

An Archival Retrospective

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In this brief retrospective, I look at the establishment and development of the official Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Archive almost 30 years ago. As the Society's Historian, I view the Archive's establishment as more than a footnote to CIES history; it is indeed a cause for celebration. The existence of an official archive is a mark of distinction for a professional organization. It signifies that the organization has been properly and solidly institutionalized, and, more importantly, that the field and people it represents have a sense of institutional memory. Almost 30 years or so of existence is not long for an archival collection, and we are fortunate to have a rather decent one, something not to be taken for granted.

To be sure, the Archive stands as a monument to the Society's institutionalization. However, to be truly useful it should also serve as a creative source of the historical record. It will not serve the latter purpose if it is no more than a large deposit box, and, candidly, it is not much more than a big stuffed space at this time. A proper archive breathes with life, with some people tending to its growth and development and other people drawing wisdom from its contents. These categories of people need and nurture each other. The work of those assigned to put the collection in order is wasted if there are not people to exploit the information and knowledge it contains. Conversely, those who seek to draw knowledge from the collection will be thwarted in their purpose if no one has cared for the archive's management and expansion.

The establishment and development of the records collection — and the assignment of people to tend it — have marked the Archive's first three decades. I believe that it is time now to concentrate at least as much on building the second group: that is, comparativists who exploit the information contained within. Indeed, I contend that the Archive will begin to wither as a facility unless people begin using it. Fortunately, a few critical steps have been taken toward making the Archive a living collection, but much more needs to be done.

Let's look briefly at the Archive's development, which has been almost entirely focused on building — as opposed to using — the collection. The Archive was established at Kent State University by action of the Society's Board of Directors in October 1980, and the first donation to the collection was made in January of 1981 by

George Z. F. Bereday, the first Editor of the *Comparative Education Review*.¹ By the beginning of 1986, the Archive contained largely the records of the Secretariats at UCLA (1973-76), Pennsylvania State (1976-79), and Southern California (1979-83); complete files of the *Comparative Education Review* from 1957-62 and 1979-85; and a complete hard-copy set of the *Review* (including one of the only two official sets in existence) and of the Society's *Newsletter* (1965-83), which replaced earlier "Newsnotes". Philip Altbach, when he was Editor of the *Review*, did much to facilitate the Archive's establishment.

After the early years, much of the work aimed at systematizing the deposition and inventorying of current records and files of Society officials, and seeking donations of materials to fill in gaps of the older records. By 1995, the Archive contained substantial (though by no means complete) files of the Society's Presidents; complete files of the *Review* editorships of Bereday, Altbach (1979-88), and Erwin H. Epstein (1989-94; subsequent collection through 1998); business files (only) of the editorships of Harold J. Noah (1966-71) and Andreas Kazamias (1972-78); and a variety of miscellaneous formal reports and conference planning documents.² During this time too the Archives became the official depository of records for the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, a role that the Society Board of Directors had declined to take on some years earlier. The new posture of the Board reflected its recognition of the importance of the World Council to the field of comparative education generally and to the part the American Society was now playing in the Council's welfare and development.³

From the mid-1990s on, the Archive continued this work and has become a substantial collection ready to be properly mined. I attribute this maturation in good part to the sustained efforts of Kim Sebaly and the archivists at Kent State, who have been stalwarts in developing the collection, even during times that the Society displayed little

¹ Yongchu Kim and Kim P. Sebaly, *Comparative and International Education Society, Records, 1954-84, Inventory*, January 1, 1986, p. 1 (unpublished document). This document incorrectly shows Bereday's editorship as terminating in 1962, when in fact he remained Editor through 1966.

² CIES Inventory, *Comparative and International Education Society, Records, 1956-1994*, pp. 1-2 (unpublished document).

³ During the early years of the World Council, many member of the American Society regarded it as a largely European organization, having little to do with the issues of interest to American comparativists. That attitude began to change in the 1980's and changed for good in the 1990's.

interest in the enterprise. Other people at Kent State, especially Gerald Read, a founding member of CIES, now deceased, and Vilma Seeberg, have also contributed their time and guidance. In brief, Kent State has been a fine repository for the Society's records. In 1980, James W. Geary, Director of Library Administration at Kent State, wrote the following to Phil Altbach in his proposal to house the Archives:

Before closing, Dr, Altbach, let me add that I believe that the records of the Comparative and International Education Society will be a welcome addition to our holdings. Let me also apologize sincerely for the necessary formality of this letter, but part of Kent State's success in this area stems from honoring commitments made. Rest assured that should these institutional records be transferred here, they will have a good home.⁴

Kent State has indeed been true to its promise.

It has taken almost three decades to establish a firm platform for the Archives. Yet it is still only a platform. The Society has yet to breathe real life into the collection, to make it truly useful for the field and its practitioners, and not just a preserve of passive records. The Board of Directors took a critical step in this direction by appointing in 1999 the first Historian, Elizabeth Swing, with tangible responsibility for oversight of the Archive. Dr. Swing spent considerable time in examining the collection and identifying topics of importance to the field for which key sources reside in the Archives.⁵ Such measures are important to avoid having scholars discouraged by the large investment in time and resources required to make use of the collection.

Nevertheless, much more needs to be done to make the Archive a living, breathing part of the profession. However important may be the measures taken thus far, the collection remains largely untapped and opaque to all but a very few comparativists. What then are to be the next steps? How is the Archive to move from passive preserve to an actively used facility? The keys here are to give the Archive the recognition it deserves and to make the records accessible. Let me list five actions that I believe would advance these purposes.

⁴ James E. Geary to Philip Altbach, September 10, 1980. Personal papers of Erwin H. Epstein.

⁵ See Elizabeth Sherman Swing, *Comparative and International Education Society Historian's First Annual Report, March 2000* (Revised 2/18/2000), unpublished document.

First, the CIES Constitution should be amended to take proper account of the Archive. Only recently has our governing document even acknowledged the Archive, and this was done only tangentially — by indicating that its supervision is to be done by the Historian. No other mention is made of the collection. Such limited language puts the cart before the horse. The Constitution gives the Historian the task of ensuring the Archive's good order, but is mute about the establishment, nature, and role of the Archive itself. It is as if the Archive is to function to give the Historian something more to do rather than to serve a visible and broadly acknowledged purpose warranting the appointment of someone with formal authority to monitor it. The implicit message is that the Archive is no more than a depository, devoid of value except for knowing that it exists.

Second, inventory lists should develop into a catalogue, so that scholars need not spend endless hours in blind searches. The thought of facing a mountain of unclassified documents is surely enough to keep potential researchers from using the facility. With the availability of a catalogue, work on the collection will be far less daunting.

Third, as a long-term project the records should be converted to electronic form and made accessible on the World Wide Web. Such an undertaking would require considerable time and resources, but it can be done gradually, starting with the inventory listings and a records catalogue. Such a project would have value from the very beginning. However partial may be the records to be accessed early on, accessibility is immediate as soon as even the partial records come on line, giving the collection a vastly magnified exposure.

Fourth, a network with other relevant archival collections should be established. Seventeen years ago, Gerald Dorfman, Curator of the Paul and Jean Hanna Archival Collection in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, wrote me regarding his interest in such collaboration. The Hanna Collection contains extensive personal papers of such illuminati as I. L. Kandel, William Brickman, R. Freeman Butts, and Paul Hanna, as well as important documents of interest to the field, such as original IEA papers from the University of Stockholm.⁶ The Board of Directors should authorize the Historian to approach curators of the Hanna collection and such formative institutions as the London

⁶ Gerald A. Dorfman to Erwin H. Epstein, October 31, 1991.

Institute of Education, Columbia University, and the University of Chicago about sharing personal papers and documents with the Society's Archive.

Finally, the Society should release funds to encourage the use of the Archive for research on the field's development. Inviting scholars to submit proposals for funding support would encourage activity to advance institutional memory and knowledge of important events and figures in our field, vital elements in securing an enduring identity for our profession.

In conclusion, we have a legacy to pass on to new scholars, but it is a legacy that is still mostly hidden in the collection boxes at Kent State. Those boxes contain valuable secrets that will remain locked without devices for unlocking them. It is only a question of our having the will to put those devices in place.