Celia Emmelhainz and Jennifer Dorner

Listening to historians

Using a listening tour to improve library support for foreign language researchers

As at many other libraries, the University of California (UC)-Berkeley Library's budget has not kept pace with student enrollment. Yet our faculty and students continue to expect extensive research holdings and personal care. To improve our ability to meet researcher needs amid constraints, our team recently surveyed social science faculty on their use of foreign language materials[1] and followed up by meeting several historians for a "listening tour" of their needs from a research library.

In this short reflection, we discuss what we learned from seven historians about their changing use of academic libraries and how we used this to improve our services to researchers using foreign materials in our library.

Faculty use the library for articles while assembling personal collections of books. They seek out rare materials abroad, using websites for digitized books and primary sources when possible.

The historians we spoke with start their search in library catalogs, moving to Google Books or other means of access when frustrated. As Laura commented, "I used to use the library catalog, but then I became frustrated . . . so I started [searching] in Google Books, and then I try to find if we have it in the library."[2]

Other scholars search first in the online catalogs of relevant national libraries, then buy their own books rather than relying on library purchases or interlibrary loan. As Lewis said, "I buy a huge number of books. . . . I hate returning books. Recently, I got books from interlibrary loan . . . and returned them because I was going away on vacation. Then I got back to write an article and had to recall them again."

Several historians also noted that they scan their own books to use a digital version while traveling—a sort of controlled digital lending to the self.

When they hit barriers to using materials through ILL, faculty simply stopped using it.

One faculty member noted that the rare materials she wanted weren't lent between libraries. She describes how, after waiting six months for interlibrary loan (ILL), she called another library and asked them to digitize the book. Others find that the material finally arrives after their research has moved on. One said, "By the time . . . it comes you may have moved

Celia Emmelhainz, formerly of the University of California-Berkeley, is now manager of the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian, email: emmelhainzc@si.edu and Jennifer Dorner is the history librarian at the University of California-Berkeley, email: dorner@berkeley.edu.

to something else. So when books come I try to copy them whole, so they're there when I can mentally engage with them properly."

One researcher gave up on ILL years ago, while another prefers to order from Amazon Germany, which delivers European materials to his house within ten days. A third waits until their next research trip abroad to buy materials. In other words, faculty sometimes get trained by our systems and laws to expect that we cannot supply everything they need.

Faculty have a keen eye for what's "missing," but they view recommending materials as a favor that comes out of their busy schedules.

Faculty appreciated our English language collections but noted gaps in foreign material, recognizing that this often stems from a lack of funding for higher education. As Calvin noted, "There are moments when the library was acquiring, and moments where it was acquiring less. I have a sense of, if it's from the 80s or from the 50s, it won't be in our collections."

Yet faculty also find recommending items a favor to us, a favor that is harder to justify if they're not actually going through us to access materials they already located elsewhere. Katrina admits, "Honestly, I haven't been good about saying 'can you get these things?' I'm usually [abroad] once or twice a year, and I read it there."

Sometimes faculty saw finding useful books as *our* job; other times they didn't ask because they perceived their work as "too specialized" for our collections or something we "couldn't understand."

Faculty want subject and language expertise and are still adjusting to our move from just-in-case bibliography to outreach, instruction, and functional roles.

People who integrate foreign languages into their research value bibliographers and research librarians with deep subject and language expertise—and they sometimes don't perceive that academic library hiring trends have moved on. They look to librarians to locate rare resources rather than to teach the navigation of common resources to undergraduates. Lewis recalled that he arrived at a major research university at a time when there were bibliographers that seemed to focus on French and German history, something that we no longer offer.

When subject librarians do not have time or depth of knowledge in niche areas, faculty look to area studies librarians instead. Howard appreciated an area studies librarian who sat in on one of his graduate seminars, noting: "I want the graduate students here to have a good relationship with him. I don't think I understood when I was a graduate student how important a librarian could be. . . . Having him [as] part of our intellectual community hopefully makes it easier for our graduate students."

This desire for specialized service contrasts with our survey of the same faculty, where they indicated a preference for collections over services.[3]

Improving outcomes for foreign language researchers at Berkeley

The insights above gave us a general understanding of faculty attitudes. The comments below helped us make more concrete changes in our outreach and collection development:

We shifted from purchasing microfilm to investing in digital primary and secondary sources.

Each historian we spoke with reported moving away from microfilm to digitized resources. Calvin used to pay to have collections microfilmed, but has now scanned his personal microfilm collection to digital. Inez can find microfilm materials in HathiTrust or digitized by national libraries. Lewis noted a metaphorical "allergic reaction" to microfilm, using resources like the Internet Archive instead. And Katrina photographs primary sources and downloads digital images, saying,: "When I was a student, my advisors said, '*microfilm everything you can.'* Now it's 'take photographs.'"

As a result, we are investing more in digitized resources, and we also note that these comments suggest a need to follow up with faculty about good data management of their research files so they can access their personal archive of digital files for years to come.

We still buy print materials but added unrestricted ebooks to support our researchers while abroad—or while in a pandemic.

Several faculty noted that they like to examine manuscripts or reference materials on digital devices but prefer to do deep reading in print. Calvin uses ebooks for quick reference and citation questions while away from home but noted the gap in available ebooks from the 1960s to early 2000s. In response, he paid to have his personal book collection scanned so he could retain paper copies for deep reading while referring to digital surrogates while abroad—a sort of remote desktop access for his home print collection. This dual access became increasingly necessary for our readers in the early pandemic, which disrupted access to libraries, office bookshelves, and collection of research materials abroad.

We share library news where faculty pause—at their physical mailboxes and in faculty meetings.

So how do we reach such busy travelers? One person noted receiving hundreds of emails every day, admitting that they don't open emails from the library or their librarian. But they were more open to looking for updates in "the one place where all faculty members go"—the department mailboxes. As a result, we are working with our departments to post updates for faculty in the mailroom and to present briefly in faculty meetings.

We're acquiring more edited volumes and making chapter authors more visible in our catalog.

It's hard for librarians to evaluate edited volumes, which are rarely reviewed and not indexed by chapter author in our ordering systems. The result is that we sometimes miss purchasing key works by our own faculty.[4] Yet our historians reinforced the value of edited volumes, noting that as junior scholars seek high-impact journal publications, senior scholars have moved to writing book chapters. One faculty member described journals as "graduate student article repositories" while feeling that scholars built more "momentum" through monograph series, "because over decades of work, the same people were building arguments together that transformed our understanding."

Yet the shift to chapters is an issue for discoverability. Katrina noted, "I'd rather have a lot of work in edited volumes because it's with a group of concentrated people, and I'm going

to have more exposure. But I have students who say, 'I'd like to see this chapter of yours and I don't see it in the library.' I have 20 chapters in edited volumes, but only one book shows up when you search my name."

In response, we are looking for ways to acquire edited volumes based on chapter author. Our discovery tool is not consistent about listing chapters and authors, so we have used Google Scholar alerts on faculty members' names to surface newly published chapters for purchase.

We're scheduling regular check-ins about our scholars' future needs.

One of the most fruitful moments of our listening tour was when Inez commented, "Once this book is done, I will be interested in [books in Lithuanian] in six years. You're looking at what I'm researching today, but I'm planning for things that may not be in the collection in ten years."

Indeed, foreign language monographs are often for sale only for a limited time, so knowing now of her future interests can help us craft a collection that supports her "serendipitous" discovery in the future. This insight led us to plan regular check-ins with faculty about both present and future needs.

This long-term view also speaks to the value of retention in academic libraries, as such relationships are best built over the long run. I (Celia) was impressed with the relationships my senior colleague (Jennifer) had cultivated with these faculty over the years. In a large history department like ours, a librarian could easily meet with each professor once every five years and never run out of people to talk with about library support for research and teaching.

We're more attuned to the faculty research lifecycle.

Faculty stories made clear how much research changes across the lifecycle. Howard, for instance, founded his career on archival work in a place that has since become dangerous, and now relies on digital archives and secondary sources: "I worked in [a politically contentious region] with the manuscripts there, and made my own copies. Then the place blew up, and the archives are no longer there . . . so when it comes to the next project, how do I do this?"

Katrina is seeing the connections she built long ago come to fruition in the middle of her career: "This summer, I spent half my time in the [country A] library working with a lot of printed things, and then my mornings in the [country B] archive working with original [manuscripts]. I'm the first person who's been allowed to work with this particular archive. It pays to get old—they wouldn't have let me do it twenty years ago!"

Laura's health issues limit her ability to travel or even visit local libraries in person. At times, she struggles to get to campus to return her printed books for renewal and has shifted to using electronic resources late at night. These stories helped us realize that we need to adapt library policies to consider researchers who are located far away, on family leave, or have limited mobility and access to campus.

Faculty are on our side; they want relevant library holdings for the long run.

Finally, historians looked to the library as a lasting place for print and digital research. Katrina noted that she once worked at a college that moved to ebooks—then realized what they were missing and moved back to print books. She now seeks out both. Laura frames historians and librarians as having a shared concern with both immediate access and long-

term preservation: "I play with thousands of years . . . what stays in the end? When the formats change from parchment to paper, a lot gets lost. Because what gets transferred to the next format is only what matters to the few generations that experience the change of format. The more electronic things change fast, what we are reading now may no longer be available to people a few hundred years down the road. We've reached the point of not being able to store it all."

Notes

1. Susan Edwards, Chan Li, Celia Emmelhainz, Adam Clemons, Liladhar Pendse, and Natalia Estrada., "Collecting Globally, Connecting Locally: 21st Century Libraries," in *Library Assessment Conference Proceedings* 14 (2019): 700–713.
2. We have changed names and obscured details for each person we conversed with.
3. Edwards et al., "Collecting Globally."
4. Celia Emmelhainz and Natalia Estrada, "Searching for recent anthropology and archaeology publications," *ACRL-ANSS Currents* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 17–21.