

[This is a reprint, as a single essay, of the two-part essay "The American Folklife Center: A Twenty-Year Retrospective," original published in *Folklife Center News*, vol. 18, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1996), pp. 3-19; vol. 18, no. 3-4 (Summer-Fall 1996), pp. 3-23. Online versions of the two parts may be found at the American Folklife Center's website: <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/fcn/fcnhome.html>. The original publication includes a number of illustrative photographs, which are unfortunately not reproduced here or at the Center's website. But many university and other libraries have runs of *Folklife Center News*. – AJ]

THE AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER: A TWENTY-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

The American Folklife Preservation Act

This year is the twentieth anniversary of the birth of the American Folklife Center. The American Folklife Preservation Act, Public Law 94-201, passed both houses of Congress at the end of 1975 and was signed into law by President Ford on January 2, 1976. Twenty years is a generation, by some systems of reckoning, which invites reflections on the course of the Center's development--and the state of folklife itself--as we approach the millennium. The bill that ultimately created the American Folklife Center was originally inspired by the Festival of American Folklife, first presented by the Smithsonian Institution in 1967. Conceived by the Smithsonian's Secretary, S. Dillon Ripley, and its director of performing arts, James Morris, as a way of making the museums "come alive" on the National Mall, the festival was created by Ralph Rinzler, who brought to the challenge his previous experience with the Newport Folk Festival. Its success drew the attention of members of Congress, and a bill was drafted that, after several years of debate and negotiation, resulted in the creation of the Center.

The legislation had an impact even before its final enactment. It was initially drafted to create a grant-giving foundation, but its grant-giving provisions drew opposition from the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, which had been created in the 1960s to provide grants in the cultural sphere. The endowments argued that their legislation already provided a mandate for grants dealing with "folklife"--the term was then novel in the public sphere, but "folklore" had a venerable history in both public programs and the academy in the United States. Folklorists advocating passage of the legislation retorted that, since the endowments favored "elite culture" over "folk culture," a third agency committed to folk culture was necessary to balance the cultural equation. The endowments protested that they had already given grants dealing with folk culture; the folklorists insisted that they had not, and that in any case they lacked the expertise to determine whether they had.

The debate triggered by congressional consideration of the legislation led Nancy Hanks, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, to call a formal meeting on the subject, and then to launch the Folk Arts Program at the Arts Endowment in the spring of 1974. That program has had a profound effect on the development of folk arts programming around the country. Unfortunately, though the Humanities Endowment has hired folklorists to serve on its professional staff, it developed no comparable program during the past generation.

The legislation itself remained in Senate committee until late in 1975. Sen. Claiborne Pell, who chaired the committee and had been a key sponsor of the enabling legislation for the two endowments, had grown sympathetic to the folklife bill but felt that federal grant-giving for cultural activities should be confined to the existing endowments. After a compromise was negotiated deleting the grant-giving provisions from the folklife bill, Senator Pell reported it out of committee, and it passed the Senate at the end of the first session of the 94th Congress.

On balance, many factors were conjoined in passage of the legislation. The intrepid advocacy of folklorist Archie Green kept the bill alive through years of backstage debate and steadily broadened congressional support for the concept. The argument that the bill would right the balance culturally, counteracting the elite bias of the two endowments, proved effective, advancing the legislation while simultaneously pressing the endowments to pay more serious attention to folk cultural traditions. The conjunction of the bill with the approaching Bicentennial of the American Revolution was likewise helpful, for the celebration of the Bicentennial in 1976 took a grassroots turn, emphasizing the variety of local, ethnic, and other cultural traditions as strands in the fabric of the nation. The 1970s in general were a period of increased attention to "roots" – those aspects of heritage that lie between the individual and the nation, and that connect individuals to communities while defining the nation as a whole pluralistically.

The definition of folklife in the American Folklife Preservation Act anchored the Center firmly in the expressive culture of the family, ethnic, religious, occupational, and regional groups that make up America. When the Senate suddenly appeared about to move on the legislation, Archie Green, the bill's key lobbyist, anxiously contacted a Senate aide with the sole purpose of modifying certain phrases in the legislation's definition of folklife. The aide later expressed wonderment that the critical issue in the final moments was refining the concept, not arguing for more money. But the definitions and justifications of the act, apart from shaping the direction of the Center, have influenced other federal agencies, state legislation, and even the legislation of other nations in the twenty years since passage of the act.

Birth of the Center

The legislation had originally conceived of a foundation within the Smithsonian Institution, but for a variety of reasons the host agency became the Library of Congress, which since the 1920s had built a famous archive of folk music and folklore. The Library had supported the legislation from the outset, but final passage of the bill caught the institution in a moment of transition between retiring Librarian of Congress L. Quincy Mumford and the new Librarian, Daniel J. Boorstin. Arrangements for launching the Center were undertaken by Elizabeth Hamer Kegan, who had served the Library for many years as Assistant Librarian of Congress. A reception was arranged in honor of the legislation's passage; the board of trustees was appointed by the Speaker of the House and the president pro tempore of the Senate; Dr. Boorstin convened the board for its inaugural meeting, during which it elected distinguished folklorist Wayland D. Hand as its first chairman; and in September of 1976 the Librarian appointed me as the director. I had formerly served as head of the Library's Archive of Folk Song and had been director of the Folk Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts from 1974 through 1976.

Starting up an office – especially one with no precedent in government – has its special administrative challenges. One must, for example, fashion job descriptions for positions that have never before existed, such as "folklife specialist." Early staff appointments to the Center included secretary Paula Johnson (now at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History); research secretary Carol Armbruster (now with the European Division of the Library of Congress); secretary-editor Brett Topping (who later accepted a position at the National Museum of Women in the Arts); folklife specialists Carl Fleischhauer (now with the National Digital Library program of the Library of Congress), Elena Bradunas (now residing in Hawaii), and Howard W. Marshall (now at the University of Missouri); executive assistant Eleanor Sreb (now retired); deputy director Ray Dockstader (now retired); secretary (now administrative assistant) Doris Craig; and researcher (now folklife specialist) Peter Bartis.

At the end of the first partial fiscal year of the Center's history, not all the funds for staffing could be spent, so equipment was purchased for the purpose of future fieldwork. A bit of money still remained, so the Reverend Howard Finster of Summerville, Georgia, was commissioned to paint two signs and two paintings in honor of the Center's creation. Reverend Finster, who has subsequently become nationally famous, calls the commission his first recognition outside of Georgia. The two paintings hang in the director's office today – when they are not being exhibited by various museums around the country.

Early Initiatives

One of the first initiatives of Librarian Daniel J. Boorstin was to open up the main front entrance of the old Library of Congress building, now known as the Thomas Jefferson Building. For years the main entrance, which opens into the Great Hall and the Main Reading Room, had been closed as an economy measure. Opening the door, for Dr. Boorstin, symbolized making the Library a more open and accessible institution. Since the American Folklife Center had been created just as he arrived at the Library, he suggested that the Center sponsor a public event on the plaza in front of the main entrance to vivify its grand opening. The Center responded with a noontime concert on September 23, 1976, featuring Washington bluesmen Big Chief Ellis, John Cephas, Phil Wiggins, and James Bellman. The concert was arranged by Richard K. Spottswood – now the host of a weekly folk-music program on Washington's WAMU-FM – who at the time was completing his editing of the fifteen-volume record series *Folk Music in America*, issued by the Library in celebration of the Bicentennial. The event was so successful that there was an immediate clamor for more concerts on the front steps of the Library. Thus was born a twenty-year series of programs on what was dubbed "Neptune Plaza," in honor of the fountain featuring Neptune between the plaza and First Street.

The Center's next initiative was more ambitious and again drew upon the ideas and energies of Dick Spottswood. On January 24-26, 1977, the Center sponsored its first conference, on the subject of "Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage." The conference sought to highlight the importance of the vast corpus of ethnic recordings produced by American commercial recording companies in the first half of the twentieth century. Though scholars and collectors had paid attention to the "hillbilly records" and the African-American "race records" of

the same era, the stunning variety of recordings from various ethnic groups in the United States had not been collected, archived, analyzed, or reissued. They represented an untapped trove of heritage, and the gathering of scholars, collectors, ethnic record producers, and others was calculated to bring this heritage to the attention of a wider audience. The conference was augmented by an exhibit on the subject and an evening concert featuring Texas border singer Lydia Mendoza and the Polish Highlanders of Chicago.

In retrospect, the ethnic recordings conference succeeded in the longterm results for which it was designed. A few years later the Center published a book drawn from the conference, *Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage* (1982). A further outgrowth of the conference was Spottswood's discography *Ethnic Music on Records* (7 vols.; Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), a monumental work of scholarship assembled with assistance from the Library's Information Technology Services office and still maintained and updated as a Library computer database. In the years following the conference, many ethnic records from the early twentieth century were reissued, fueling a renaissance of interest in and performance of any number of ethnic music traditions in the United States. The initiative was the Center's first major undertaking, and it illustrates how the Center from its inception established and cultivated points of continuity between itself and the Archive of Folk Song, which had preceded it at the Library.

The first full year of the Center's operations was 1977, and in that year it launched two field documentary projects, the Chicago Ethnic Arts Project and the South-Central Georgia Folklife Project. They set into motion a pattern of field documentary projects that has characterized the Center's work for the two decades of its existence. Both projects were arts-connected. The Chicago project, coordinated by Elena Bradunas, responded to a request from the Illinois Arts Council, which had been mandated by its state legislature to begin a program in support of ethnic arts and asked for guidance on the networks and artistic traditions of Chicago's many ethnic groups. The Georgia project, coordinated by Howard W. Marshall, responded to an invitation from the Arts Experiment Station, based at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and operating programs in an eight-county area of south-central Georgia.

Though one was urban and one rural, both projects emphasized the importance of documenting artistic traditions professionally, using sound recordings and still photography, with an eye both to creating public products and to building an archive for the future. In this respect they bore the imprint of the Center's media specialist, Carl Fleischhauer. Both projects also were designed with the strategy of leaving behind a permanent position in the region after the Center's work was over.

The Chicago project led to a lengthy final report with recommendations to the Illinois Arts Council for future programming. At the same time, the contributions of project photographer Jonas Dovydenas were highlighted in the exhibition and catalog *Inside Our Homes, Outside Our Windows*, which opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 1979 and later traveled to the Library of Congress, then to Springfield, Illinois, Milwaukee, and (with the help of the USIA) Dubrovnik. The Georgia project took another tack. After the fieldwork was completed, the Center held a series of workshops in the region to report to local citizens on the results of the fieldwork. A booklet of photographs entitled *Sketches of South Georgia Folklife*

was distributed to workshop attendees. The archive for the Chicago project includes extensive manuscript materials, 342 sound recorded tapes, 8000 black-and-white photographs, and 3700 color transparencies. The Georgia collection is similar but somewhat larger and includes video recordings. A reference archive of the collection was prepared for an institution in the project area – a customary procedure in later projects.

The South Georgia Project had one further product not foreseen when the project was planned. In 1978 the Center drew upon the results of the project to create a photographic exhibit on South Georgia folklife. The idea cross-pollinated with an Atlanta-generated exhibit on Georgia folk art, "Missing Pieces," and the Library's exhibits officer, Michael Carrigan, decided to fill the entire ground floor of the Library's Jefferson Building with both exhibits. The First Lady and Amy Carter helped open the double exhibition. Rev. Howard Finster, who had sent his art by Greyhound bus to help launch the Center not long before, still talks about the Georgia contingent's hair-raising airplane ride to Washington to see the exhibition.

The Center and the Archive

On November 17-18, 1978, just over two years after its creation, the Center organized a symposium on the Archive of Folk Song in honor of the Archive's 50th anniversary. Implicit in the celebration was the fact that a few months earlier, on July 31, the Archive had been transferred from the Library's Music Division to become part of the Center. Founded in 1928 within the Music Division, the Archive made important contributions to ethnography, folklore and folk music research, public programming, and cultural documentation and preservation in every decade of its distinguished history. Its heads included Robert W. Gordon, John A. Lomax, Alan Lomax, Benjamin A. Botkin, Duncan Emrich, Rae Korson, Alan Jabbour, and Joseph C. Hickerson. Though originally named the Archive of American Folk-Song, it had begun documenting folk music beyond the borders of the United States as early as 1935, when Alan Lomax recorded in the Bahamas, and by 1940 it had expanded its documentary scope well beyond folk music into folklore, verbal arts, and oral history. Since the 1950s it had been named simply the Archive of Folk Song.

The 50th anniversary symposium marked a turning point for the Center's development. The legislation specifically authorized the creation of an archival center for folklife. Center field projects were rapidly generating a large new archival corpus of documents in several media. It made no sense to duplicate the efforts of an existing archive within the Library by creating a separate archive for the Center. Further, the Center staff believed in a cycle of activity moving from field documentation to archival preservation and access to public programming. Lacking an archive meant lacking a critical stage in that cyclical process. At another level, so long as the Center was separate from the Archive, it was in a real sense separated from its institutional history within the Library and seemed extraneous to the institution. The conceptually logical and economical solution was to merge the Archive of Folk Song with the Center, at once making the Center whole and wedding it to the history and mission of its host institution.

Joining the Archive fully to the Center was a long process. Initially it was simply an administrative matter: the three staff members of the Archive – Joseph C. Hickerson, Gerald E.

Parsons, Jr., and Patricia Markland – were transferred to the Center roster. But in time each "part" of the Center inevitably began to influence the other. The first important step toward integrating their missions was changing the name of the Archive. In 1979, reflecting both the historical broadening of the Archive's purview and the Center's need to deal archivally with all aspects of folklife, the name was changed to the Archive of Folk Culture.

Field Projects, East and West

One way the Center immediately changed the Archive was by infusing into its collections the multiformat documentary results of field projects representing a panoply of folklife traditions. Field projects were a major activity of the Center over its first two decades. They may have seemed to represent a new direction, but in reality they restored an activity that had characterized the Archive in the 1930s and again in the 1970s. Looked at in that light, the Center's innovation was not in instituting fieldwork, but in expanding it to include not only music but verbal arts, material culture, occupational traditions, and other aspects of culture not documented by the Archive in an earlier generation.

Similarly, the basic tools of documentation expanded to include not only sound recordings but photography. And finally, the process of fieldwork expanded from the classic one or two workers to teams of several professionals working in close interaction. Yet the ideal of fieldwork – generating a permanent body of knowledge for the archive through documentation in the field – can be said to characterize the whole history of folklore and folklife activities at the Library of Congress, from the Archive's inception in 1928 through the Center's work in the last quarter of the century.

The early field projects mounted by the Center in Chicago and South Georgia were followed by a project in 1978 in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. The area is legendary for its musical traditions – well represented in the early recordings of the Archive of Folk Culture – but that was not why the Center chose the Blue Ridge for a major project. Instead, the choice of locale was made by the Center's partner in the project, the National Park Service. The director of the Park Service, William Whalen, had been named by President Carter to the Center's board, and discussions began on collaborating to study the folk cultural traditions within and surrounding a national park. Planning focused on two possible sites, Olympic National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway; the Blue Ridge Parkway was finally selected.

The Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project focused on a band of counties bordering the Blue Ridge in northwestern North Carolina and southwestern Virginia. The project team documented a wide range of Blue Ridge traditional life, from festivals and jam sessions through church services and religious narratives to crop harvesting and food curing. In comparison to the Center's 1977 projects, the Blue Ridge project was more comprehensive: artistic expression remained the central focus of the documentation, but the sweep of fieldwork was broader than in South Georgia and much broader than in Chicago. A perusal of the photographs reveals not only music, dance, crafts, preaching, stories, and community celebrations, but beans drying in the back window of a car in a parking lot, Mexicans harvesting cabbages, and teenagers at a drive-in. The Center was merging the Archive's tradition of artistic documentation with the concept of

ethnography.

A goal of the Blue Ridge research was to provide the National Park Service with knowledge of the living cultural traditions along the Blue Ridge Parkway for use in park interpretation and planning. The Park Service has a long-standing interest in traditional culture, but cultural interpretation had often been filtered through a lens that, in the Center's opinion, sometimes made traditional culture seem solely a function of the historical past. Countervailing with a vigorous portrayal of the presentness of culture – no less alive, dynamic, and developing for being traditional – was perhaps the central thrust of Center documentation in such projects.

The Blue Ridge work yielded two significant products, both reflecting the tenor of the fieldwork itself. *Blue Ridge Harvest*, edited by Carl Fleischhauer, provided a balanced photographic statement not only about the project but about the texture of culture and community in the region. It is, surprisingly, a rare instance of a photographic publication making a balanced, comprehensive statement about American grassroots culture. *Children of the Heav'nly King* is equally unusual, presenting a specific subtheme of the project, religious expressive traditions. Edited by project coordinator Charles K. Wolfe, its two long-playing recordings, coupled with a lengthy textual and photographic booklet, bring together not only religious music but sermons, prayers, religious narratives, and (through the photographs) religion in the cultural landscape. No such multimedia statement on American religious expression had appeared before, to the best of our knowledge, but its influence is discernible on later publications from other institutions. It provided no little satisfaction to Center staff that subsequent visits revealed both publications in the homes of many Blue Ridge citizens.

In 1978 the Center launched its first Western project. Center staff had been eager to expand the Center's westward purview, and the national media were just beginning to focus, under the headline "Sagebrush Rebellion," on the feelings of national neglect, federal encroachment, and cultural endangerment in the ranching country of the inland West. Walking into a sagebrush rebellion carrying a federal banner might seem imprudent, but Center staff wanted to try their documentary skills on traditional ranching and felt that the rising concerns about the future of ranching in the West provided a potential policy backdrop for Center fieldwork. The quest for a site narrowed to Nevada, and then, in consultation with Nevada university colleagues, to an old and multi-ethnic ranching community in the north-central part of the state, Paradise Valley.

Paradise Valley was the first Center project that stretched fieldwork beyond a single season. It also became the first project to include extensive documentation with 16-mm film. The principal ethnographic subject of the motion picture film was a trail drive bringing cattle from the mountains down to the home ranch of Les Stewart in the valley. Stewart was himself a close observer of tradition who had documented traditional ranching practices on 16-mm film in the 1940s and often provided his own narration when he screened the film for 4-H classes and other groups. Carl Fleischhauer responded with a strategy of documentary collaboration: he not only recorded Stewart's contemporary narrations for the older films but showed him sequences of the newly shot footage and filmed his insider's commentary on the buckaroo arts captured therein.

Despite the Center's emphasis on the importance of planning products for each project, the

Paradise Valley work was begun without a clear product in mind. As it turned out, it has been one of the most product-rich Center efforts. That was a time when exhibitions attracted a great deal of energy within our field and in Washington. Howard W. Marshall, the Center's project director, had persuaded Smithsonian colleague Richard Ahlborn to join the field team, and soon a plan was afoot to produce an exhibit featuring their work. The final result was an unusual collaboration: the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History presented the exhibit *Buckaroos in Paradise*, and the Library published the companion volume of the same title.

In 1983 the Center produced a comprehensive exhibition on *The American Cowboy*, and the section on contemporary cowboy life featured the Paradise Valley collection again. President Reagan presided over the opening of the exhibition in the Library's new Madison Gallery. One of the highlights of the exhibition, an interactive display using a videodisc produced by Carl Fleischhauer, presented the film sequences shot with Les Stewart and his hands in Paradise Valley. It marked the first use of what are now referred to as "new technologies" for public presentation by the Library.

After the exhibition, the Center took the technology a step farther, publishing a double-sided videodisc with a lengthy booklet entitled *The Ninety-Six Ranch*. The title names Les Stewart's ranch, and the disc features his ranch both today and through his 1940s film. In fact, the publication encompasses more than a single ranch; it is a multimedia encyclopedia of Paradise Valley in film, photography, and recorded sound. Over a decade later, another facet of the project – the architecture of Paradise Valley, with special attention to the traditional Italian stonemasonry dotting the valley and the West generally – received attention in Howard W. Marshall's book *Paradise Valley, Nevada: The People and Buildings of an American Place* (1995). Perhaps the Paradise Valley collection will next appear online, continuing its productive history as a documentary collection into the next century.

Cultural Conservation

The Blue Ridge and Paradise Valley projects both drew the Center into the array of cultural issues associated with what is sometimes called "land-use planning." In addition, the Blue Ridge project was the first of a series of collaborations between the Folklife Center and the National Park Service. The second was not so successful.

In 1979 the Center was approached by Park Service officials regarding the possibility of mounting a research, programming, and planning effort in the counties along the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. The waterway, which was already under construction, was to run through northeastern Mississippi and southwestern Alabama, connecting the Tennessee River with Mobile Bay. Funds were available through the Department of the Interior to conduct what are termed "mitigation" efforts to counteract any adverse impacts of the project on the region's cultural resources. "Cultural resources" were generally understood to consist of historic and archeological sites; the Center saw the project as an opportunity to broaden the concept to include living cultural traditions. But though construction was already underway, part of the project was not yet funded. Some environmentalists continued to oppose it, and the Center found itself drawn into controversy within the field of folklore and folklife studies about whether accepting mitigation funds lent support to a public works project the ultimate fate of which was

not yet determined. In the end, the Center withdrew. But the withdrawal did not signal the end of either the Center's involvement with the National Park Service or its exploration of the connections between living cultural traditions and the large family of activities and issues involving historic preservation, natural conservation, and land management. In fact, a new opportunity presented itself within a year.

Federal historic preservation responsibilities, which comprise an important cluster of cultural programs and activities, are managed principally within the National Park Service in the Department of the Interior. In 1980 the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives began consideration of a bill amending the National Historic Preservation Act, which is perhaps the most important piece of national legislation dealing with historic preservation. An early draft of the new legislation included a clause calling for a study of the relationship between living cultural traditions and the preservation responsibilities of the federal government.

I immediately got in touch with House Interior Committee staffer Loretta Neumann to discuss the clause. In the ensuing months, the Center was an active ingredient in the parleys, negotiations, and hearings that characterize the course of a bill through the Congress. In the end, the clause remained essentially intact:

The Secretary [of the Interior], in cooperation with the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress shall, within two years after the enactment of this Act, submit a report to the President and the Congress on preserving and conserving the intangible elements of our cultural heritage, such as arts, skills, folklife, and folkways. The report shall take into account the view of other public and private organizations, as appropriate. This report shall include recommendations for legislative and administrative actions by the Federal government in order to preserve, conserve, and encourage the continuation of the diverse traditional prehistoric, historic, ethnic and folk cultural traditions that underlie and are a living expression of our American heritage. (National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980, Title III, Section 502)

The bill passed in the waning days of the 96th Congress, with the Carter administration departing and the new Reagan administration preparing to arrive. Washington waited for the dust to settle, but early in 1981 I met with Bennie C. Keel, departmental consulting archeologist for the Department of the Interior, and we resolved to collaborate in fulfilling the mandate provided by the new legislation. The proposed study needed a fulltime coordinator, so Ormond Loomis was borrowed from the Florida Folklife Program. A committee of independent consultants was constituted from the fields of folklore and folklife, anthropology, archeology, and historic preservation, and the drafting of the report began.

Exactly how the title of the final report came to be is a little mysterious. But it was clear to many of us that "intangible elements of our cultural heritage" would not suffice. The term "intangible" (which came from the world of archeology and historic preservation, where tangible culture is the focal subject) is problematic in that it defines something by what it is not. Further, there was a strong sentiment within the Center staff – corroborated by our independent consultants – for

making the report deal with the entire system of working with culture, not just a portion of it.

These matters must have been on our minds one day when a group of Center staff convened to discuss the report (still at an early stage of preparation) with Ormond Loomis. The question arose about giving the report a stronger, more positive title. A few words and phrases were kicked around. Then someone said "cultural conservation"; none of us can now remember how it came up, or from whom. We all murmured the phrase, then looked at each other. Our new phrase was positive and focused; it provided an umbrella under which the various disciplines concerned with cultural action could unite; it chose a noun that resonated with the dynamic ecological models of natural conservation, as opposed to the static images of freeze-frame preservation; and finally, it alliterated. The phrase stuck, and *Cultural Conservation* was the title of the final report. Today, more than a decade later, the term has a life of its own and is cited by scholars and cultural specialists from many fields as a descriptive banner for their collective mission.

The Center's next project, in the Pine Barrens of southern New Jersey, carried the concept of cultural conservation a major step farther. The *Cultural Conservation* report had sought to bring into a working relationship all the key professional fields of cultural endeavor – folklore and folklife studies, archeology, historic preservation, and planning. But though the study appropriated the term conservation, the report did not give as much attention as it might have to the world of natural conservation, ecology, and environmental research. The Pinelands Folklife Project remedied that earlier neglect.

The Pine Barrens of South Jersey were the subject of much environmental discussion in the 1970s and early 1980s, culminating in legislation creating the Pinelands National Reserve to protect the special environment of the region, from its pristine aquifer through its endemic species and archeological and historic treasures. The Reserve was to be managed, not as a park or wilderness set-aside, but as a dynamic environment where people had always lived and would continue to live. The Pinelands Commission, made up of representatives from federal, state, and local governments, would manage the gradual and orderly development of the region to ensure that its unique features are not obliterated by suburban development, industrialization, and other forces.

The Commission promptly sponsored research on everything from the endemic species to the archeological and historic sites of the Pine Barrens, in order to factor knowledge of "natural and cultural resources" into a long-range planning process. But somehow no one thought to study the living cultural traditions of the region today. The Center's Pinelands Folklife Project, launched in 1983 under the direction of Center staffer Mary Hufford with assistance from several state agencies, sought to correct that oversight.

The Pinelands Folklife Project was broad in its sweep, and it probed the interstices of what are normally thought of as "nature" and "culture." It is not surprising that the fieldwork revealed a connection between the natural resources and the cultural traditions of the region. What is surprising is the depth of that connection. Some "natural resources," like white cedar, have been managed by human tending throughout the historical era – making them as much cultural as natural resources. Some endemic species seem to owe their existence to the periodic burning of

the land, which has been going on at the hands of humans since prehistoric times. Contemplating the Pine Barrens, it is hard to say precisely where culture leaves off and nature begins.

The project had two tasks: to make recommendations to the Pinelands Commission about incorporating project findings into long-range planning, and to share the findings more broadly with the general public – including especially the people of the region. The first product was *One Space, Many Places: Folklife and Land Use in New Jersey's Pinelands National Reserve*. Designed as a report to the Pinelands Commission, it fulfilled the first task and contributed to the second as well. It has been a popular volume within the region and has also found its way into classrooms and onto planners' desks as a model for dealing with similar issues in other regions. But something more was called for to fulfill what the Center took to be its public mandate. Happily, the project had stirred great interest among various New Jersey agencies, and the New Jersey Historical Society, New Jersey Council on the Arts, and New Jersey State Museum eventually collaborated in a major exhibition and companion book, both entitled *Pinelands Folklife* and both drawing heavily on the fieldwork of the Center and the vision of the Center's project director, Mary Hufford. Among the visitors to the exhibition at the state museum in Trenton were thousands of citizens of the Pinelands, excited and, we hope, empowered by the public evocation of their traditions and way of life.

A 1985 project in Utah permitted the Center to experiment further with the connections and compatibility between folklife and historic preservation. The Grouse Creek Cultural Survey focused on a single community in northwestern Utah. Its field team was composed of folklorists, historians, and architectural historians representing several Utah cultural agencies. Its goal was simply to demonstrate to historic preservation offices that a multidisciplinary field team would yield a deeper, fuller portrait of the salient cultural features of a community – in this case, a community of Mormon buckaroo traditions, lying on a cultural fault line between the Mormon farming belt and the ranching traditions of the Great Basin.

The Park Service Connection

Cultural conservation as a working concept has had many facets for the Folklife Center. So has the Park Service connection. The Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project connected with the National Park Service's management of national parks; the cultural conservation study and the Grouse Creek Cultural Survey connected with a different network of professionals, both within and outside of the National Park Service, concerned with archeology and historic preservation. The Center's next project, in Lowell, Massachusetts, opened up yet another dimension of cultural conservation to be explored with another network of professionals connected with the Park Service – planners.

Lowell, as an early mill town, is prominent in the history of American industry; it is perhaps less prominent as a multi-ethnic contemporary city. Like other such cities, it was in economic decline for much of the twentieth century, but it was blessed by community leaders who united to begin planning the town's renewal. The planning led to the creation of Lowell National Historical Park, and it also led to the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, which was to work in coordination with the park but embraced directly the broader goal of community redevelopment.

The Commission engaged the Folklife Center in a project to identify, document, and plan programs addressing the ethnic and neighborhood traditions of Lowell.

Lowell was not the Center's first urban project. It had begun with an initiative in Chicago in 1977, and in 1979 it had undertaken a folklife field survey of Rhode Island, a heavily urban state. Center staffer Peter Bartis, who had worked on the Chicago project and directed the Rhode Island effort, served as the key staffer for Lowell. The project brought to the fore the relevance of folklife to cultural planning for a city, just as the Pinelands project had pressed for the inclusion of folklife in planning for a rural region. Community cultural planning is a cornerstone in the architecture of cultural conservation, as envisioned in the Center's policy study of that title. From the mid-1980s on, a number of Center field initiatives explored in fuller detail the implications of the idea.

The Maine Acadian Cultural Survey of 1991, undertaken again at the invitation of the National Park Service, assessed and documented the cultural traditions of the St. John Valley in far northern Maine. Center staffer David Taylor, himself a Maine native, directed the project. Congress had passed legislation mandating attention to Maine Acadian cultural heritage under the auspices of the Park Service, and the survey's charge was to define the boundaries and character of the region (a valley dominated by Acadian French traditions), enumerate its prominent cultural resources, and prepare a report laying the foundation for future regional efforts. It is noteworthy that the Maine Acadian project followed the precedent of the Grouse Creek Cultural Survey by defining itself as a "cultural survey," not a "folklife survey." The Maine legislation cited "folklore," but the Center found it more important to show a reach and breadth of expertise, redefining "cultural heritage" in the process, than to labor to assert the importance and define the boundaries of "folklife."

Two projects in West Virginia, both directed by Mary Hufford, continued the trends discernible in the Pinelands, Lowell, Grouse Creek, and the St. John Valley. The first was the New River Gorge Folklife Project, undertaken in conjunction with a Congressional expansion of the New River Gorge National River (a national park). Its report and recommendations dealt with a proposal to establish a crafts and folklife center at a site within the park. The second, entitled the Appalachian Forest Folklife Project, is exploring traditional culture along West Virginia's Coal River with particular attention to regional cultural knowledge and use of the natural environment. In it, the Center finds itself in a mediating role between scientists concerned about evidence of forest health or sickness and local people who represent the only ample reservoir of knowledge about the subject.

Finally, a recent project in Paterson, New Jersey, in connection with an urban history initiative in New Jersey mandated by congressional legislation and administered by the National Park Service, has returned to the urban planning model exemplified by the earlier Lowell project. The Paterson work, however, has shifted from an ethnic emphasis, as in Lowell, to a focus on occupational traditions in a city that, since the dawning of industrial America in the late eighteenth century, has symbolized the importance of manufacturing and the concomitant importance of labor and small business skills and traditions.

From the New Jersey Pinelands on, these projects have explored a new approach to fieldwork. The Center found itself working in a world of planners and scientific surveyors, and its role has been to mediate between planners and local citizens by providing models through which local culture could be included in planning. Within the National Park Service, the planners represent a new generation of park professionals who have been gradually abandoning the acquire-control-and-manage model for national parks and exploring models for cooperation with local communities, operating on the premise that local people should be enlisted, not evicted. Their attitudes coincided with a clear trend in congressional legislation toward a new kind of park unit that blurred park boundaries, extolled partnership as a goal, sought cost-sharing with local and state governmental units and the private sector, and envisioned the living culture of citizens as a resource worth celebrating and conserving.

Characteristics of Center Field Projects

Field projects, spanning as they have the entire first generation of the Center's existence, have in a sense defined the Center, just as field recording expeditions defined the great Lomax era of the Archive. The Center's fieldwork ranged from documentation of folk arts in the early years to immersion in community cultural planning in the later years. Broadening of purpose has been a clear trend, though the projects never lost sight of the power of expressive culture to define community life and values. Curiously, the trend within the Center's history parallels a noticeable broadening of scope in the Archive from the mid-1930s on. Perhaps there is an imbedded impulse in the professional occupation of folklore to broaden scope.

Nevertheless, certain recurrent features may be called the hallmarks of Center field projects, whether early or late:

- * Use of teams working together in the field;
- * Emphasis on professional documentation, including high-quality sound recordings and professional photography;
- * Attention to the full span of expressive culture in all forms;
- * Interest in documenting the full range of everyday life;
- * Development of publications, exhibitions, and other public products from the fieldwork;
- * Cooperation with other federal and state agencies;
- * Involvement of local people in defining the thrust of fieldwork and in developing plans and recommendations;
- * Creation of large multi-format ethnographic collections as a major product of the fieldwork;
- * Creation of reference archives in regional repositories;
- * Strengthening local capacity to continue the work in the future.

In a century that might fairly be described as the documentary century, the idea of documenting and preserving culture through the use of new technologies began the century in the realm of scientific and artistic experimentation, and ended the century as a mode of human intercourse so

widely diffused as to become a generalized cultural mechanism. In the late twentieth century, documenting culture *is* culture. If something is important, one should take photographs, make sound recordings, or aim a video camera at it; next, by subtle inference, documenting it symbolically affirms one's belief in its importance.

In this context, the Center has reflected, and at times anticipated, the larger trends in cultural documentation in the later decades of the century. Center field projects have both broken new ground and continued a tradition of folklife field documentation associated with the Library of Congress since early in the century. In the process, the field projects also provided a major infusion and caused a substantive transformation of the Archive of Folk Culture, adding over a half million items in various media to the Archive's collections.

Field Documentation Projects and Cultural Surveys

Chicago Ethnic Arts, April-July 1977
Coordinator: Elena Bradunas

South-Central Georgia Folklife, July-August 1977
Coordinator: Howard W. Marshall

Paradise Valley Folklife, seasonal visits 1978-82
Coordinators: Howard W. Marshall and Carl Fleischhauer

Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife, July-September 1978
Coordinator: Carl Fleischhauer

Rhode Island Folklife Survey, July 15-December 31, 1979
Director: Kenneth S. Goldstein
Coordinator: Peter T. Bartis

Montana Folklife Survey, July 1-September 15, 1979
Director: Barre Toelken
Coordinator: Carl Fleischhauer

Ethnic Heritage and Language Schools, Spring 1982
Coordinator: Elena Bradunas

Pinelands Folklife, September-November 1983
Coordinators Sue Samuelson and Mary Hufford

Grouse Creek [Utah] Cultural Survey, summer 1985
Coordinator: Carl Fleischhauer

Lowell [Massachusetts] Folklife, June 1987-June 1988
Coordinators: Peter T. Bartis and Douglas DeNatale

Italian-American Folklife in the West, March 1989-October 1991
Coordinator: David A. Taylor

The Maine Acadian Cultural Survey, January 1991-January 1992
Project Director: David A. Taylor
Field Coordinator: C. Ray Brassieur

New River Gorge [West Virginia] Folklife, December 1991-May 1992
Coordinators Mary Hufford and Rita Moonsammy

Working in Paterson [New Jersey], summer 1994
Coordinator: David A. Taylor

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#### Other Research Projects

To many observers of the American Folklife Center's first twenty years, the field projects described in the first installment of this essay comprised the dominating form of research project for the Center. But the Center undertook other kinds of projects as well. Its first "project" had been the conference on "Ethnic Recordings in America" (1977) and its resultant book *Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage* (1982). Soon after that conference, Center folklife specialist Elena Bradunas and researcher Theodore Grame devised a plan for a national survey of ethnic broadcasting. Ethnic radio programs were then (and remain today) a widespread and long-standing cultural medium for ethnic communities, and ethnic television programs were already becoming common. Like commercial recordings, these broadcast evidences of ethnic cultural maintenance were not an unknown phenomenon. Most Americans were aware of the African American and Spanish-language stations dotting the aural map of the United States, and many had had cultural encounters with, say, Cajun music on the radio in southwestern Louisiana, or Polish news, music, and community announcements in Chicago. But what the national survey and report, *Ethnic Broadcasting in the United States* (1980), brought home was the ubiquity of ethnic broadcasting on the airwaves – except, interestingly, on public radio and television – and its importance as a tool for cultural maintenance among ethnic communities throughout America.

As it happened, the Center's survey of ethnic broadcasting coincided with concern at the Federal Communications Commission with monitoring certain practices in commercial broadcasting. In particular, "time-sharing" by stations – the practice of renting broadcast slots to a programmer from an ethnic community, who manages the entire planning and presentation of the final broadcast – had received some criticism for being amateur, unpredictable, and difficult to monitor. Language barriers heightened this sense of official anxiety. Who knew what was being broadcast during the weekly Maltese radio program in Detroit or the Basque program in Elko,

Nevada? Such policy issues arise regularly in official Washington, and they point to the need for research efforts with a national scope and a focus on policy applications. In this case, discouragement of time-sharing by the FCC would have had the effect of depriving many ethnic communities of a voice on the local broadcast media. But when the FCC promulgated a request for public comment on the virtues and defects of time-sharing, the Center was able to submit a national survey and a set of recommendations that seem to have had a genuine impact on the ultimate FCC decision: to continue permitting, or even to encourage, time-sharing in the future.

Ethnic recordings and ethnic broadcasting were followed by another project with an ethnic orientation. In 1982 the Center launched a new national study, the Ethnic Heritage and Language Schools Project. Like ethnic broadcasting, ethnic schools represented a relatively familiar phenomenon in many parts of the country, yet few Americans were aware of the scope and diversity of ethnic education. Indeed, the study revealed that most ethnic communities that supported after-school, weekend, or other kinds of ethnic "schools" were unaware of similar educational programs in other ethnic communities. Nor, with the exception of some pioneering work by sociologist Joshua A. Fishman, had ethnic schools been the subject of previous research – despite the avowed interest of educators in supporting ethnic diversity and community involvement in public-school education. Tackling ethnic schools proved conceptually challenging, for the Center had to begin by defining a universe. Should the project include or exclude ethnic programs within public schools? Parochial schools? Should it concentrate on heritage programs? Language training? Religious education? How about special ethnic schools like American Indian schools? Center staff resolved some questions of focus, then solicited further definition from colleagues around the country through a request for proposals to study specific ethnic school programs.

The ethnic schools study differed in design and strategy from other Center studies, in that it was conducted by independent researchers at sites they had proposed to the Center. The final tally of sites included a variety of educational and cultural programs representing a variety of ethnic groups. Most of the sites were urban, though a few were rural. Most involved after-school programs outside the purview of professional educators or state and municipal curriculum standards. Many involved instruction in religious traditions, and most entailed language instruction. Formal introduction to arts associated with the cultural group was a common denominator. And all the programs could be said to be controlled wholly by the ethnic community itself, and thus to represent community values in the cultural education of young community members. Having wondered initially whether ethnic schools amounted to "folklife," in the sense of maintaining cultural traditions by informal rather than formal means, Center staff concluded that the firm anchoring of these programs in community values fully justified the Center's exploration of them as a cultural phenomenon. The resultant publication, *Ethnic Heritage and Language Schools in America* (1988), offers portraits of thirteen of the twenty schools studied in the project. It remains a seminal exploration of a neglected facet of American cultural education.

The Center began a third research project in 1979 that proved one of the most ambitious and challenging it has undertaken. Though all Center projects have increased the collections of the Archive of Folk Culture, the Federal Cylinder Project was the first to be based on existing

Archive collections. The Archive over the decades had received many wax cylinder recordings of ethnographic material documented in the field from 1890 through the 1930s. Indeed, it had received so many that the Library's Recording Laboratory had developed a special expertise in the engineering challenge of copying them. Some had been copied onto disc in the 1930s and 1940s, and more were copied in the magnetic-tape era beginning in the 1950s. But many of the over ten thousand wax cylinders and cylinder-based recordings in the Archive had never been copied for preservation and access. As the decades passed, it became apparent that the survival of the cylinders was imperiled. Not only were they extremely fragile, but they were made of emulsions that, in the fullness of time, tended to separate. Oils exuded into a film on the surface, where they attracted molds and other external perils. What was needed was an intensive and comprehensive effort to preserve them.

The time-consuming engineering required for preserving cylinders was going to be expensive. But equally time-consuming and expensive would be the cost of organizing and cataloging the collections to make them useful for research. In an extreme example of the cataloging challenge, one box of cylinders in the Archive contained absolutely no information except the large letters "ESKIMO" scrawled on the box; it turned out to contain the earliest field recordings made in central Africa. The solution to the twin challenges of finding resources for preservation and cataloging lay in a third challenge. Sometime in the 1970s there was a sudden increase in American Indian visitors and correspondents attracted by the Archive's reputation as a national repository for American Indian music and lore. Most inquirers were of the younger generation; all were seeking their cultural heritage. Perhaps three-fourths of the cylinder recordings contained American Indian music and lore. Since they were recorded between 1890 (Jesse Walter Fewkes's cylinders of the Passamaquoddy Indians in Calais, Maine, the earliest field recordings anywhere) and the early 1940s, they represented the earliest recorded information about Indian tribal culture available from any source. More than that – they represented, for young Indian researchers, somebody's grandfather or great grandmother. The third challenge, then, was to return copies of these unique cultural resources to the tribal communities whence they came.

The Center devised a three-pronged plan for preserving, cataloging, and disseminating the cylinders; then it began to seek funding. Support came initially from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation. Then, as the project gained momentum and attention, the Ford Foundation weighed in with a generous grant of over \$100,000. Project staff changed over a multi-year period, but Erika Brady, Judith A. Gray, Maria La Vigna, Dorothy Sara Lee, Edwin J. Schupman, and Ronald Walcott can be named as key contributors to the effort. Thomas Vennum of the Smithsonian Institution directed the project in its earlier stage, followed by Dorothy Sara Lee and Judith Gray. The early participation of the Smithsonian in planning and administering the project only partially accounts for the embracing title of the Federal Cylinder Project. Just as important in determining the title was the resolution to preserve and disseminate not only the Library's ethnographic cylinders but other smaller collections at the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives, the National Archives, and certain installations within the National Park Service.

The Federal Cylinder Project may have been the Center's most expensive project, and it was certainly among its most successful. Yet it is not finished. Though all the wax cylinders were

preserved by duplicating them onto tape, only about three- fourths were cataloged, and copies of perhaps two-thirds were returned to Indian communities. Paradoxically, the interest generated by the project led to new batches of cylinder recordings being sent to the Library for copying. Thus it became a paradigm for those preservation projects for which the work is never done.

Yet it can fairly claim to have been a trail-blazing effort. A few other institutions with wax cylinder collections, notably the Lowie Museum of Anthropology (subsequently renamed the Hearst Museum) at the University of California-Berkeley and Indiana University's Archives of Traditional Music, emulated the design of the project in their own initiatives. The idea of sharing copies of collections with the originating communities led to many special successes. It is noteworthy that the Center's experiment in sharing collections preceded by several years the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which has focused on museum collections. Whether because documents, unlike artifacts, can reside in more than one place through duplication, or because the Federal Cylinder Project embraced from the start the idea of cultural consultation with Indian communities, the Federal Cylinder Project was remarkably free of the controversy and turmoil that were to haunt some museums over the years.

### The Documentary Cycle

The return of the wax cylinder recordings to the communities whence they came dramatizes a process that underpins much of the Center's work with cultural documentation. Among the important cultural developments of the twentieth century has been the emergence of documentation, not only as a method of recording the cultural process, but as an actual part of the cultural process itself. We see this on every hand: photograph albums in the home, video documentation of weddings, recordings of baby's first word, the firefly effect of flashbulbs from the stadium during cultural events like the Olympics. The documentary process is a affirmation of the importance of the event, which calls forth the impulse to capture it for re-evocation later.

An important attendant feature of the documentary process is the emergence of the archive, not simply as a repository, but as a critical link in the "documentary cycle." That cycle begins with documentation, continues with preservation of the documentation, and concludes by recycling documents back into cultural use. The archive may function simply in the second stage – preserving the documents – but may also participate in the initial creation and again in the third-stage recycling. When it does this, the archive is not simply a way-station but a kind of cultural engine that can drive the documentary cycle through all its stages.

An event in the course of the Federal Cylinder Project illustrates the documentary cycle nicely. I traveled to Macy, Nebraska, to make a proposal to the Omaha Tribal Council. The Center had copied onto tape a large collection of wax cylinders recorded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, and wished to give a copy to the Omaha community. Since the acoustic quality of the cylinders was particularly good for the era, the Center also proposed to produce a published recording selected from the collection – the resulting publication was called *Omaha Indian Music: Historic Recordings from the Fletcher/La Flesche Collection* (1985). The council was supportive but concerned that nothing regarded as secret or sacred be published. They referred me to an Omaha elder, John Turner, a singer familiar

with the older traditions. We set up in the Tribal Administration Building, and I began playing cassette copies of the cylinder recordings, while recording his comments on another tape recorder. As he listened, explicated, cautioned, and offered a few of his own renditions, a crowd of young people quietly gathered to listen. Years later, as I listen to the tape we made, I hear Omaha singers from the turn of the century; John Turner, who was born about the time they sang, listening, talking, and singing in response; the younger generation of Omaha occasionally commenting or laughing in response to their elder guide; and myself – all speaking side by side on the same tape.

Talking about the documentary cycle may sound high-flown, but thinking about it at the practical level led to an innovation in Center field projects that has now become a standard operating procedure and has been borrowed or imitated by other institutions around the country. Center field projects of the late 1970s and early 1980s, being the creation of many professionals working intensely in extended field situations, generated huge documentary collections that, despite all normal efforts by the fieldworkers, seemed well-nigh indigestible upon their return to the Center. Normal archival systems were devised and applied, grouping the materials by medium and according to the fieldworkers who created them. But how, in a massive field collection, could one compare materials on the same subject in different media by different fieldworkers? Or trace materials on, say, a Blue Ridge man who was interviewed on different days by different fieldworkers, who appeared again as the preacher in a Primitive Baptist church service and yet again in his pickup truck for a local foxhunt, and whose homesite was documented architecturally by the photographer and yet another fieldworker?

The answer lay in the personal computers that were appearing on America's technological horizon in the early 1980s. The Center had begun using computers on the Federal Cylinder Project, but its first use of computers in the field was for the Pinelands Folklife Project (1983) in South Jersey. They were not quite "in the field" in the modern sense; these were not the laptops of the later 1980s. But a bank of them occupied the field office, and the fieldworkers gave them a workout every evening producing fieldnotes and tape and photo logs. After the field phase was over, project director Mary Hufford and media specialist Carl Fleischhauer teamed up to devise a searchable database for the entire project. In the Lowell Folklife Project (1987-88), the Center carried the use of computers in the field a step farther. Field coordinator Douglas DeNatale, a skilled computer programmer, devised an automated program for fieldworkers that gave additional coherence and structure to the documentary output of the fieldwork.

Since then, the computer program has become a standard feature of Center field projects, and the model has been borrowed or imitated by other projects around the country. What the computers allowed the Center to do could be described as "archiving in the field." That overstates it: plenty still had to be done after the field phase to process the collection, and more to make a fully searchable archival database. But the effect of the new technology was to shift into the field phase some work previously done in the archival phase of the project, providing the creators of the documents with tools for organizing them coherently for future use. Since archivists regularly receive unorganized masses of materials and are forced to provide organizational structures to make a collection accessible, this development represented what might be called an archivist's dream. For collections not created by Center field projects, Center archivist Stephanie A. Hall

devised a publication, *Ethnographic Collections in the Archive of Folk Culture: A Contributor's Guide* (1995), which, we hope, will encourage creators of ethnographic collections to organize their materials more systematically before submitting them to archival institutions.

The *Contributor's Guide* points to a longstanding program goal for the Center. Doing a project well, or in a new way, may provide a model for others, but why not move beyond models to helping others directly in various phases of the documentary cycle? One of the Center's earlier publications, *Folklife and Fieldwork: A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques* (1979; revised edition, 1990), by Peter T. Bartis, has proved of enduring value and popularity by addressing the desire of local cultural organizations, schools, and enthusiastic individuals to undertake cultural documentation more effectively. A later publication by David Taylor, *Documenting Maritime Folklife: An Introductory Guide* (1992), addresses the same broad need but provides more guidance for the specific challenges of documenting maritime community culture.

In addition to producing manuals and guides, the Center has managed an Equipment Loan Program that makes high-quality documentary equipment (and, on occasion, accompanying guidance) available to independent researchers when the Center is not using the equipment for its own purposes. In 1994 the Center added a new dimension to helping others document culture. In collaboration with Colorado College and the University of New Mexico's Center for Regional Studies, it organized a field school to train university students, school teachers, and cultural professionals in the techniques of cultural documentation. The school included a week at Colorado College and another in Colorado's San Luis Valley. A year later the school was repeated, this time for three weeks, with a field focus on farmers' markets in Colorado Springs.

Within the Center, staff sometimes debated whether the mission was better fulfilled by doing projects – pushing out the envelope of knowledge and technique and publishing the results for others – or by focusing efforts on helping others directly. Doing fieldwork has an obvious benefit in acquisitions for the Archive, and it affords opportunities to highlight new issues, like cultural conservation, or new techniques, like the automated program for field documentation. Fieldworkers on contract with the Center for particular projects carry over what they learn in their own work. On the other hand, relying on model-creation and dissemination is a kind of "trickle-down" approach that works well with other professionals but may never reach a local teacher – or a professional in another field. Which to choose? In the end, the Center did both.

### Preservation and Access: The Organic Archive

The Center's Archive of Folk Culture has an illustrious history in the twentieth-century documentation and preservation of folklife. Although its compass has often been broader than music, its first half-century was associated most prominently with American folk music. Indeed, till it was made part of the Center, its name was the Archive of American Folk-Song, then (to account for its holdings from abroad) the Archive of Folk Song. Once integrated into the Center, it gradually evolved with it but also became, as archives should, the anchor of the enterprise. It is instructive to review profiles of the Archive today in comparison with 1977, just before it

became part of the Center. The figures are rough estimates, but in the aggregate they point unerringly to the changes that reconstituted the Archive over the years. It should be noted that in 1978, after the Archive joined the Center, a large assemblage (about 180,000 pages) of WPA manuscript materials pertaining to folklore and oral history was transferred to the Library's Manuscript Division, as part of a consolidation of WPA collections into one division's custody where they could be processed and serviced together. Thus the figures for manuscript materials in 1996 would be higher but for that transfer.

|       |                           |               |
|-------|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1977  | Manuscripts 360,000       |               |
|       | Sound recordings 19,000   |               |
|       | Photographs 2,000         |               |
|       | Moving image materials 10 |               |
|       | Printed material 20,000   |               |
|       | Microfilm 40              |               |
| <hr/> |                           | TOTAL 401,000 |

|       |                            |                 |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1996  | Manuscripts 1,250,000      |                 |
|       | Sound recordings 53,000    |                 |
|       | Photographs 220,000        |                 |
|       | Moving image materials 450 |                 |
|       | Printed material 26,000    |                 |
|       | Microfilm 57               |                 |
|       | Computer disks 400         |                 |
| <hr/> |                            | TOTAL 1,550,000 |

Surveying the figures, it is clear that the Archive has grown exponentially over the past twenty years. That growth has been in part because of acquisition of major collections, such as the Fahnestock South Sea Collection or the Henrietta Yurchenco Collection. But the greatest cause of the statistical surge has unquestionably been the field initiatives undertaken by the Center itself. The second striking facet of the statistics is the jump in visual documentation from a negligible supplementary role to a place of honor alongside the manuscripts and sound recordings. This shift in the contents of the Archive is primarily a consequence of the use of still photography and, to a limited extent, moving image documentation in Center field projects. There are many contributors here, but the individual most responsible for the transformation is Carl Fleischhauer, the Center's media specialist from 1977 to 1989 and a professional photographer and filmmaker in his own right.

Finally, the appearance of computer disks in the statistics for 1996 signals the onset of a generation in which computers became part of the process of cultural documentation. The change in the Archive was not just quantitative. The Center's broad mandate for "folklife," and the comprehensive documentary sweep of Center field projects, forced the staff to reconceptualize what the Archive is. It is, in fact, not just an archive of music and other cultural materials, but an archive of ethnographic collections. Gerald E. Parsons, former head of the Center's reference unit, first formulated what became a mantra for Center staff: *an ethnographic collection is a "multiformat, unpublished, created work" documenting aspects of human culture in field*

*situations.*

Embedded in the definition are several significant elements:

- (1) Multiformat. Ethnographic collections typically consist of multiple formats documenting the same cultural event. A collection might contain manuscript fieldnotes and logs, still photographs, sound recordings, perhaps moving image material, and (nowadays) computer disks. Even a tape recording accompanied by a log and descriptive fieldnotes should be considered multiformat, in that all the formats must be considered together to understand the nature and meaning of the ethnographic event they document.
- (2) Unpublished. An ethnographic collection is defined not simply by its cultural content. A book or television program can be ethnographic, but the Archive is not defined as an assemblage of such published works.
- (3) Created work. Ethnographic documentation is not simply a mirror-like reflection of an external reality. Rather, it is the product of interaction between the documenter and the documented, both of whom contribute their creativity to the final documentary product.
- (4) Human culture in field situations. These qualifiers distinguish ethnographic collections from other kinds of documentation.

The concept of the Archive as an archive of ethnographic collections seems clear, in retrospect, but it took time to see all the implications of the concept. Changes in the way the Archive developed and was managed occurred step by step. The finding aids that once described "recordings" in the Archive now describe "collections." The numbering system for accessioning now is structured by whole collections (AFC 1990/004) rather than by cumulative counting of physical items (AFS 13,273). Organizing, preserving, and cataloging is now done collection by collection. Other changes came to the Archive as well. For years "the Archive" had been not only a collection but an administrative section within the Library. But a few years after it became a part of the Center, the section was reorganized into acquisitions, processing (organizing, preserving, and cataloging), and reference units of the Center. The Archive was, in a sense, freed to become collections again.

The public face of the old Archive also changed. As the renovation of the Library's Jefferson Building progressed, the Center was moved to new quarters. Under the watchful eye of Gerry Parsons, who was in charge of the move, the new quarters included a more inviting Folklife Reading Room with improved facilities. Reference services of the Center in recent years are at a much higher level than in earlier years. There are more visitors, more telephone calls, more letters – and, nowadays, faxes and e-mail queries – to respond to. The collections receive heavy use, despite the lingering public image of "the dusty archives." The photographs from Center field projects have been discovered by photo researchers hunting for illustrations for a variety of public or published products. In addition to the Center's own publishing efforts, the Archive has yielded hundreds of published recordings by the private sector over the years; more and more books and articles have drawn on Archive holdings; and film, television, and radio programs

regularly use Archive materials.

The digital age promises to increase this pattern of heavy use. The Center already has a Gopher site and a World Wide Web page for sharing information about its collections, and the next stage of the digital revolution is making it possible to share not just information but the collections themselves. The Library of Congress is mounting a major effort, the National Digital Library Program, to digitize collections and put them online, and the Center is actively participating in the effort. One major collection from the 1930s – the WPA California Folk Music Project Collection (1938-40), made by Sidney Robertson Cowell – has already been prepared for complete online presentation, and several others are in early stages of preparation.

### Public Presentation

The legislation that created the American Folklife Center provided a mandate "to preserve and present American folklife." "Presentation" should be construed broadly, and one of its facets is public events. The first installment of this essay described the origin of the Center's concert series on the Library's Neptune Plaza. Its first full year as a series was 1977, and it ran continuously (in warm weather months) for nineteen years, ending with the 1995 series. A typical season included six or seven concerts, and the series over the years (counting the stand-alone 1976 program) presented a total of 130 programs. The audience included all sorts of people, but it was dominated by Library and Capitol Hill staffers, making it for years the Center's public face on the Hill. Budget constrictions forced cancellation of the Neptune Plaza programs in 1996. The series (along with other public presentations) were managed by Brett Topping (1977-83), Magdalena Gilinsky (1983-90), and Thea Austen (1990-95).

The Neptune Plaza series evolved over the years. It began as a two-hour lunchtime program with a break in the middle, during which there was an interview of the artists. In time it was shortened to an hour and a half, then to an hour. But compensating for the loss of the interview was the evolution of the program flyer by 1986 into an educational tool containing a background essay on the artistic tradition and a list of further reading and listening options. Beginning in 1989, the audience was substantially expanded when the concerts were broadcast on Washington's WAMU-FM – live for two years as part of the Lee Michael Dempsey Show, then delayed as part of the Dick Spottswood Show.

The program fare also evolved. The emphasis in the early years was on blues, oldtime and bluegrass, gospel, and Hispanic and Caribbean traditions. In time, more ethnic traditions were highlighted; then groups from abroad began appearing. (I still remember a song composed to address America by Kubata, an Afro-Cuban group who had just arrived as part of the Mariel migration.) Washington-area groups predominated in the early years, but as time passed there was a growing admixture of groups from elsewhere. Dance and drama increased over time and moved from incidental billing to a central focus in some later programs. The series showed a regular tendency to probe the boundaries of what was considered "folk" – an intangible boundary that itself shifted over the span of the series. In 1977 some purists still looked a bit askance at bluegrass; in the 1980s electrified polka music may have seemed a stretch; in the 1990s the Lindy Hop and tango occupied the margin. But it was important that the series test definitional

boundaries, searching out grassroots energies without too fine a regard for preconceived ideas of what comprised "American," "world," or "folklife."

Neptune Plaza has not been the Center's only venue. In the cool weather months the Center sponsored a variety of workshops, lectures, and other programs. Many workshops featured crafts, spoken-word traditions, foodways, and other aspects of folklife that do not lend themselves so well to outdoor summer audiences. The crafts workshops featured interviews with the crafts people and hands-on demonstrations. Several were accompanied by informative brochures on the subject (rag rugs, paper-cutting, or the like) that became useful reference handouts in the months and years after the workshop was held. The lectures were similarly varied, sometimes standing alone and sometimes accompanying a workshop-demonstration. Several lectures featured folklorists from abroad and served as a tool to keep the Center connected with international folkloristic developments. In 1996 the Center began a new series of lectures by staff and guests, "Notes from the Field," featuring the collections in the Archive of Folk Culture.

In addition to the workshops and lectures, certain hybrid events were shaped organically by the possibilities presenting themselves rather than by a sense of presentation genre or series. Thus the Center teamed up with the Library's Poetry and Literature Center to sponsor a Cowboy Poetry Day in 1994, including a symposium in the afternoon and a reading by three cowboy poets in the evening. Similarly, release of the compact disc *The Spirit Cries: Music of the Rainforests of South America and the Caribbean* (1993) – the first in the Endangered Music Series co-produced on the Rykodisc label by Mickey Hart and me – was heralded by an afternoon symposium followed by an evening reception in the Library's Great Hall with the Grateful Dead in attendance. In a memorable moment, two Aluku singers from the rainforest of French Guiana sang an invocation, their voices echoing around the marbled walls of the Great Hall, while Jerry Garcia smiled down beatifically from the mezzanine.

## Exhibitions

Live events are not the only mode of cultural presentation. Throughout its first twenty years the Center used exhibitions to present and reflect on aspects of folklife in public venues. Center staff did not concentrate on exhibits at first; somehow the Bicentennial era that gave rise to the Center seemed a more celebratory era conducive to live performance as a medium of public engagement. But the post-Bicentennial years were – in the cultural realm, at least – touched by a quieter mood. Exhibitions, which permitted the viewer to interact with the material one-on-one at the viewer's own pace, were an effective medium for the new mood. The first major exhibition undertaken by the Center was actually two exhibitions in one. Entitled *Folk Art and Folklife*, it combined a photographic exhibition (with sound stations) – "Sketches of South Georgia Folklife," drawn from the Center's South-Central Georgia Folklife Project – and "Missing Pieces," an exhibition of Georgia folk art, assembled in Georgia and brought to the Library by Exhibits Officer Michael Carrigan. The exhibition as a whole occupied the entire ground floor of the Library's Jefferson Building and functioned as part of Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin's effort to make the Library feel more accessible to general visitors. The overarching title and parallel structure of the exhibition suggest a tension between two ways of looking at a subject, and in truth there was; in 1983 the Center further explored that tension in a conference on folk art, from which the volume

*Folk Art and Art Worlds* (UMI Press, 1986) is drawn.

A few years after the Georgia exhibition, the Paradise Valley [Nevada] Folklife Project led to two exhibitions. The first arose directly from the project itself. One of the fieldworkers, Richard Ahlborn from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, proposed using that museum as the site for an exhibit drawn from the project's material-culture encounters relating to Great Basin ranching traditions. The Center was enthusiastic and, in an unusual collaborative venture, produced the book-catalog *Buckaroos in Paradise: Cowboy Life in Northern Nevada* (1980) to complement the museum's exhibition of the same name. That success suggested, to Center Deputy Director Ray Dockstader, an idea for something bigger and bolder. Soon the Center was planning, with guidance from Ingrid Maar of the Library's Exhibits Office and guest curator Lonny Taylor, a major exhibition on the American cowboy. The exhibition and the complementary book, *The American Cowboy* (1983), were made possible by major support from United Technologies. Maar and Taylor divided the subject into three sections: the late nineteenth-century reality of cowboys and open-range cattle in the West; the rise and diffusion of mythmaking about cowboys, which began burgeoning through American culture as the early trail drives dissolved into history; and the contemporary reality of cowboys and cattle management in the Western states.

The exhibition was an extraordinary success in the Library's recently opened Madison Building, and it toured to several sites after closing at the Library. It was an excuse for a variety of associated activities and products, from touring seminars to T-shirts (for which the demand in the Library's sales shop has never abated). In fact, it was successful enough to generate an opponent who tried to capitalize on its success by mailing press releases around the country attacking it – a phenomenon that seemed harmless enough at the time, but foreshadowed a number of troubling media campaigns against exhibitions a decade later. The section of the exhibition on contemporary cowboy life featured the Center's documentation in the Paradise Valley Folklife Project. It was thus the second important use of that field project, which had already been featured in *Buckaroos in Paradise*. The centerpiece of the Paradise Valley area in the exhibition was an interactive videodisc fashioned by Carl Fleischhauer, enabling viewers to follow a motion-picture sequence documenting a trail drive from the summer high country back to the home ranch in Paradise Valley. The Center later published the videodisc, in expanded form accompanied by a lengthy booklet, as an experiment in new technology.

*The Ninety-Six: A Cattle Ranch in Northern Nevada*, as the third important use of the project's collection, was also an experiment in sharing with the world what amounts to a selective published archive of a Center collection. A decade later, that experiment is being carried out Library-wide as the National Digital Library Program, an effort to share Library collections with the world online. Now the Center is laying plans – which will constitute the fourth important use of the collection – for placing the contents of the videodisc, and perhaps more, in the online offerings (through World Wide Web) of the National Digital Library. In retrospect, it is satisfying to see how fruitful the Paradise Valley Folklife Project has been. Contrary to conventional wisdom both then and now about the efficient administration of cultural projects, it was originally devised without cost-sharing partners and without a clear sense of what its final products might be. It was, one might say, pure research. *The American Cowboy* was a Center-

organized initiative, but under the deft guidance of Ray Dockstader it ultimately enveloped the entire Library as an institution. The Georgia exhibition had enlisted other Library offices, but the collections it featured were drawn primarily from the Center's fieldwork. The cowboy exhibition, on the other hand, involved collections from many of the Library's divisions; thus it felt more like a Library-wide effort and is still remembered by many within the institution as one of the highlights of the 1980s.

Paradoxically, some from the folklore and folklife network fretted that the themes and collections content of *The American Cowboy* were not exclusively "folklife" in scope. Indeed, its "myth and reality" theme inevitably and appropriately involved not simply folklife but American history and popular culture. Though some folklorists of this generation, such as Alan Dundes, have urged folklorists to bring their expertise to bear on larger cultural themes and issues, such as the mythmaking propensities of contemporary popular culture, others have hewn rigorously to a small-community model in their work. *The American Cowboy* in fact did both, exploring not only the historical and contemporary reality of ranching and cowboy life but the twentieth-century popular mythmaking process that was spun out of it. Whatever the boundaries of folklife may be, a national center representing folklife should both test those boundaries and reach across them, making common cause with other networks and disciplines to explore larger national goals and issues.

Similar intellectual and institutional bridging occurred, on a smaller scale, with another Center exhibit in the 1980s. *Documenting America, 1935-1943* was a fresh look at the work of the famed photographic office for the Farm Security Administration (and, later, the Office of War Information) in the Depression and War years. The collection, which resides in the Library's Prints and Photographs Division, is widely noted as a sustained effort to document American life in the 1930s, and its work is historically and conceptually related to the Center's documentary and ethnographic interests. The project was a joint effort of the Center and three other Library offices: Prints and Photographs Division, the Publishing Office, and the Exhibits Office. It was jointly curated by Carl Fleischhauer from the Center and Beverly W. Brannan from Prints and Photographs. In an interesting twist, it was conceived as a book complemented by a photographic exhibit, not the other way around; the book was published by an outside partner, the University of California Press (1988). Like *The American Cowboy*, it was not exclusively about folklife. Yet its central premise – that the FSA photographs should be looked at not singly but in sequences reflecting the photographers' work on assignment in the field – underscores its connectedness, as a documentary milestone of the twentieth century, with the Center's own documentary and ethnographic history and principles.

One other exhibition from the 1990s warrants consideration here. The year 1992 was the Quincentenary of the first voyage of Columbus to the New World. Several years in advance, the Library, along with other agencies and institutions, began to prepare for its proper celebration. Asked by Congress what its plans were, the Library responded with a proposal for a major exhibition focusing on the early encounter of European civilization with the geography and cultures of the Americas. The congressional response was supportive, but with a further suggestion. Why not do something else, too – something that featured contemporary culture as well as early history? The Folklife Center, having encountered a strong Italian- American

component in the ranching life and architecture of Paradise Valley, responded with a project focusing on Italian- American cultural contributions to the West.

Italian immigrants arrived in the West beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, early in its European settlement, but the contributions of Italian-Americans to the culture of the West were little known nationally. What is more, Italian-Americans – beginning in the West – had adopted Columbus as a sort of culture hero. The geographic scope of the project presented an interesting challenge: How could the entire West be covered? Project director David Taylor settled on a "representative-community" strategy, electing finally to focus field research on San Pedro (commercial fishing) and the Santa Clara Valley (farming and wine culture), with additional coverage of San Francisco, Monterrey, and Santa Cruz, in California; Walla Walla (truck farming) in Washington; Eureka and Lincoln County (mining and ranching) in Nevada; Carbon County (mining) in Utah; and Pueblo (agriculture and iron-working) in Colorado. Within the larger regional and ethnic context, areas were chosen because they highlighted certain occupations in which Italian immigrants and their descendants contributed significantly to the life and work of the West. In addition to the occupational theme, fieldwork devoted considerable energy to home life and religious practices.

Fundraising for the exhibition was not easy; unlike the cowboy exhibition, there was not a single donor – though a major gift from Henry Salvatori of Los Angeles helped launch the effort. But the exhibition opened on time – around Columbus Day of the Quincentenary year – at the de Saisset Museum of the University of Santa Clara, traveling from there to Las Vegas, then to the Gene Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles. After it had been presented to Western audiences, it traveled to the Library of Congress, then to the Museums of Stony Brook on Long Island and finally to Providence, Rhode Island. As a useful complement to the exhibition, the Center published a book of essays by project fieldworkers, edited by David A. Taylor and John Alexander Williams; the book and the exhibition shared the title *Old Ties, New Attachments: Italian-American Folklife in the West*.

## Publications

Publications seemed, in 1976, a logical and central function of a national folklife center. At the federal level, neither the Archive at the Library nor the Folk Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts had generated many publications, except for the Library's series of documentary recorded publications, and the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife had yielded primarily a series of handsome program booklets to accompany their annual festival. But publications do not come first; they follow and reflect other activities. Thus one of the Center's first undertakings was a canvass of folklife activities in federal agencies, undertaken by Linda Coe; the result was the first Center publication, *Folklife and the Federal Government* (1977). It was number 1 in Publications of the American Folklife Center, a series of varied publications that continues to this day (the latest is number 20). A few years later, at the suggestion of the eminent folklorist and founding chairman of the Center's board of trustees Wayland D. Hand, a second series to include scholarly publications was begun, *Studies in American Folklife*. The two series have provided a great variety of publications addressing specific subjects and audiences.

But the Center needed something to address its constituency and share its activities more broadly. Accordingly, a quarterly newsletter, *Folklife Center News*, was inaugurated in January 1978. Over the years it has had two editors: Brett Topping in the early years and James Hardin from 1988 to the present. The first issue appeared on buff paper and was eight pages long. In time it expanded and switched to white paper, and the appearance of its title page was recast. Short news features made way for longer essays. But it has always maintained its focus on Center programs and activities, resisting (despite occasional stirrings to the contrary) the temptation to expand into a publication on folklife in general.

To complement *Folklife Center News*, the Center, in collaboration with the Library's Publishing Office, launched a series of annual volumes, with color as well as black-and-white illustrations, containing general essays on folklife. The first *Folklife Annual*, edited by James Hardin (then an editor in the Publishing Office), appeared in 1985. The series ran through a fifth volume, *Folklife Annual 1990*, before Publishing Office funds for its production ran out and it had to be discontinued. Within the Center there is lingering regret that the annual could not be continued. There is nothing else like it representing the folklife field, and such a publication provided an important long-range vehicle for sharing the insights and energies of the field with a broader public. But if the niche is to be filled in the future, it will require funding from the private sector.

From the beginning, the Center entered into public-private partnership arrangements to accomplish some of its purposes. But by the 1990s the production of publications through partnership arrangements shifted from an option to a central strategy. The dwindling of appropriated budgets was certainly a factor; but so was the Center's growing sense that private-sector partners were more likely than the Center itself to achieve the kind of national distribution the Center desired. Such partnership arrangements in publishing appeared first with books accompanying exhibitions. *Buckaroos in Paradise: Cowboy Life in Northern Nevada* (1980) was first published by the Center in an edition for sale during the exhibition at the Smithsonian. Subsequently, the Center entered into an arrangement with University of Nebraska Press to reissue it. *The American Cowboy* (1983) was initially published using funds from United Technologies to coincide with the opening of the exhibition. A trade edition of the book published by Harper and Row appeared the following year. Similarly, *Documenting America 1935-1943* was published by University of California Press.

What worked for exhibition-related books could also work for publications derived from Center conferences, and for research volumes generated by Center staff. A symposium "The Washington Meeting on Folk Art" (1983) led to an arrangement with UMI Press to publish a collection of essays, *Folk Art and Art Worlds* (1986), edited by John Michael Vlach and Simon J. Bronner. *Quilt Collections: A Directory for the United States and Canada* (1987), produced by staffer Lisa Turner Oshins, was published by Acropolis Books; it is the first attempt to locate and guide researchers to quilts and quilting resources in museums and archives around the continent. The Center's 1990 conference on "Cultural Conservation" followed suit. Made possible by a grant from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, together with funds from the Center's own Raye Virginia Allen Fund, the conference was designed to bring together professionals from the fields of folklife, historic preservation, natural resource conservation, and planning to seek common

ground under the banner of "cultural conservation" – a term and concept the Center had promulgated with its policy study *Cultural Conservation: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the United States* in the 1980s. Center folklife specialist Mary Hufford set to work after the conference to draw together a selection of essays by conference participants. The resultant book, *Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage*, was published by the University of Illinois Press in 1994.

Another tier of books reflects the energies of Center staff and projects but was not authored or produced directly by the Center. Here the list is too long to cite comprehensively; good examples are *Pinelands Folklife* (Rutgers University Press, 1987), drawing heavily from the work of the Pinelands Folklife Project; and *Listening to Old Voices: Folklore, Life Stories, and the Elderly* (University of Illinois Press, 1992), which presents and analyzes many interviews by author Patrick B. Mullen as a fieldworker for the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project. A number of such books, taken together with articles, essays, photographic essays, and other contributions by Center staff in a variety of books, magazines, and journals, make the total printed record of the Center over the last twenty years even more substantial than its own publications suggest.

The most famous series of publications from the Archive is doubtless the series of documentary folk music recordings issued from its collections. The series began with a special 78-rpm album in 1941, which was incorporated into a larger album in 1942. By 1976, when the Center was created, the Archive series had produced sixty-seven recordings in long-playing record (LP) form. In addition, a special fifteen-album Bicentennial series, *Folk Music in America*, edited by Richard K. Spottswood, was released over a period of several years overlapping into the early years of the Center. Thus a total of eighty-two releases dated from the pre-Center era.

The Center began adding to this total in 1978 by issuing an LP album, *The Folk Music of America* (AFS L68), featuring the field recordings created by Robert W. Gordon, the first head of the Archive, in the 1920s and early 1930s. A year later, the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project yielded a double-LP set, *Children of the Heav'nly King* (L69-70). And a few years later *Omaha Indian Music* (L71) appeared. All had very extensive booklets accompanying the recording, in the educational tradition already established by the Archive series. They were in fact multi-media publications, but that term had not yet gained currency, so reviewers persisted in regarding them as recordings with swollen liner notes. In addition to these new recorded publications, the Center rectified an old gap in the Archive series. The Willard Rhodes series of American Indian music (AFS L34-L43) largely lacked accompanying booklets, so the Center, working with Dr. Rhodes, produced a new edition of the series, adding new booklets to the boxed package and making the ten recordings available in either LP or cassette format.

In 1982 the Center organized a meeting with the private-sector record companies responsible for production and distribution of folk recordings. How, the Center wondered, could it help the private-sector companies in their mission? One answer came through loud and clear: the companies wanted help in placing their records in libraries. Libraries, on the other hand, told the Center that they wanted to purchase such recordings, but did not know what to choose. Out of this discussion grew a ten-year effort on the part of the Center, *American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings: A Selected List*. The list, issued each year, 1983-92, contained thirty to

thirty-five recordings selected by a panel of experts out of the year's crop of folk records. Each year's edition was widely distributed – not only to libraries but to a host of other individuals and organizations. The *Selected List* must have been useful, for record companies continued submitting their candidates each year. But it is a source of no little regret to Center staff that the program had to be ended in 1992, after ten successful years, because of budgetary constraints.

By the late 1980s, the Center's production of recorded publications ceased. It was a period of transition between the old LP format and the new digital compact disc. In addition, the Center was refocusing its publications strategy on working with private-sector partners rather than publishing and distributing directly. Government, the Center had concluded, could be fine at production, but it would not be so fine at distribution. The same argument applied to recordings, which are publications every bit as much as books are. The first recorded fruits of the partnership strategy came out of the Endangered Music Project. It was proposed by Mickey Hart, a percussionist for the Grateful Dead and a longtime documentarian and advocate for grassroots music, American and worldwide. He proposed a series featuring the collections in the Archive representing music of the world's cultures, in collaboration with the record company Rykodisc. The first in the series presented musical traditions from rainforest cultures of the tropical Americas. Entitled *The Spirit Cries*, it was released in early 1993. The second in the series, *Music for the Gods* (1994), presents music from Bali and nearby islands in Indonesia, drawn from the Fahnestock South Sea Collection, which was donated to the Center in 1986. At present the project is preparing four additional releases from West Africa and the African American traditions of Brazil and the Caribbean. The Center has also recently entered into a private-public partnership with Rounder Records for reissue in a CD format of records from the LP series for which the Archive is famous. The initiative is in cooperation with the Library's Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, which includes the Recording Laboratory that originally issued the LP recordings. About ten reissues are now in production, and ten more will follow.

One final series of publications deserves mention. In 1983 the Center, tapping a long Archive tradition of providing bibliographies, directories, and finding aids for researchers, launched a new (or newly reformatted) series, LC Folk Archive Finding Aids, edited by Joseph C. Hickerson. The series provides detailed surveys of Archive holdings on particular subjects or from particular geographical regions. Notable have been the state-by-state finding aids, prepared by interns and other volunteers who are a regular and welcome feature of life in the Center. These finding aids now provide coverage for holdings from twenty-seven states and territories. The finding aids are published both in print editions and on the Center's Gopher and Web pages.

## Funds and Funding

Partnerships with the private sector have been successful and productive for the Center, and there is every reason to suppose there will be more in the years to come. To support them, as well as to receive private donations, the Center established three private funds early in its history. The American Folklife Center Fund was established in 1978 to receive gifts from various donors for the general purposes of the Center. The Friends of the Folk Archive Fund (1978) is a similar gift fund, designated specifically to benefit the Archive and activities associated with it. And the

Elizabeth Hamer Kegan Fund (1979), created to honor the Assistant Librarian of Congress who helped create the Center after the enabling legislation was passed in 1976, is a "revolving fund" used to finance publications and other items and to receive the revenue from their sale.

Gift and revolving funds are not simply "more money"; they are financial mechanisms for fostering a variety of activities that do not lend themselves to the mechanism of public appropriations. Funds from a gift fund may, for example, be used to finance a reception, for which the use of appropriated funds is prohibited; and funds may be received into a revolving fund for sale of copies of a book, for which, had it been paid for by appropriated funds, the receipts must go to the U.S. Treasury. But in the longer term the Center's prosperity may depend on the support of another type of fund: what in the federal context is called a "trust fund" and is known in most cultural institutions as "an endowment." Endowing certain kinds of activities, given the pressures on appropriated funds within the U.S. government in the 1990s, may be the best way to ensure that the activities will continue for generations.

The Center established two trust funds during its first twenty years. The first is the Raye Virginia Allen Fund (1984), named for a founding member and former chairman of the Center's Board of Trustees. Her mother, Vivian McCreary, created it in her honor on the occasion of her retirement from the board. The Raye Virginia Allen Fund has been used once so far, to support the conference on "Cultural Conservation" in 1990. Otherwise, the Center has been using its annual revenues, as well as additional donations by the family and others, to build it as a programming tool for the future. The second trust fund is the Gerald E. and Corinne L. Parsons Fund for Ethnography, which was established by Gerald E. Parsons in 1994 to honor his parents. Parsons was the Center's reference coordinator until his death in 1995 and may have been the first Library employee to establish such a fund. The Parsons Fund is dedicated to fostering use of the Archive and other ethnographic collections of the Library of Congress by individuals and organizations in the private sector. It thus underscores the crucial role of the Archive as a public resource, available not only for the Center's uses but to researchers, publishers, record companies, and others for their own purposes. In 1996 the Parsons Fund made its first award, to Julia Bishop from the University of Sheffield, England, for research in the James Madison Carpenter Collection. The Center hopes that, with continuing contributions from many individuals, the Parsons Fund will grow into a robust tool for making the incomparable collections of the Archive of Folk Culture more available to the world.

Reviewing this two-part essay, it strikes me in retrospect that the Center's twenty-year history divides rather neatly into two ten-year phases. The first decade was characterized by an expanding budget and an emphasis on fieldwork and public programming. The second decade was characterized by a flat budget – actually, a shrinking budget in constant dollar terms – which has gradually shifted the Center toward fundraising and partnerships for its programming. Concomitant with that shift has been an increasing emphasis on the collections-based functions of the Center. The turning point was 1986, when the Gramm-Rudman budget reductions signaled the beginning of an era of dearth and constriction in the federal government. That era has extended into the 1990s and promises to continue to the turn of the century. In such an era, the shift to a greater reliance on fundraising and partnerships represents the logical strategy for maintaining and extending the reach and creative energy of the Center.

But what the future holds for the Center will depend, not only on fundraising and partnerships that the Center can undertake, but on larger developments in the field of folklife and in the feelings of the nation about its relationship to its cultural heritage. Those were the key factors in the Center's creation, and they are likely to be the key factors in its future. By the early 1980s some voices were wondering aloud whether the nation, having strengthened its interest in its cultural roots during the Bicentennial era, was entering into a new phase when the emphasis would shift to reinforcing national coherence. But the grassroots inquiries keep rolling in at the Center, its publications command continuing interest, and its Archive continues to attract attention from all quarters of the nation. So long as Americans hold dear their grassroots heritage, the support is not likely to diminish for a small but energetic center, capable of dynamic change to suit the needs of the times but permanently committed to the preservation and presentation of that grassroots heritage and its creative recycling to build a better future.