The National Printed Archive from Panizzi’s Time to the Digital Era

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In the early 1980s the Reference Division of the British Library began reviewing its traditional practice of autonomous, ‘imperial’, collection development, dating from Panizzi’s time, in a series of colloquia held in connection with the relatively new national libraries of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and relevant faculty.¹ Then in 1985 the Library announced, in its first Strategic Plan, a policy of developing a ‘common stock’ of texts, amalgamating the holdings of its Reference Division in London and its Lending Division in Boston Spa.² This policy implied a final departure from the equally traditional, Panizzian distinction between the archival, non-lending ‘national library for research’ and ‘educational libraries’.³ The finality of the departure was made even clearer by the collateral move in collection development towards a collaborative, increasingly digitally based national and international library network of partners,⁴ implying an eventual globally distributed archive.

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³ See Panizzi’s Answers to Question 4794 in the Report from the Select Committee on the British Museum (London, 1836), and to Questions 758 and 780 in the Report from the Select Committee on Public Libraries (London, 1850).

Such developments were linked to major changes in the technological context – from print to digitization – but also in the cultural-political context, of the national library. Indeed they were a critically important part of the British Library’s bid for continuing support by government, the world of learning, and the public.

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The early nineteenth-century crisis in ‘keeping pace with the increase of human knowledge, [by] giving the necessary means of information on all branches of human learning from all countries in all languages’ in the Hellenistic imperial tradition of the Alexandrian Library had been resolved, for one or two generations at least, by Panizzi’s reform of the still largely inert British Museum Library. The reform was based on a critique of French revolutionary scientisme by the tradition of historicizing, book-wise, filologia which had originated partly in the country of Panizzi’s birth and which was now to be based on the mission and resources of the imperial phase of the British Age of Improvement, after 1815.

In particular Panizzi solved the crucial problem of bibliographical control of the by then relentlessly proliferating, industrialized printed archive – the ‘second revolution of the printed book’ – by successful advocacy of a far more fine-meshed although, given the constantly increasing size of the collections, in no way immediately publishable, alphabetic author-and-title General Catalogue, which he derived from the example of the Biblioteca Casanatense and the like. This master strategy he championed in the face of continuous, and often fierce, opposition from the bibliographically simplistic proponents of a published, widely accessible, subject-classed catalogue à la française. Regarding themselves as heirs of the Enlightenment, the latter formed a powerful and articulate lobby against him, ranging from the scientists of the Royal Society of the 1830s to the radicals and popular educators of the 1840s and 50s. Their belief in an immediately publishable ‘universal Catalogue’ was epitomized in a speculative essay by Charles Wentworth Dilke, published in Dilke’s influential Athenaeum in 1850.

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The idea of such a universal Catalogue may seem at the first suggestion somewhat wild and visionary; but the more closely it is examined, the more distinctly, we have assured ourselves, will it grow into a reality, simple and practicable. What we propose is this: let Mr Panizzi proceed [...] to complete his Catalogue, – let him have additional assistants, one, or two, or three, as may be desired, who shall under his direction, consult libraries, catalogues, bibliographical works, and prepare, on the same uniform system, the titles of all works published in the English language, or printed in the British territories, but not at present in the British Museum. [...] This would be the contribution of the British nation to the universal Catalogue. Meanwhile, communication should be opened with the principal Governments of the world, and a proposal made to each of them to cooperate with the British nation in publishing a Universal Catalogue [...]. Each government should print its own catalogue, and each exchange with the others stereotyped titles [...]. The British Government is by our plan relieved at once from the necessity of cataloguing all foreign works contained in the Library – one-half or one-third of the collection – because the titles of all such would be contributed by foreign nations [...]. We do not profess to have improvised a great scheme to which objections may not be raised [...] but simply to have indicated a course which, in our opinion, would do honour to the nation, and help the peaceful world in its onward progress.10

Less controversially, but with equal effect, Panizzi applied the requirements of historico-philological scholarship – ‘the assistance that an editor or an historian has the right to expect from the national library’11 – to collection development. This he, and his successors, did by extending effective legal deposit to categories such as provincial and colonial imprints, and newspapers.12 At the same time he achieved a substantial increase in the annual purchase grant from government to acquire the likewise proliferating output of historic-philological scholarship abroad, as well as to fill the immense gaps in the national printed archive which were the result of the previous inefficacy of legal deposit. Finally, so far as research and research librarianship in general were concerned he saw that the compulsive reading – Zwangslesen – involved in essentially text-based philological scholarship was different in kind from the reading for amusement, or for self-instruction, characteristic of the established commercial, and the newly emerging free, public libraries, of the Age of Improvement.13 Consequently research libraries, and in particular the national research library, had to be segregated from these ‘libraries of education’; and in response to the radical lobby he proposed – in the event unsuccessfully – that a separate lending function to support libraries of education be added to the responsibilities of the national library, insisting that there should be no lending from the research collections as such but, instead, from a separate national collection of duplicate texts.14

The circular British Museum Reading Room opened in 1857 was the iconic, as well as practical, making manifest to the public at large, as well as to the then metropolitan-centred

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14 See Panizzi’s answer to Question 4794 in the Report from the Select Committee on the British Museum, and Questions 758 and 780 in the Report from the Select Committee on Public Libraries.
world of learning, the triumphant autarchy of the national research library in what one can see as its classic mode. Thus E. M. Forster’s evocation:

Ansell was in his favourite haunt – the reading-room of the British Museum. In that book-encircled space he always could find peace. He loved to see the volumes rising tier above tier into the misty dome. He loved the chairs that glide so noiselessly, and the radiating desks, and the central area, where the catalogue shelves curve round the superintendent’s throne. There he knew that his life was not ignoble.  

On entering the Museum Reading Room one might say one was visited by an oceanic feeling of the virtual presence of the entire world textual archive, eine universale Präsenzsbibliothek. At the same time, at the level of daily practice:

When I am in London, I always work here in the library [of the British Museum]. It’s a remarkable institution […]. In the shortest time you will be given information on any question; in which books you can find material on subjects you are interested in […] How pleasant and convenient it is to work in the London library […] Here every reader has a separate place where he can lay out in any way he likes all the books he has ordered, his excerpts, notes etc. You order books, and they are brought to you almost immediately […] for work on the sources in any language that I’ll need in the immediate future you can’t imagine a better place than the library of the British Museum. 

That is Lenin. Moreover, Panizzi’s success in managing the first great crisis in the development of the national library, in particular the relative sophistication of his theory and practice of bibliographical control, was a factor in the emergence of librarianship as a profession. As in the case of other professions at the time this has to be seen, so far as his power-base as well as his doctrine were concerned, as an aspect of what for want of better words we may call the rise of the European liberal-national state in the nineteenth century. However the relative continuity between the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cultural-political establishments which was peculiar to Britain (and admired on the politically traumatized Continent as an aspect of British preponderance after 1815) resulted in the control of the British Museum remaining in the hands of amateur ‘gentlemen’ Trustees, not bureaucrats and government ministers as on the Continent. Indeed, the Museum Library under Panizzi owed much of its élan to this symbiosis of amateurism and professionalism in the fundamental cultural-political complicity of the time – though a shrewd commentator on the radical wing and himself an able cultural

19 Panizzi’s views on ‘gentlemen’ Trustees are contained in his answers to Questions 4924 and 4932 of the 1836 *Report*. For the involvement of bureaucrats and ministers in the institutions of ‘print culture’ in Germany, see J. J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866* (Oxford, 1989).
administrator of the next generation, Henry Cole, could write appreciatively but with prophetic reservation, from the alternative point of view, of the need

[after] the reign of Mr Panizzi [and his] dominant will and ability [...] to substitute the Parliamentary responsibility of a Minister for the ineffective administration of [an] irresponsible board [of Trustees].\(^{20}\)

Likewise, Panizzi's autarchical system depended greatly on the fact that the typical Zwangsleser was not the career don at Oxford or Cambridge but the scholar or writer who was willing and able to live in the metropolis to spend his working life in the Reading Room: for example not only cosmopolitan exiles (like himself) such as Herzen or Marx or Lenin, or men of letters like Samuel Butler or George Bernard Shaw, but also technical scholars such as F. J. Furnivall or S. R. Gardiner or Sidney Lee – pioneers of modern technical scholarship in Britain who might be said to measure up to the philological solidity of the Germans.\(^{21}\)

Further: Panizzi gave the national research library a classic identity which, although devolved from any general administration of science and learning, was accepted as paramount by the scholar, the intellectual, the political innovator, and the general public alike, during the period when European intelligence and power were at their imperial zenith. Not only were Panizzi's reforms crucial for the modernizing of the Bibliothèque Nationale/Impériale under Napoleon III's cultural adviser – and Panizzi's friend – Prosper Mérimée. A national library, its alphabetical catalogue and its central circular reading room became henceforth an integral and highly visual part of the programme whereby hitherto culturally peripheral countries sought to establish their independence from, or better succession to, France and Britain: beginning with Bismarck's Second Reich and the post-Civil War United States.\(^{22}\)

Even so, in proposing his reforms Panizzi was careful to guarantee their viability for no longer than 'some years to come'. The Leibnizian archival nightmare – ‘cette horrible masse de livres qui va toujours augmentant’ – would persist; and we can best see the subsequent development of national libraries in terms of the main attempts made to master it.\(^{23}\)

II

The inability of the Panizzian doctrine and practice of national library autarchy to keep pace with the accumulation, and variety, of text-based scholarship first became evident at the end of the nineteenth century. We have the accelerating professionalization of scholarship and, following the Great Exhibition of 1851, 'the great surge of enthusiasm for science and technology'.\(^{24}\) This surge was much reinforced by the prestige of German institutionally


unified, though geographically dispersed, *Natur- und Geisteswissenschaften* and *Technische Hochschulen*. Particularly after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 this prestige was mediated in Britain by influential local promoters of cultural-political ‘national efficiency’ vis-à-vis German (and soon American) rivalry and competition, such as Richard Burdon Haldane and Sidney Webb. Above all there was the decline from the zenith of Empire. So far as the British Museum was concerned this was symbolized by Lord Randolph Churchill’s budget cut of 1887/8.

Scholars and scientists began to be employed not only in more fully research-oriented schools and institutes such as Webb’s London School of Economics or Haldane’s Imperial College of Science and Technology (the ‘London Charlottenburg’) with their own specialist libraries such as the LSE’s British Library of Political and Economic Science or Imperial College’s link with the Library of the Science Museum, but also in the new civic universities of the Midlands and the North, distanced from the aura of the British Museum Library and its Trustees, and from the ‘certain exquisiteness’ of the Oxbridge academic establishment (compared with the realism of the new German establishment) noted by Haldane. Moreover so far as primary texts were concerned, a new awareness of the importance of bibliographical evidence, which High Victorian enterprises physically based in the national library such as Lee’s *Dictionary of National Biography* had done much to bring about, began to imply a far greater intensity and immediacy of access to a notionally complete global archive. Such access no one established national library could provide from its own collections, in isolation. This was true of the Bibliothèque Nationale which had been the first in the field of encyclopaedic acquisition, and true even of the British Museum which had become the most powerful and, with its first generation of special catalogues (early English books to 1640, incunabula, Civil War tracts), one of the most responsive to the new intensity of scholarly demand.

The effect of such thickening of the textual basis of scholarship was aggravated by the relentless pressure of current book and serial production. This manifestation of the Leibnizian nightmare challenged the Trustees’ will both to widen enforcement of the provisions for legal deposit and to hold the Treasury to its commitment to finance current foreign, and general retrospective, purchases after the shock of 1887/8. By 1935 an authoritative survey of libraries in Europe could insist that

> the mass of printed literature is now so great that, less than ever before, is any library now able from its own stock to satisfy all readers. There are probably at least 30 million different works in existence: the greatest library in the world, the British Museum, has perhaps hardly 1 in 10 of these, and most libraries hold an immensely smaller proportion.

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By the end of the nineteenth century it was becoming clearer that the only solution to the problem of ‘universal’ archival control was to incorporate each national library, though still as a leader, into a national, indeed international, library network. The amalgamation would provide the supplementary loan service required by scholars as well as laymen, based on a universal subject as well as author catalogue. This catalogue, in turn, would be based on the various national bibliographies and union catalogues, and would be retrospective as well as current in scope. Here was a grand design in substance anticipated by Dilke’s *Athenaeum* proposal of 1850; and whatever Panizzi’s disagreement with Dilkean views may have been, the logic of Dilke’s views was perceived – in varying degrees – by Panizzi’s successors in the British Museum Library. The next major figure in the Department of Printed Books after Panizzi, Richard Garnett, saw that the relative maturity of the library’s collections justified lifting Panizzi’s embargo on the publication of the General Catalogue, and masterminded that unprecedented, colossal, task not only as a means of containing the size of the manuscript working copy of the Catalogue in the Museum Reading Room, but also as the only step toward a ‘Universal Catalogue’ immediately possible.29

A. W. Pollard, the following major figure in the succession, not only opened up the vast retrospective, archival implications of the idea of the Universal Catalogue with the *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640*, but promoted the discipline and practice of historical bibliography (book history) as able to navigate the commercial-cultural promiscuity characteristic of the archive and its development, in particular (to begin with) the discipline and practice of close reading of variant copies of a text preserved in the archive to help resolve otherwise baffling cruxes in texts such as Shakespeare’s. Moreover he spread the gospel through effective bibliographical journalism such as his contribution ‘The Story of Printing: Gutenberg to Morris’ to *The Times Printing Number* of 10 September 1912 (a seminal influence on the young Stanley Morison) and two major book exhibitions – for the tercentenaries of the Authorized Version of the Bible (1911) and the First Folio of Shakespeare (1923). At the same time he pursued Panizzi’s original proposal for a separate national lending system by helping set up, and administer, the Central Library for Students (later the National Central Library) associated with the Adult Education movement of Albert Mansbridge and Haldane, part of the post-imperial social, cultural, and intellectual outreach project, and complemented in Pollard’s case by his joining the interfaith London Society for the Study of Religion – Islam and Judaism as well as Christianity.30

Finally, in his *Theory of National and International Bibliography* Frank Campbell, an intellectually adventurous Assistant in the British Museum Department of Printed Books, had, following Dilke, as early as 1896 produced a remarkable foreshadowing of the entire international network as it has eventually come to pass.31


Nevertheless, after the publication of the General Catalogue had been completed in 1905 the British Museum Library entered a half-century of deepening introversion: a lotus-land tendency, or stiffening of the joints, perhaps inevitable within any encyclopaedic archival collection, given virtual cultural-political inviolability (‘irresponsibility’, in Henry Cole’s phrase). In 1899 Campbell had resigned from a sense of frustration that soon proved fatal for him. Later, in 1929, the Trustees refused the recommendation to manage the National Central Library made by the Board of Education’s Public Libraries Committee, the Chairman of which had been their own Director – and Pollard’s ally – Sir Frederic Kenyon. This refusal had the effect, among other things, of obliging the independent Science Museum Library, under the direction of the innovative S. C. Bradford, to take over national leadership in scientific documentation and loan-service to off-site users. It thereby aggravated an apparent Panizzian indifference to the promotion of science and technology (albeit in Panizzi’s time a relatively harmless indifference, given the Royal Society’s Catalogue of Scientific Papers pioneered by Augustus de Morgan, a firm supporter of Panizzi). Indifference was already evident in the Trustees’ ambiguous response to another Pollard-Kenyon initiative in national and international bibliographical control helping extend the archival project to natural science. This was the World List of Scientific Periodicals Published in the Years 1900–1921 which after the first edition, promoted by Pollard, had to be continued by W. A. Smith and his associates at the Museum in their off-duty, spare time. Again, Pollard himself had eventually completed, in 1926, the Short-Title Catalogue for the period 1475–1640 but only after his retirement from the Museum (in 1924). Finally, in their management of the physical expansion of the Museum as a whole the Trustees began out-housing the relatively homogeneous but relentlessly expanding category of printed material – newspapers – with a depository built on cheaper land at Colindale in 1905.

III

By contrast, the energetic liberal-national state where the tension between the project for a national library and the professionalizing, specializing and geographic dispersion of scholarship was most strongly felt, and its resolution through union catalogues promoted most rigorously, was not Cavour’s Kingdom of Italy (of which Panizzi was made a Senator) but Bismarck’s Second Reich, erected after 1871 on the military and cultural hegemony of Prussia. As one of the most forceful of the Reich’s academic apologists, Heinrich von Treitschke, put it: acceptance of the widely felt need to promote the Prussian royal library in Berlin, in order to compete culturally with the national libraries of France and England, did not require the imposition of Panizzian autarchy at the expense of the confederal centres of scholarship and library collections traditional in Germany and modernized at Göttingen, Berlin and elsewhere. Quite the contrary: the inescapability of constructive interaction between libraries dispersed in

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Berlin, Göttingen, Bonn and so on, mediated by a general union catalogue, *Gesamtkatalog*, based in Berlin was ‘an invaluable piece of good fortune [that] corresponds to the character of our own culture’.\(^{36}\)

Further: tradition was converted into system with dispatch and thoroughness largely on the initiative and under the close supervision, not of a national librarian, but of the cultural *haut fonctionnaire* Friedrich Althoff: as Haldane put it, unlike Britain ‘overall Germany the Minister of Education is constantly on the watch’. In the words of Adolf von Harnack (one of Althoff’s closest and most distinguished collaborators, pre-eminent church historian, and later Prussian royal librarian), ‘military strength and learning are the twin pillars of German greatness; and the Prussian state, following its glorious traditions, has to care for the maintenance of both’.\(^{37}\) Hence, among the national union catalogues of the early twentieth century it was the Prussian *Gesamtkatalog* that was recognized as the leader, even in the Anglo-Saxon world of innovative general librarianship.\(^{38}\) Moreover in the far more hesitantly emerging world of international current and retrospective bibliographical control it was not the Royal Society’s eventually abortive International Catalogue of Scientific Papers but Althoff’s ‘World Catalogue of Incunabula’ (later the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*) which, riding on the solid base of nineteenth-century philological scholarship, stayed the course to become the first stage of the world information network.\(^{39}\)

On the other hand Althoff, together with Harnack (envisaging Panizzi’s library as exemplary, ‘vorbildlich’),\(^{40}\) failed to develop the central Berlin collection as an effective archival *universale Präsenzbibliothek* to be superimposed on the entrenched confederal centres (a failure eventually prejudicial – *pace* Treitschke – for German scholarship as a whole).\(^{41}\) Instead, the prestigious publishing cartel (*Börsenverein*) in Leipzig took responsibility for national printed archival deposit (die *Deutsche Bücherei*). Again, by 1939 the Berlin *Gesamtkatalog* was still unfinished, the unpublished parts being lost in the Second World War. Moreover the deliberate confining of the Althoff ‘system’ to research, and in particular to specialized, non-lending, research-institute libraries,\(^{42}\) and the virtual disregard of free public libraries, can be seen as an aspect of the ominous failure of the Bismarckian Reich to engage with what Harnack, in a delicately qualified memorial tribute to Bismarck, termed the ‘social sphere’ (‘soziales Gebiet’) of emerging mass democracy.\(^{43}\)

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38 Pafford, *Library Co-operation in Europe*.
41 Fabian, *Buch, Bibliothek und geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung*, p. 36.
Much of the bad as well as the good in the Second Reich was the result of an intensification – an eventually lethal intensification, to be sure – of trends common to Europe as a whole: the overreaction of a cultural-political confederacy only belatedly entering into the cockpit of ‘neighbouring and contending nations’ (‘benachbarte und wetterfernde Nationen’ in Ranke’s bleak phrase). The relative German failure in the social sphere can be seen as part of the general malaise of the segregated society of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. Moreover Althoff was above all blessed, or cursed, with a ‘somewhat buccaneering’ temperament. As one of his most famous domestic critics, Max Weber, suggested, by his cavalier treatment of the institutions of high culture in Germany Althoff in effect helped destroy the civility of German public life. And civility, in the otherwise dangerous interplay between highly energetic and focused ‘military strength and learning’, was the one thing needful to avoid breakdown.

IV

Engagement of the national research library with the social sphere of a geo-politically confederal but, unlike Germany, distended yet triumphant mass democracy, with its need for effective access to ‘genteel’ cultural authority as well as the archive, became the mission of the Library of Congress under Herbert Putnam. Inheriting in 1899 a library massively and conspicuously enlarged on the Panizzian model by Ainsworth Rand Spofford, Putnam was the first Librarian of Congress, and the first general administrator of any major national research library, to be recruited from the relatively new, and largely Anglo-Saxon, free public library movement – a movement that had been promoted in the progressive, former cultural periphery after the

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44 See the classic expositions by F. Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat* (Munich and Berlin, 1908), and Schnabel, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*.
47 K. Haebler, ‘Wie ich Inkunabelforscher wurde’, *Philobiblon*, 5/1/1 (1931), p. [7].
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defining moment of Civil War, more effectively than in the former imperial centre. As such, Putnam projected the Library of Congress on to a new path which he defined as the nationalization of the Library [...] by extending the benefits of its collections and of its technical processes to the country at large,

and, again,

[to] reach out [...] to the country at large through the libraries which are the local centres of research involving the use of books.

Though they were subject to the volatilities of a grass-roots Congress as well as to the enthusiasms of his co-professionals, we can see Putnam’s doctrine and subsequent practice of library service and leadership – as distinct from autarchy – inaugurating the next phase in the great tradition in national research librarianship and access to the archive.

Putnam’s practice derived largely from the progressive public library entrepreneurs, such as Melvil Dewey. It involved the elements of a national system of collaborative bibliographical control that was based on the continent-wide distribution of bibliographically self-sufficient Library of Congress catalogue cards which indicated (contra Panizzi) a book’s subject as well as author, and constituted a de facto union catalogue and interlibrary lending service for libraries serving as ‘local centres of research’. However Putnam further developed the outreach functions of the Library of Congress as a national institution of not only genteel high culture, but also of traditional folk culture not merely a collection of material for purposes merely utilitarian but an embodiment, so far as may now be possible, of influences for the promotion of culture.

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This involved cultural philanthropy in the form of a Library of Congress Trust Fund Board, attaching scholarly consultants to ‘interpret’ the ever deepening collections in classical mode (as well as, famously, commissioning musical works and performances), and Putnam found himself distanced from an increasingly demotic public library movement that aimed to make the Library of Congress the agency of a New Deal library ethos concerned with ‘leisure-time, cultural, social, education [...] activities’ and no longer, simply, with a ‘general public of serious investigators’. When Putnam retired in 1939, his major accolades came from scholarly groups such as the American Council of Learned Societies and the American Historical Association rather than the professional public library community.

The Library of Congress entered its classic era of international archival leadership as part of the rapidly enlarging American preponderance in the world after 1939, with President Franklin Roosevelt’s controversial appointment of the ‘public poet’ Archibald MacLeish as Putnam’s successor, pursuing this presidential initiative in 1944 with his appointment of MacLeish as Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural and Public Affairs. MacLeish’s appointment was closely involved with the Administration’s promotion of the new and (unlike the League of Nations) hopefully solid world order of the United Nations, and in particular its inspirational educational, scientific and cultural agency, Unesco. However the whole American national archive had been found to be dangerously inadequate for servicing the relatively sudden radical expansion and deepening of the country’s former peripheral involvement in world military, political and cultural affairs. This servicing now required, according to MacLeish’s initial formulation in 1940,

full and representative collections of the written records of those societies and peoples whose experience is of most immediate concern to the people of the United States — a fundamental doctrine which was significantly and substantially refined by MacLeish’s successor, Luther Evans, after victory in 1945:

No spot on the earth’s surface is any longer alien to the interest of the American people. No particle of knowledge should remain unavailable to them.

The execution of such global doctrine required the archival association of the Library of Congress with an increasingly articulated national library system of university, state, and large public libraries, and, in particular, the development of new collaborative acquisition and cataloguing methodologies to control the returning Leibnizian nightmare. This association can be said to mark ‘the second stage of the development of national libraries [...] the Co-operative Library’.

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64 S. Donaldson, in collaboration with R. H. Winnick, Archibald MacLeish: An American Life (Boston, 1992).
wartime challenge to military etc. intelligence and matured with the attempt to consolidate civility, as well as bid for world leadership, at the climax of the bipolar Cold War in the 1960s – the ‘Great Society’ of the Johnson administration.69 Beginning with the Cooperative Acquisitions Project of the Library of Congress Mission to Europe – launched in 1945 by Evans and MacLeish (now at the State Department) and over the next three years distributing to 113 libraries ‘a total of 819,022 books and periodical volumes’ of European wartime production70 – the post-war phase of Library of Congress leadership in cooperative global acquisition expanded with the Library’s administration (both centrally and in the field) of the federal Public Law 480 Program, which in the ten years from 1961 distributed more than 14 million items, mainly from politically unaligned countries of the Third World in exchange for US politico-economic aid, to forty-one major research libraries.71 An equally if not eventually more epoch-making innovation was the application by the Library of wartime developments in automated data processing (associated with Vannevar Bush, his presidential Office of Scientific Research and Development, and the Manhattan Project) to cooperative, digitized machine-readable cataloguing (MARC): a Hot and Cold War harbinger of la troisième révolution du livre imprimé, envisaging (with Unesco) ‘Universal Bibliographical Control’ (UBC).72 This application was first pronounced feasible in 1964, and was integrated with the acquisition strategy as a consequence of the National Program for Acquisitions and Cataloging (NPAC), itself part of the Johnson Administration’s seminal Higher Education Act of 1965.73 The collateral establishment of the (significantly presidential rather than congressional) National Advisory Commission on Libraries in 1966, its consideration of a detailed Statement submitted by the Library of Congress,74 with its recommendation that the Library be not only further strengthened but formally recognized as ‘the National Library of the United States’,75 represents a push towards the final predominance of the Library of Congress on the world scene.

For inevitably in an age of globalized cultural democracy, the mission of national library outreach did not remain confined to the United States. Rather than the by then almost fully introverted British Museum Library it was the Library of Congress that had influence on the long process leading to the establishment of national libraries and national library services in other ‘distended’ polities evolved from within the former imperial periphery: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.76 It was the ‘buoyancy and verve and confidence of the Library of Congress […] and the reliance by other libraries on its leadership’ that, on his own evidence, encouraged F. C. Francis, the last of the conspicuously innovating figures in the history of the British Museum Library, when initiating the radical changes in the Museum which eventually, if indirectly, produced the British Library.77 Further, among established libraries outside the

71 Downs, ibid., pp. 64-5.
75 Ibid., p. 516.
76 See, for example, F. D. Donnelly, The National Library of Canada: A Historical Analysis of the Forces which Contributed to its Establishment and to the Identification of its Role and Responsibilities (Ottawa, 1973).
English-speaking world, the leadership of the Library of Congress had already been shown by
the invitation in 1928 to help modernize the catalogues of the Vatican Library and in 1947 to
help amalgamate the Diet and Imperial libraries of post-Hiroshima Japan to form the National
Diet Library. Finally, the whole internationalizing of national library service to produce a global
archival network might be said to have begun with the Unesco/Library of Congress Survey in
support of the Unesco Conference on the Improvement of Bibliographical Services of 1950,
promoted by Evans (later the third Director General of Unesco), and then to have taken off
with the working-through of the MARC and NPAC systems and their international
implications in the Unesco/International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)
programme of Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC). One of the main original architects of
the eventual international network, President of IFLA, promoter of UBC (and Royal Librarian
of Belgium), Herman Liebaers, was likewise motivated more than a little by his ‘love affair with
the Library of Congress’.  
In the longer perspective, the buoyancy, verve and confidence of the Library of Congress can
be seen to have originated in what Howard Mumford Jones has called the ‘Age of Energy’
following the Civil War, specifically in what Jones terms the ‘pragmatic idealism’ in education
and politics that was necessary for finally establishing cultural distinction, as well as
cohesiveness, throughout a cultural-politically distended subcontinent – the leading creative
periphery of the English-speaking world. It was exemplified presidentially by Putnam’s
‘energetic’ associate, Theodore Roosevelt. This pragmatic cultural nationalism was and has
remained essentially pluralist in its organization. It involved library consortia and corporate
philanthropy – what Jones calls ‘the second stage of the capitalist-expertise symbiosis’
represented by Carnegie, Rockefeller, later Ford and Mellon and their foundations, as well as
the United States Congress and agencies of the federal government (such as, eventually, the
National Science Foundation, with its deep concern for scientific information transfer),
and in particular by the long ‘ascendancy of the American university’ (as Edward Shils, of
Rockefeller’s University of Chicago, has termed it) in establishing a sub-continental order of
learning. If the Library of Congress ‘has through [...] voluntary co-operation achieved more in
co-ordination than any other national library’, this result has been achieved by exercising
national and international leadership ‘in a low key’.  

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78 H. Liebaers, ‘American, European and International Librarianship’, in Mostly in the Line of Duty (The Hague,
also Wiebe, The Search for Order, especially ‘A New Middle Class’, ‘Progressivism Arrives’.
80 Jones, The Age of Energy, p. 172. Thus, the day-to-day arrangements for interlending in the United States have
been based largely in the city (for example, the Philadelphia Bibliographical Center), the state, and the region (for
example, the Pacific Northwest Bibliographic Center, the Mid-West Inter-Library Center/Center for Research
Libraries), rather than in Washington, DC. The enlargement and conversion of the Library of Congress card-
catalogue file into an effective national union catalogue was initiated in 1927 with funds not from the Congress
or the federal government but from John D. Rockefeller Jr. The eventual automation of union-cataloguing and
resource-sharing in order to produce a national network was, again, initiated not federally but locally, by library
consortia – the Ohio College Library Center; the Research Libraries Group – albeit based on the automated
Library of Congress catalogue files which had resulted from the feasibility study of 1964, itself sponsored by the
Ford Foundation’s Council on Library Resources. The year after the Coolidge Gift in 1925, Bowker gave $1000
to stimulate the Library’s bibliographical services across the board; and, later, the operations of the Center for the
Book were, and still are, funded exclusively by other private book- and media-oriented individuals and
 corporations such as McGraw–Hill, CBS, and Target, Inc.
81 G. Chandler, International and National Library and Information Services, Recent Advances in Library and

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However with the establishment after 1945 of the United States as the major world power such low-key pluralism underwent noticeable strain, largely as a function of the inevitably growing tension between strong, or would-be strong, globally entrepreneurial Presidents – Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Carter – and the sectionalized, distended, grass-roots Congress. Thus, after Truman’s loss of control of the Congress in 1946 came the defeat of the efforts of Luther Evans and his deputy, Verner Clapp, to associate the Library of Congress more closely with the international bibliographical system emerging in and around Unesco. The proposals for a formal national library and information network, developed during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, were lost in the fiscal retrenchments of the 1970s. Finally, the similar proposals made during the Carter administration (for example, proposals for a national periodicals lending library) were lost in the Congresses of the Reaganite 1980s, typified by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget restrictions.

In the words of the Library of Congress’s original Statement (fathered by the shrewdest of the post-war Librarians of Congress, L. Quincy Mumford) to the National Advisory Commission on Libraries: the one thing needful was ‘a felt demand from the country strong enough to convince Congress to vote [...] for the funds required for the full support of a national library, as well as of Library of Congress functions’. In contrast to the episodic Progressive Era of the first Roosevelt, there was insufficient ‘felt demand’ at the grass-roots level.

In this context the establishment in 1973 of the British Library, following the official Report of the National Libraries Committee under Dr F. S. Dainton FRS of 1969, with national archival responsibilities for collection development, conservation, bibliographical control, and inter-lending – all predicated on international as well as national collaboration yet all homogenized under ministerial influence, if not direction – was, to the historian of the Library of Congress, ‘a political achievement of considerable magnitude’.

Unencumbered, then, by an American-style separation of powers, the formal conversion in Britain of the national library complex into the hub of a domestic, and eventually node of an international, archival network required the persuasion, not of a whole Congress, but of the relatively few government ministers, civil servants and academic heads responsible for the political management of the order of learning. This major step, together with the earlier association of the Bibliothèque Nationale with the Direction des Bibliothèques under Julien Cain might be said to have marked the return of innovation in national library development to a recently traumatized Europe.

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83 Ibid., p. 40.
84 Libraries at Large, ed. Knight and Nourse, p. 446. For Mumford’s various statements prior to the Commission hearings, see Cole, The Library of Congress in Perspective, pp. 61-6.
However the matter was by no means so simple as that. It was true that F.C. Francis was already convinced that the Panizzian British Museum Library, in association with the National Central Library and its union catalogues, ‘could and should re-model its procedures so that it could take its proper place in meeting the new insistent demands of science and technology for a tailor-made literature service’.\(^89\) Indeed, he had made considerable, and by no means unsuccessful, efforts to move the Trustees and, through the Trustees, government to replace the humanities-based autarchy of the British Museum Library. Having helped set up the British National Bibliography as the national cooperative cataloguing agency, and (later) having initiated its collaboration with the American NPAC as the pioneering element of an international cooperative cataloguing system,\(^90\) Francis persuaded the Museum Trustees to absorb the Patent Office Library to become the National Reference Library of Science and Invention. This, together with the National Central Library (of which he was himself a leading trustee) he saw as forming, with a British Museum Library moving towards cooperative collection development, the hub of an effective national library system.\(^91\) At the same time however, as part of the attempt to further professionalize the Civil Service, the essential political element of the Panizzian arrangement had been removed with the transfer in 1963 of ministerial responsibility for the British Museum from the generalist, ‘Gladstonian’, Treasury to what was felt to be the appropriate specialist – meritocratic and managerial – ministry concerned with the delivery of specific, clearly defined policy objectives: the Department of Education and Science.\(^92\) Francis was unable to resist an eventual takeover of both the BM Library (finally separated, physically as well as administratively, from the Museum and its Trustees) and the National Central Library – as well as a progressive homogenization of their reference and lending functions – by a different bloc of powerful cultural-political interests (which he had certainly aimed to accommodate, but also to keep at arm’s length).\(^93\) This bloc consisted of those responsible for research in science information transfer within the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR, dating from Haldane) and, on the dissolution of the DSIR in 1965, their successors within the Department of Education and Science – the Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI) directed by Dr H. T. Hookway – inter alia formerly Director of the UK Scientific Mission (North America) in Washington and influenced by the preoccupation there with ‘Big Science’.\(^94\) Like other government circles at the time, this bloc seemed more concerned with ‘the nation’s economic wellbeing’, in the words of the Dainton Report to the Department of Education and Science (or even ‘the white heat of a technological revolution’, as successful political rhetoric then went),\(^95\) rather than traditional historico-philological scholarship and the textual archive.


\(^{92}\) William St Clair, in conversation with the author.

\(^{93}\) Harris, ‘Sir Frank Francis of the British Museum, 1901-1988’, p. 11.


After the Second World War the output of scientific and technical literature again grew so great that some entirely new developments were thought necessary, specifically by Hookway’s Office (OSTI) rejecting what it felt was Sir Frank Francis’s conception of the national library as ‘a museum of literature and not as a working library with a clearly defined set of uses’. \(^96\) (echoes of Haldane’s hostility to ‘exquisiteness’?). All this was given urgency by an acute sense of Britain’s relative economic decline following the brief euphoria of 1945 and the Festival of Britain, and the remarkable post-war resurgence of not only Germany but also France and Japan from defeat. It was effectively exploited by Francis’s main rival on the British national library scene, D. J. Urquhart, formerly Principal Scientific Officer at the DSIR, involved in the influential post-war Royal Society Scientific Information Conference of 1948, and Director of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology which had been set up by the DSIR as the high-impact development of the lending function of Science Museum Library, Urquhart’s original base. \(^97\)

One might say this bloc of interests represented a real alternative tradition in national library thinking in Britain, a tradition that we can trace back to Dilke, Cole and Campbell. \(^98\) Unlike the main line of Garnett > Pollard > Francis, the alternative tradition had risen steadily on the tide of scientific and technological information transfer during the first half of the twentieth century, \(^99\) reaching (as we have already noted) a high profile in Britain between the wars with the doctrine and practice of Urquhart’s predecessor at the Science Museum Library, S. C. Bradford. \(^100\) Though Bradford and the Science Museum Library had worked in effective pre-war collegiality with the National Central Library, \(^101\) it was Bradford’s classic paper of 1936, ‘On the Organisation of a Library Service in Science and Technology’, \(^102\) which prefigured the revival of the influence of scientisme (interest in the ‘informational’ content of books, rather than on books as artefact as well as content), not only nationally in connection with the eventual British Library but also internationally in the promotion, largely led by Hookway through Unesco, of the United Nations Information System for Science and Technology (UNISIST) and National Information Systems (NATIS). It was these programmes that proposed a political and financial base for a world information, rather than research, order. \(^103\) The distance between Francis and Urquhart

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\(^98\) Rayward, ‘Some Developments in Nineteenth Century Bibliography’.
\(^100\) D. J. Urquhart, ‘The Ecology of Inter-Library Loans’.
\(^101\) S. P. L. Filon, \emph{The National Central Library}, p. 152.
\(^102\) Bradford, \emph{Documentation}, pp. 102-22.
might be seen as an aspect of what was perceived in the 1960s to have been the breakdown in collegiality between the ‘Two Cultures’ of the humanities and the sciences. Indeed at the time, the founding of the British Library was perceived by government as helping to eventually re-establish such collegiality as a necessary condition for the further advancement of learning.

Indeed the maturing of the new British Library as the national research library after 1973 involved proceeding beyond immediate preoccupation with the informational demands of big science and technology. This re-equilibration was inevitable, given the revival of Pollardian contextual historicism across the whole order of learning – the history of science as well as of literature: a revival based by no means marginally on the potential of post-war automation for access to the total archive. Following initiatives such as the automated Anglo-American Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC) and the Incunable Short-Title Catalogue (ISTC), the British Library now had, in the words of its first Strategic Plan of 1985

[the] dual purpose of being the nation’s greatest source of information necessary for economic success and also an accessible repository of the knowledge and wisdom of the past which nourish the cognitive and affective parts of human nature thereby embodying ‘the “double aim” of pure culture on one hand and application of scientific and other knowledge to practical life on the other’ envisaged by Haldane and others at the end of the Panizzi era. Likewise at the international level, in his address at the launch of NATIS in 1974 Herman Liebaers criticized the maverick scientisme of Unesco’s UNISIST and NATIS programmes, and indeed the ‘pointless’ discussions centring around the idea of ‘two cultures’, given the fact that ‘the written document’ constituted a ‘permanent’ link between normal scientific documentation and philological research: hence the compelling, inclusive archival rationale of UBC in the new international

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105 Thus, for example, Lord Eccles, former chairman of the British Museum Trustees and first chairman of the British Library Board, in conversation with the author.

106 See, for example, A. Kenny, The British Library and the St Pancras Building (London, 1994).


110 Liebaers, Mostly in the Lane of Duty, pp. 63-9.
order of learning. Implicit in the archival rationale of UBC was the goal of retrospective digitized Universal Bibliographic Control; and following the lead of the ESTC and ISTC world research librarianship began, with the European collaborative Hand Press Book Database, to attend to the needs of scholars, historians of science, etc. as they prepared to coordinate our understanding of the fundamental process of ‘globalization in world history’, and ‘the larger curiosity about the world’s changes and multiplicities’, on the basis of digital access to the world archive as a whole, including records of aboriginality.

VI

Particularly since the 1980s and 90s access to the archival base of the order of learning was faced with radical if not revolutionary change, with the maturing globalization of finance, of digital information technology and digital scholarship.

The hostility of the post-Cold War war financial market to traditional, ‘corporatist’ Keynesian government deficit spending and regulation had meant that national governments were increasingly reluctant, indeed unable, to invest in public projects when private finance, in particular global venture capital, might be available to share, and even underwrite, the risk. Not only was the traditionally autarchic archive, and its cost, to be finally distributed, nationally and internationally, among research library partners, guaranteeing at least a fundamental common stock. Libraries were required to look for new ways of funding library and information projects which involved partnerships with commercial organizations that regarded digitized information, including archival and educational material, as a fundamental resource to be priced, and marketed globally to a newly perceived, digitally literate, life-long learning society:


in particular, a virtual universale Präsentbibliothek accessible – if often at a cost – by the serious reader as well as the scholar at his home work-station. In the words of the Library of Congress, national libraries had increasingly to look for the ‘support of […] entrepreneurial and philanthropic leadership’.  

To focus briefly on the retrospective development of the digital archive (associated, as we have seen, with the intensified contextual historicism of the order of learning).

The interest in the universal availability of corpora of electronic fully searchable text surrogates was in the process of completing the project of the ‘retrospective Universal Availability of Publications’ initiated by the publication of the Research Publications/British Library Eighteenth Century Collection, based on the Anglo-American Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue, and the British Library/Chadwyck Healey Nineteenth-Century Library. The fundamental strength and viability of the strategy depended on the effect of the public/private partnership basis in conjunction with the digital revolution in scholarship, encouraging academically sophisticated specialization within enterprising multinational corporations in part activated by post-1970 venture capital: for example in the case of the Eighteenth Century Collection Thomson Learning and its takeover of Research Publications, then Gale Cengage Learning owned by the private equity consortium of APAX Partners and OMERS Capital Partners and its takeover of Thomson Learning in 2007, systematically carrying forward the Eighteenth Century Collection as Eighteenth Century Collections Online within a characteristically 21st-century ‘integrated learning solutions’ portfolio. Even such initiatives had been overshadowed by Google’s announcement in December 2004 that, ‘in partnership with some of the great research libraries (including Oxford, Harvard and New York Public Library) it would underwrite the cost of scanning millions of books’. In 2005 Google ‘became the first partner of the public-private partnership with the Library of Congress and Unesco donating $3 million to support development of the World Digital Library’. Finally – and startlingly – in 2010 Google ‘estimated that there were about 130 million unique books in the world and that it intended to scan them all by the end of the decade’.

Even so, the task before the administrators of the research component of the distributed archive, facing the brave new world of the third millenium, was to sustain the typical single researcher by securing for him, within a virtual universale Präsentbibliothek, the archetypal, omnipresent textual oceanic feeling. From the point of view of the scholar there were the essential limitations of virtuality. As the use of on-site textual surrogates for purposes of scholarship had mushroomed, Pollardian explorers of the Literaturkontinuum and the virtual

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117 For current, distributive, development of the archive see the various recent reports etc. listed in n. 4 above, in particular the Research Support Libraries Group Report (the Follett Report), 2003, and the current British Library Collection Development website, <http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/coldevpol/index>.


universale Präsenzbibliothek,\textsuperscript{120} such as historical bibliographers and book historians like G. T. Tanselle, had to warn that there is no way that reproductions – regardless of what technology is developed in the future – can ever be the equal of originals as documentary evidence [...]. Many people apparently fail to see that [...] paper with written or printed words on it is also an artifact, containing an unreproducible assemblage of clues to its own genesis [...]. The study of the past requires artifacts from the past.\textsuperscript{121}

Or as D. F. McKenzie, initiator of The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain put it, more schematically:

our humanist memory bank is constituted by such discrete physical objects which directly encode all the signs of their distinctive constructions [...] Every act of reading is a new act of composition: everyone reads the same text differently; no one reads the same text twice in the same way. Because in that sense meaning is [...] conditional, the study of the conditions under which texts are generated – a study bibliographical in its central concern for the physical forms of texts – provides any ‘history of the book’ with its rationale as one of the most powerful means we have of recovering the past, for it is only through such signs that we gain access to those conditions.\textsuperscript{122}

Or as Robert Darnton, speaking as Librarian of Harvard as well as book historian, put it more concisely and severely:

computerized texts communicate a specious [sic] sense of mastery over space and time [...]. Therefore, I say: long live Google, but don’t count on it living long enough to replace that venerable building with the Corinthian columns [...] as a citadel of learning and as a platform for adventure on the Internet.\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{footnotes}

\footnote{G. T. Tanselle, ‘Reproductions and Scholarship’, \textit{Studies in Bibliography}, xlii (1989), pp. 38-9. A classic celebration of the particular copy of a particular book as ‘artifact’ would be Orwell’s depiction of Winston Smith reading Goldstein’s \textit{The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism}: ‘Julia would arrive presently: meanwhile there was the book [...] A heavy black volume, amateurishly bound, with no name or title on the cover. The print also looked slightly irregular. The pages were worn at the edges, and fell apart, easily, as though the book had passed through many hands [...] Winston stopped reading, chiefly in order to appreciate the fact that he was reading, in comfort and safely. He was alone: no telescreen, no ear at the keyhole, no nervous impulse to glance over his shoulder or cover the page with his hand [...] He settled deeper into the armchair, and put his feet up on the fender. It was bliss, it was eternity [...]’, \textit{Nineteen Eighty-Four} (London, 1950), pp. 188-90.}

\footnote{D. F. McKenzie, ‘Re-covering the Past: Conservation and Scholarship’ (Oxford: privately printed, 1993). Cf. McKenzie, ‘History of the Book’, in \textit{The Book Encompassed: Studies in Twentieth-Century Bibliography}, ed. P. Davison (Cambridge, 1992), p. 297: ‘[... ] every act of reading is a new act of composition: everyone reads the same text differently; no one reads the same text twice in the same way. Because in that sense meaning is [...] conditional, the study of the conditions under which texts are generated – a study bibliographical in its central concern for the physical forms of texts – provides any “history of the book” with its rationale as one of the most powerful means we have of recovering the past, for it is only through such signs that we gain access to those conditions.’}

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