for newly tenured faculty to pursue **full professorships** in order to be **leaders and mentors** within the library and the broader profession

## Aspirations

- Continue to support **communities of scholars** at local, regional, national, and international levels
- **Build and share distinctive collections** that provide access to **unique and rarely held materials** that attract **visiting scholars** and open up **new research pathways** for Illinois scholars
- Implementing **outreach and engagement events** that reach across the town and gown divide, foster **interdisciplinary collaboration**, enrich **co-curricular learning**, and nurture a culture of **lifelong learning**
- Communicate the **societal impact** of Illinois **area studies research** across **world regions and cultures** in order to increase **public engagement** with and **support** of the library
- **Collaborate** with other divisions to enable new possibilities in maximizing the **discoverability of collections** and pursuing new sources of **funding** such as grants and new gift funds and endowments
- Establish consistent support for **overseas fieldwork** which will enable ASD to deepen connections with **scholars and institutions overseas** and develop new collaborative projects, better **connect Illinois scholars** with institutions abroad for **original research**, and better build **distinctive collections**
- **Model** how the people of the world should work together (**respectful, empathetic, and inclusive**) in order to promote a **healthy organizational culture** and **retain our highly skilled faculty and staff**

## Results

### Scholarship, discovery & innovation

- Expand the university's **international network** and develop and maintain meaningful **partnerships** with libraries, universities, and cultural institutions around the world (Av)
- Support **interdisciplinary research** by building rich collections that are **inclusive** of a variety of perspectives, languages, and world regions (Aii)
- Implement high quality **outreach and engagement** programming that:
  - **Builds connections** between scholars across disciplines and fosters **multidisciplinary** convergent scholarly opportunities (Biii)
  - **Promotes** the work of **humanities scholars** and **artists** by providing a venue and support for them to share their work (Ci)

- Engage in **collection development** and **digitization** initiatives that promote free and **open access** to global resources in service of supporting **equitable, just, and sustainable** access (Diii)

### **Transformative learning experiences**

- Implement and **assess outreach and engagement** programming that enhances student learning by providing **co-curricular** enrichment and prepares students for living in a **diverse, globally minded** society (B, Di)
- Build robust and **distinctive area studies collections** and work to make them as **discoverable** and **accessible** as possible to ensure that **global perspectives** are **integrated and emphasized** in Illinois teaching and learning (Cvii)
- Help students develop **global awareness** and **cultural competency** by building strong **international networks and partnerships** and by developing resources and collections around these topics (Ev)

### **Societal impact**

- Leverage **international networks** and **partnerships** and **engage** with local communities to broadly share Illinois scholarship with the world and integrate **global perspectives** into Illinois scholarship (Biv)
- **Collaborate** on **educational and outreach efforts** with other campus units such as the Krannert Art Museum, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, the Spurlock Museum, and the cultural resource centers (Dii)
- Support campus and Library **marketing** endeavors in order to share research with a **global impact** (Fii)
- Continue to **foster a culture** which **rewards** faculty for being proactive in undertaking **outreach and engagement** initiatives (Bi)

### **Resources & strategic investment**

- Support **faculty and staff retention** by fostering a culture of **equity** and **inclusion** (Dii)
- Expand opportunities for **mentorship and support** that target **underrepresented groups** to welcome and promote a **diverse and inclusive work force** within the library profession (D)
- Increase efforts within the division to develop an **advancement strategy** to garner more **support** for the Library's area studies collections and services (E)