

## **Research and Studies on Language, Area, and International Studies Issues**

Sandria B. Freitag

American Historical Association

The addition of this session (and its good attendance) reflects a central point alluded to frequently in Friday's plenary presentations: The history and successes of area and language studies in this country are fundamentally tied to the capacity to create new knowledge. "Research" constitutes a part of every other topic to be considered. The changing conditions surrounding scholarly work, in which a reauthorized Title VI would function, make it imperative that we deal explicitly with the topic. No knowledge system can survive—intact, functional, and effective—if we do not do so. The session participants thus addressed the three topics posed, in the following way.

### **1. Changed International Situation**

We wanted to begin by making the point that the international situation is *always* changing. Speakers have already made clear how altered are the circumstances in 1997 from those in 1958, and how those alterations moved incrementally from one reauthorization cycle to the next. There is clearly no grounds for assuming that the international conditions of today—or the policy problems posed or strategies such as "global competitiveness" now being adopted—will obtain even in a few years. Reshaping Title VI (and Fulbright-Hays)-supported activities to ensure the ongoing creation of new knowledge

thus needs to rest on several foundational principles:

First, *we must foster* what the bench scientists call "*basic research*"—in-depth, ongoing research to answer questions posed by the nature of the material itself (whether that be the medieval movement of intellectuals or the compilation of social science data) with no immediate, instrumentalist goal to be served. This *needs to be recognized as a fundamental responsibility of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs*. Events change rapidly, researchers cannot always anticipate where to work, to create the knowledge that will be needed to address contemporary issues. Only by accumulating a range of results on seemingly "irrelevant" topics to ensure in-depth knowledge will we be equipped to meet future challenges.

Second, *we must refute explicitly the specious logic that area studies was a product of the cold war* and, since that is ended, we no longer need area studies. With the end of the cold war we face a much more complex world, in which the training and skills of those able to encompass both the rigors and methods of their respective disciplines *and* the depth of knowledge of particular places are more necessary than ever.

Third, we must promote the *opportunity to work much more closely with scholars in other countries* as among the most salient of the post-cold war changes. This will be essential if we hope to succeed in dealing with the more complex world we face.

Fourth, *we must resist efforts to interpret the term "globalization" to mean homogenization*. We

substituted the term “glocalization” to emphasize the need for new kinds of local knowledge (e.g., ongoing work on changing language use and cultural constructions of identity) within a global and comparative framework. An ongoing understanding of the changing relationship between the local and the global will be imperative.

Fortunately, the basic framework established for Title VI recognizes the centrality of new knowledge, and the need, therefore, to support research. Several shifts in the way Title VI and Fulbright-Hays have been implemented are, however, suggested by these principles:

- Some areas invisible or previously privileged by cold war considerations may need special attention in these changing contexts, and ongoing changes are likely to make this flexibility an important part of new Title VI requirements. At the moment the key example may be the fact that those who work on parts of the previous Soviet Union no longer have sufficient research support to travel to and work in newly accessible archives.
- The impact of immigration on the United States, as well as research results focused on diaspora and the like, makes the previous distinction between area studies of overseas areas *only* and heritage communities much less salient. New flexibility in Title VI definitions will be important for fostering the creation of new knowledge that explores the fundamental connections between American citizens (and students) and the rest of the world.
- A much closer connection between the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays (and reverse Fulbrights) should be achieved, to ensure that intellectual goals and practical implementation dovetail in the efficient use of resources.

## 2. Capacities and Adaptability of the Academy

Sharply reduced support for research in the academy—both from external funders and from campus resources—is among the most crucial changes that a reformulated Title VI must recognize and deal with. General patterns across the academy are felt disproportionately by area studies, and for this reason alone a reformulated

Title VI must look carefully at the way its programs foster research.

The impact of *downturns in external funding provides the outline of the picture*. In a 1991 study conducted by the ACLS, some 90 percent of individual (portable) awards for research support came from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Area studies scholars received a satisfying proportion of those awards, as more recent reviews of the award lists have established. Since that time, of course, NEH support has been cut three years in a row; last year the cuts reduced the size of endowment funding by some 34 percent. The endowment, in reconfiguring its programs and goals, has made heroic efforts to protect its support for research, and its chairman has spoken repeatedly on the public interest served when the endowment fosters the creation of new knowledge. But it is revealing, from our perspective, to note the nature of the one pot of new money that has come to NEH in the wake of these cuts. The Mellon Foundation has established a new program with the NEH that provides individual (residential, not portable) research fellowships, for use at a selected number of private libraries and archives. These are a wonderful addition to the resources available for scholars, but few area studies specialists will find much useful material among the collections at the Folger, the Huntington, or their fellows. Changes in the funding of research are hitting area specialists disproportionately.

*Filling in the outline sketched by external funders are developments on campuses, where support for research—ranging from supplementary grants to released time and sabbatical leaves, and to workloads designed to include research—is being fundamentally altered*. To justify these changes, which are responses to downsizing and political pressures, administrators (and state legislators) try to pit research *against* teaching in order to increase workloads, and to use as accountability measures only the seat-time of additional students to gauge faculty “productivity.” It is absolutely essential that we use our programs to demonstrate that teaching and research, rather than being antithetical, are integral parts of the same knowledge system.

*In terms of senior scholars, we are in danger of losing all the accumulated expertise produced by previous decades of research support*. External funders report decreasing numbers of applicants; we think that stems especially from the fact that levels of support provided by these fel-

lowships are so low that scholars cannot use them alone to do research, and campus support is atrophying so that they cannot combine external fellowships with campus support and survive to successfully conduct research while on leave from their campuses.

*In terms of doctoral candidates, we are in danger of losing the next generation's capacity to generate new knowledge because of the shrinking support for dissertation research. Dissertation support from the Social Science Research Council (working with Mellon money), for instance, has recently been reduced from eighteen months to nine months. Within this extraordinarily short period of time, doctoral students must improve their language capacity, extract materials from foreign and unfamiliar archives and societies, and frame their studies not only in ways that satisfy their discipline's understandings of rigor but that satisfy the new SSRC emphasis on comparison.*

*In terms of undergraduate students, we run the risk of missed opportunities to ensure that future K-12 teachers (especially through offerings in world history, geography, etc.), business people, and the like, understand the larger world through programs overseas that combine cultural exposure and classes that use research training in local materials. With greater flexibility in center support, we could also expand undergraduate understanding of research (and facilitate faculty research) by creating stipends for undergraduate research assistants.*

There are a number of implications for reshaping Title VI and Fulbright-Hays in the face of these extraordinarily profound changes in the academy:

- We need more flexibility in Title VI requirements, to encourage innovative programs that recognize and support the fundamental *connections* between teaching and research. Not only good teaching materials, but the best instructional methods, require the fostering of these connections. The quality of undergraduate instruction in history, for example, is being raised by the movement for “active learning,” which requires faculty to engage students in the practice of history, working with primary source materials (which, especially in the growth of world history courses, ought to be from area studies sources) to establish cause-and-effect, etc.
- We need recognition in graduate student support (FLAS, SSRC, and others) that fostering the capacity to create new knowledge in area studies—given the need to combine discipline understandings of rigor and method with linguistic capabilities and familiarity with distant and difficult archival materials—takes a longer time and more financial support.
- We need rewards in Title VI support that recognize ways to “apply” basic research in collaborative approaches through new consortial and other arrangements that increase the capacities of individual campuses to support research. These innovations accomplish several purposes at once: bring back to center-supported library collections those who had been graduate students trained there and now working at non-Title VI campuses; enhance the capacity to continue creating new knowledge by compensating for campus short-falls in supporting research; strengthen networks of scholars in the United States and abroad by fostering collaboration; enhance the capacity to tackle new issues by bringing different kinds of expertise together.

### 3. The Unique Niche of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays Programs

The relatively small amounts of money available through Title VI make it imperative that the future shape of the program be used to foster the capacity of campuses and scholars to deal with the larger changes of international circumstances and in the academy itself. In this respect, the ability to create new knowledge must lie at the heart of the reshaping process, however it becomes linked (on the campuses) to language instruction, library collections, or changing undergraduate instruction, and (nationally) to global competitiveness, national security, and the like. Leveraging and innovative model programs lie at the heart of this strategy. Leveraging can foster increasing aggregates of research support funds; flexibility in program regulations can encourage innovation in tying the creation of new knowledge to other elements of the knowledge system now supported by Title VI and sources beyond it.

As many participants in the conference have noted, *the presence alone of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays resources provides area studies and language faculty with tremendous evidence to influence administrators' decisions about programs and allocations.* Such funding can be used as leverage for seeking other funds, especially to support research. At the same time, this form of funding provides the seed around which nontraditional and cross-disciplinary programs and approaches can be designed and encouraged.

For example, the use of *Title VI resources to support a core of area specialists can also become the opportunity to encourage the addition of area expertise to other faculty members' knowledge base.* In an era of downsizing, this new composite form of area-focused research and teaching should be seen as a legitimate and creative strategy for campus use of Title VI support.

*Rather than seeing area studies and disciplines in competition, Title VI should use the campus organization around (discipline-based) departments as an opportunity.* Support of research that will ultimately be measured by disciplinary notions of rigor and methods, but is focused on issues and questions raised by area studies, is much more likely to be innovative and challenging to the core of the discipline. In this way, efforts that begin at the "margin" of the way the academy is organized, can be supported until the importance of the contributions move them to the center. The current influence of both women's studies and postcolonial studies, two interdisciplinary areas that posed new questions and, working with new forms of evidence, have challenged central understandings in a number of disciplines, demonstrates how this has worked to great benefit in the creation of new knowledge.

*The twin focuses of discipline and area studies also enable expansion in the range of support for research that can be brought to the campus,*

and that play out, as well, through networks national and international in scope. (Folks at the ACLS have pointed out to me that when they ask overseas scholars who they want to work with in the United States, they identify scholars by discipline, not as area studies specialists.)

Implications for the reconfiguration of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays to take full advantage of leveraging and model-building in support of research thus would include:

- Flexibility in defining "core faculty" on a campus to include both specialists in a particular region, and specialists who use their content to work comparatively, would enable Title VI centers to demonstrate the importance of shared research agendas to serve as a base for building strong area knowledge.
- An emphasis on innovative and collaborative programs focused on the creation of new knowledge would enable Title VI centers to leverage the resources on their campuses with external funding (and support from other campuses). This expanded support could be used to bring international scholars as well as area studies specialists from non-Title VI campuses together on extended research projects as well as short-term conferences, seminar series, etc.
- A funding system or set of regulations that rewarded closer integration of area studies centers and (discipline-based) departments would ensure greater security for area studies work, while enriching and challenging the core of many disciplines. Working together, the new knowledge created by these different orientations would move the knowledge system ahead in significant incremental leaps to the benefit of the public interest in this country.

**This page is blank**