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by

Lauren Ann Waelder

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The Report committee for Lauren Ann Waelder

Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

A Study of the U. S. Diplomatic Library

In Mexico City

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: _____

Philip Doty

Melanie Feinberg

A Study of the U. S. Diplomatic Library

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by

Lauren Ann Waelder, B. A.

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A Study of the U. S. Diplomatic Library

In Mexico City

by

Lauren Ann Waelder, M. S. in Information Studies

The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

SUPERVISOR: Philip Doty

This paper addresses the topic of diplomatic libraries. It opens with a section covering the topic in general, but then focuses on the specific scope of the paper. It focuses on the circumstances associated with the library in Mexico City that goes with the U. S. Embassy to Mexico. That library is the Benjamin Franklin Library, established in 1942 and named after the person from the early United States history. It attempts to provide an overview of the library, as well as theoretical framework surrounding diplomatic libraries and cultural relations in the United States. The paper accomplishes these goals in two ways. First, it performs a review of relevant literature, both old and new, on the topic. This literature review also analyzes the gap in information between the older and more recent sources, focusing on a difference between the older works' historical base and the newer works' practical experience. Second, it also incorporates original research through an actual visit to the library in Mexico City. The paper goes on to discuss the two research questions and thirteen other questions that a process of interviews with three different groups of Ben Franklin Library librarians was able to answer. Finally, the paper wraps up both the literature review and the research notes through a discussion of the interaction between the two sections and how they both contribute to the paper as a whole

and to an active readership. The discussion of these issues includes references to items in either form, but it transcends actual commentary on the contents of the relevant literature, focusing instead on its larger implications for the topic. It also touches briefly on a few of the ways future research could continue to enhance this field. Finally, a conclusion leaves the reader with a few comments that explain how an article of this nature provides its audience with an expansion of knowledge about the topic of diplomatic libraries and about the Benjamin Franklin Library in particular. This combination of information should allow other readers to form more educated opinions of diplomatic libraries and their place in society.

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Chapter One: Introduction

There are many reasons a foreign government could desire to use libraries as part of a cultural outreach process. Of these, perhaps the most evident is the wealth of information made available in such repositories. Diplomatic libraries often provide the most reliable information about the foreign country available to residents of the host nation, and they often are the first point of contact between the resident's country and the host nation. A conversation nationals could have within the library could be their first opportunity to ask questions of the nation, and a talk with the library's reference staff could be their first chance to seek answers. The new knowledge the patrons have makes them feel capable of deciding important matters between the two nations. It also gives the decision's content a certain validity that it may not have otherwise. For example, it allows residents to make informed and educated decisions about the policies and life in the foreign country, as well as the worldviews shared by its nationals and the way they consider situations. This will permit nationals of two different countries to find common points of understanding and realize that they are not so different after all. This new way of thinking could end short-term conflicts between the two nations; in the long term, it could produce successful future diplomats. Another significant detail is the intrinsic nature of diplomatic libraries and their difference from other sorts of library such as public or academic institutions. The most important part of that distinction is that diplomatic libraries are designed for foreign nationals rather than for people of the same nationality as the library's administrators. Also, with the goal of providing information about the home nation, the library's subject focus is much more specific than public institutions, which cover an entire host of information of all genres and subjects. However, another reason for the presence of diplomatic libraries is to provide access and freedom, demonstrating ideals that may be different from those of the host nation. For

example, United States diplomatic libraries in Asia are rapidly growing in popularity. Their readily available content and secure location are seen by Asian nationals as a symbol of the freedom that their governments currently lack or seek to attain. Also in other countries, the access demonstrated by other diplomatic entities is a revelation. For example, the United States diplomatic library in Mexico first shocked its patrons with the concept of open stacks. In open stacks, patrons have their own access to each book on the shelves, an idea the United States espoused much earlier than other nations. The transparency of the government, and the way it gives access to all information, both positive and negative, about the country, gives the impression that it affords the same ease of access in other matters, leading to a more prosperous day-to-day existence. Finally, one other important task carried out by the diplomatic library is that of instruction. One common topic of instruction at the libraries is information literacy, which helps patrons find the information they seek more easily. This puts host residents into a situation with the foreign country in which they are students and believe that what the foreign country tells them is true. Once they find out that such instruction is, in fact, beneficial to their lives, they may continue to trust the foreign entity, and its nationals, feeling secure in their presence. This security can help to avoid conflicts or the feelings of anger, frustration, or resentment that often overwhelm conflicted individuals, keeping them from seeing the facts that could end their process of struggle.

Once these diplomatic institutions are in place, the way they function is similar to the structure of the relevant national government. Despite these differing specifics, there are certain aspects of the repositories that several nations have in common. One instance of this is that the library tends to have a connection with the public affairs or cultural affairs portion of the government. Another is the way the libraries are considered for legal purposes. While the staff of

the institutions may vary, the repository itself tends to fall under the jurisdiction and employ of the foreign nation rather than the host nation. These similarities allow many different information repositories to fall under the scope of this topic; however, the scope of this paper focuses on only one of these institutions.

Chapter Two: Overview

While there may be several such entities, one specific repository stands out among them all. There are many other diplomatic libraries from the United States, such as others in India or in Asia, and also many diplomatic libraries from other nations such as Germany and France; however, this paper focuses on the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City. One of the reasons for selection of this topic is the unique aspect of the library in terms of its size, content, and access. For example, it is the oldest United States library outside the nation. It is also the largest repository of its kind in this hemisphere. Another reason is the two nations the library focuses on: the United States and Mexico. Sharing many miles of border and a steady flow of people, work, and goods, there are many points of contact – and points of potential conflict – between the two nations. It is also singular in the qualities of diplomatic libraries. The various systems the library uses, as well as the subject matter it contains, enable the Benjamin Franklin Library in particular to carry out the goals of the U. S. Government. However, the uniqueness of the library is accompanied by the gaps in the documents detailing its specifics. These documents in combination paint a relatively complete picture of the issue we face, both its theory and history. However, there is a very large gap between the older and newer texts, so that in order to have the full story, one must investigate both of the bodies of sources. This prevents some current scholars of the field from understanding the particular details of the situation of the United States with respect to the Benjamin Franklin Library.

This paper hopes to address this parting in knowledge; it will add to the topic's body of knowledge through original research. Nevertheless, in order to do this, it is important first to understand both past and present literature dealing with the topic of cultural affairs and diplomatic librarianship. It will address the current literature through the following literature

review. It will then proceed to add to the field through an explanation of the case study and methodology of this paper. Finally, with a new understanding of the current knowledge of the field, it will enhance the body of knowledge surrounding the topic by discussing the specifics of the Benjamin Franklin Library in combination with the theories and situations of the present time along with its continuation from the past.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

Overview

Locating the documents that make up the majority of my works cited was a relatively simple, although extensive, task. There are certainly plenty of sources, both monograph and serial, depicting the Benjamin Franklin Library and many other diplomatic efforts of the United States in Latin America. However, there is one significant gap in the information I was able to obtain readily about my research. The vast majority of the more relevant sources are older volumes that speak of the Ben Franklin Library's past rather than its present. Many of the sources consulted for this investigation were published in the early 2000s or even in the 1990s or 1980s, with one text from the 1960s, speaking of an international situation extremely different from our circumstances today. The search for more recent information about the library did not find fruit until conversation with the library's staff revealed one of the library's best-known supporters as none other than esteemed film critic Carlos Monsivaís. A look into Monsivaís' literature reveals that he was a great admirer and supporter of the library's actions during his life, and also that he valued greatly its role in his educational formation. Also, surrounding articles on library science in Mexico include notes from Monsivaís. For example, an article on the twentieth century development of information organization in Mexico mentions his support of the library. Upon mentioning the use of the Dewey Decimal System in academic libraries in Mexico, it also notes that Monsivaís considered the Benjamin Franklin Library an important part of Mexico's "battle against illiteracy" (Naumis 2013). An article detailing the importance of preservation and access to cultural heritage materials also discusses his support of the library and of cultural relations between Mexico and the United States (Blanchard 2008). However, beyond these sources, there is little published information about the Benjamin Franklin Library. While there is

still information regarding the library's progress, this is largely in the unpublished form of anecdotes or available from the library's own website. This gap in recent information may have appeared for several reasons, but one of the most likely is the downsizing of the government under the Clinton administration in the 1990s, which reduced both the power and the resources available to the library and reduced the scope of worldwide foreign policy information efforts. Other reasons could include a decrease in the amount of public support to the project, a decrease in funds to the project, or could even be tied to recent events that hinder Mexico's safety to United States citizens living abroad. Despite the reason, this divides the literature into two separate parts, the first including older literature and the second with more recent works.

Older Literature

Many of the older works focus on World War II as the central conflict to define United States foreign policy. However, these works focus on simple relating of historical facts. The facts have to do with history of the library and of the foreign policy of the United States, with its cultural diplomacy endeavors, and with theories of diplomatic librarianship. They combine these facts with some slight addition of theory, but the history and theory are both firmly rooted in past situations and past cultural conflicts. Although these works discuss the specifics of the Benjamin Franklin Library, they do not have as many hypothetical situations that could explain parts of the library's current function.

The historical texts begin with an overview of Mexican libraries from 1969, during the first years of the Benjamin Franklin Library. It explains the trends of improvement in issues such as illiteracy and lack of education, some of the problems that the Benjamin Franklin Library sought to address (Bixler 1969). The texts then go on with more specific information on the

library. Kraske's fundamental work on the topic is basically a history of the American Library Association's international efforts in conjunction with the Rockefeller Foundation. It begins in the 1930s and focuses on the United States' wartime efforts around the world, in Latin America and in parts of the world like East Asia and Europe. It especially focuses on the realization of the United States that culture can be used as a weapon, and the subsequent efforts to spread information throughout the globe through libraries, student exchange, aid to international students, and donation of texts from the United States. Although it has many of the specifics the newer literature lacks, including an entire section on the Benjamin Franklin Library, it also does not have the theoretical components other works have to offer (Kraske 1985). Frankel, however, points out the need of the library to avoid the way that "[t]he utility of an American library is compromised when, as is generally the case, it is composed of books that are clearly pre-selected to deliver a message" (Frankel 1965). As long as the library is careful in its approach to its diplomatic endeavors, it can complete its goals. A 2007 article from *Library Trends* continues this history of the Benjamin Franklin Program and its related efforts, expanding on theoretical aspects such as the use of books as a cultural weapon in wartime and suggesting that what may have worked in the past can also work now (Robbins 2007).

However, this lack in theory is made up in the work *The American Style of Foreign Diplomacy*, which provides an overview of different administrations' foreign policy between Presidents Teddy Roosevelt and Richard Nixon. It discusses the changes in the general foreign policy from President Roosevelt's imperialist stance to the aftermath of the war. This content sets up the context for Kraske's more specific ALA history (Dallek 1983). The text *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy* is also more of an overview of United States foreign policy in general. It takes place beginning in World War II and ending in the Cold War, with much of the

policy taking place in the aftermath of the war. Although it has more of an emphasis on information than the previous book, it also focuses on the outline of foreign policies rather than on the details of the situation in Mexico City. It covers the situations in different locations around the world, not devoting more than a subchapter to the Latin American region (Coombs 1964). The most theoretical text of the bunch of older literature is a text called *Public Sector Communication*, which talks about the process of gathering, developing, organizing, and distributing information in governmental and other public organizations. Its theory provides a thought pattern behind the formation and early history of the library and Information Resource Centers that are part of the United States State Department (Graber 1992). An article from *Government Publications Quarterly* discusses this thought from the point of view of the Congressional Information Service, about dispersing governmental information through its institutions, discussing new technologies in those efforts such as a microform system. It also talks about the way the view of governmental information has widened, leading the public to expect more information than they did previously, which is best distributed through public institutions such as libraries (Adler 1982).

Newer Literature

Many of the more recent works relate international generalities rather than specifics related to the Benjamin Franklin Library. For example, a text from 2010 mentions the importance of international communication in resolving ethical disputes between nations. Since different nations and different cultures may have opposing ethical customs, a long process of mediation and thought may be necessary in order to create a lasting peace between opposing methods of thought. Since much of the news is negative information about foreign countries, there is a necessity for alternative information sources. While the Ben Franklin Library certainly

fits within the parameters the text sets for international communication, it does not receive a specific or even a general mention as an institution of that nature (Golan et al. 2010). The 2013 text edited by Kerr and Wiseman similarly relates a series of articles on contemporary diplomatic theories. It goes on to discuss the importance of cultural diplomacy to nations such as China. However, while it mentions the need for communication, it does not mention the circumstances specific to the relations between the United States and Mexico (Kerr and Wiseman 2013). The next text, *Information & Liberation*, has more information about the power of information and the use of libraries as tools for that. However, it is told from the point of view of the situation in Kenya, leaving readers to extrapolate the techniques in that book to other nations such as Mexico. It does not itself mention Latin America or South America, or even library institutions (Durrani 2008). Finally, Garlitz and Jarvinen mention a period in U. S. history prior to the creation of the Benjamin Franklin Library in which “international-minded Americans entertained a liberal belief that ‘brotherhood’ could be forged among peoples of all nations if they were educated to understand and appreciate one another’s cultures” (Garlitz and Jarvinen 2012). This theory is one that was present in the minds of citizens like Rockefeller, who created the foundation funding the Benjamin Franklin Library. While the book does not discuss the library specifically, it mentions many of the theories of mutual understanding and education that founded and funded the institution. The 2011 text *Culture and External Relations* goes even deeper into theory, discussing the very undercurrent of culture and of the combination of different cultures. It discusses the desire of some cultures to replace others rather than coexisting, and also the importance of culture as a source of communal identity. Although it expresses the importance of discussing different cultures to avoid these conflicts, it does not in particular

mention the Benjamin Franklin Library or the entirety of Latin America, rather choosing to focus on the peoples and cultures of Europe (Bátora and Mokre 2011).

One other common trend is for increasingly common mentions of transparency and of online access to information. For example, an article from *Government Information Quarterly* discusses a new e-Government act taking place in Spain that would increase diffusion of information, a change that would also affect government institutions such as the Ben Franklin Library (Cerrillo-i-Martínez 2011). An article from the preceding year states that public policies must be made with public data. The Ben Franklin Library's position as a public institution makes it easy for the government to live up to that particular promise and others regarding a free flow of information among governments and people (Napoli and Karaganis 2010).

Discussion

These documents in combination paint a relatively complete picture of the issue we face, both its theory and history. However, there is a very large gap between the older and newer texts, so that in order to have the full story, one must investigate both of the bodies of sources. This prevents some current scholars of the field from understanding the particular details of the situation of the United States with respect to the Benjamin Franklin Library. It is this parting in knowledge which this paper hopes to address by discussing the specifics of that library in combination with the theories and situations of the present time. With this in mind, this paper will now move from discussion of other literature to discuss the original research completed for this investigation.

The review of relevant literature on the topic reveals a missing link between older and newer information. This document gap means that the newer documents should be supplemented

with details on the Ben Franklin Library. With the scarcity of such documents, more recent information on the BFL can be best obtained through personal narratives. By visiting the library in Mexico City, I was able to obtain some of these personal narratives. My notes detail how this process intersects with the literature earlier in this review. The discussion section later goes on to document the way my knowledge of the topic's literature enhances my experience on location in March. It also relates helpful information for future research, which would make the field of diplomatic librarianship every bit as involved as its immensely significant effects hint. This focus on the BFL will open the field to future research, either on the same or on other repositories in a similar situation.

Chapter Four: Methodology

General Overview

I visited the Benjamin Franklin library on two days, both on March 12 between 10:00 am and 4:00pm, and on March 13 from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. On March 12, I had an appointment between 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm to discuss my research questions with 7 of the personnel of the library in 3 groups.¹ Prior to my appointment, I gathered general information regarding the library's physical location and basic functions.

The Library is about 560 square meters in size and holds: 32,000 books, over 1,800 videos and DVDs, 100 magazines and newspapers, 14 computers with Internet access, databases with over 9,000 full- text periodicals, and historical runs of U.S. newspapers on microfiche. There is an additional space for offices, but there are no additional stacks. There are several spaces for patrons to read or study, including many round tables seating four people and several armchairs. The library also has several locations where patrons can converse with librarians and staff for reference or circulation questions. There is a circulation desk immediately inside the entrance, with space for one or two staff members. There, staff members check books out to patrons or assist with technological functions such as access to the WiFi available to each patron. At the back of the library, there is a desk for four reference personnel. All of these staff members

¹ In order to enter the library, I first approached the gated entryway and explained my intention to study at the library to the armed security guard. The first guard then directed me to a second, who directed me through a metal detector and then allowed me to enter the anteroom to the building, where I met with a third armed guard. There I filled out a sign-in sheet indicating my intention to visit the library. The guard then reviewed the items I had with me and guided me to leave any food or water in a cubby. Upon presentation of photo identification (I used my driver's license), the guard handed me a visitor's badge and opened the locked doorway to the remainder of the building. Once there, I passed through a corridor with a receptionist who was ready to direct me if needed. I then walked through the doorway into the Benjamin Franklin Library.

also occasionally walk around the library in the course of their work. Additionally, there are several conference and other meeting rooms located off of the library's main room. The library has many reminders of its functionality as an institution of the U. S. Government. For example, it has pictures of President Obama, as well as a well-displayed quote of his intentions for the relations between the United States and Mexico. It also has many pictures of Benjamin Franklin. The library materials include English and Spanish volumes, and the collection of videos is generally about either U. S. travel or U. S. pop culture.

My meeting with the staff was in the style of semi-structured interviews, in which I guided a conversation with each of the three groups of respondents. Prior to these interviews I went on a brief tour of the library with the Information Resource Officer. My first meeting in the interview setting was with a group of three of the reference librarians. Next I met with two librarians in charge of arranging programs for patron outreach, and then with the library director and with the Information Resource Officer who handled the library's interface with the U. S. Embassy in Mexico City and with the larger U. S. Government. After the conclusion of the interviews, I remained in the library to begin work on my notes. Due to protection of the confidentiality of the participants, I will refer to each group by their general points of view on the library rather than more directly by their names. The first group will be known as the Reference Group, the second as the Special Projects Group, and the third as the Administrative Group.

Interview Notes

My meetings focused on two general research questions and thirteen more specific questions. I asked the majority of questions to each of the three groups, in order to document the

differing or similar responses of each group of respondents. The below chart (Table 1) should detail the responses that each of the three groups gave to the questions I asked.

Table One			
Questions	Reference Group Response	Special Projects Group Response	Administrative Group Response
<p>Research Question 1</p> <p>What message does the United States hope to address with the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City?</p>	<p>The library seeks to promote mutual understanding between Mexicans and U. S. citizens. Each year the government prints a list of specific goals.² The library provides information to the diplomatic mission and to the State Department in order to help them achieve these goals.</p>	<p>The library promotes mutual understanding and explains the U. S. and its point of view to Mexican nationals. The motto of the library refers specifically to an information flow from the American people to the Mexican people.</p>	<p>The library promotes mutual understanding. It allows patrons to make informed decisions about the U. S. It also allows Mexicans and U. S. citizens to find common values and to collaborate with one another. The library is usually the first access point for Mexicans to learn about the U. S. It also reports information back to the U. S. Government, especially through the nearby embassy.</p>
<p>Research Question 2</p> <p>How does the library's material organization and content assist the U. S. in relaying that message?</p>	<p>The personal reference system provides that message personally and on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>The library has its own international language of sorts - that of metadata, discovery, and reference assistance. It teaches this language through information literacy programs such as looking at more advanced searches than Google. Also, many Mexicans who may not agree with the policies and political views of the U. S. may prefer its music or literature. At the library, patrons may verify these or other views by speaking with a U. S. citizen - often their first conversation with such an individual. The library also uses U. S. culture to promote the English language, for example with lectures or conversations in English on a few popular bands or games.</p>	<p>The library, in addition to its many outreach programs, brings technology to the Mexican society. For example, it offered email access before many patrons had an email address, and it offered Wi-Fi before personal laptops with Internet access became common. It also has such breakthrough technologies as barcode readers since the 1980s and databases with multiple access points. The website, which has been in place since 1988, receives 200 visits per day.</p>

² This year's list includes six specific goals: 1) Security and Protection of the U. S. and Mexican People, 2) Sustaining Rule of Law and Protecting Human Rights, 3) Increasing Jobs, Investment and Exports through Secure and Competitive Markets, 4) Sustaining Our Planet, 5) People and the Future: Building Communities and Supporting Youth on Both Sides of the Border, and 6) Strategic Communications are Deployed to Project U. S. Goals in Mexico.

Table One, cont.			
Question 1 Who are the library's prospective users? Mexican nationals? U. S. citizens? Both?	The library's users are about 70% Spanish speaking and 30% English speaking. They are primarily Mexicans living in Mexico City but also U. S. citizens resident in the city. Many of the U. S. patrons are now elderly adults. The two nationalities seek different information from the library. The U. S. patrons are primarily in search of general news, and the Mexican patrons look for specific information. There are also Mexican library science students who attend the library. Also, there is a small section of children's books, both in English and in Spanish.	The majority of the patrons who attend the events are Mexican nationals. However, there are a few patrons who are U. S. citizens.	The library is designed for Mexicans, not necessarily for U. S. citizens in Mexico City. However, anyone who lives in Mexico City or in its metropolitan area may sign up for a library card and borrow books, much like a public library in the United States.
Question 2 How have the library's purposes been translated over different situations and personnel?	All of the reference librarians know the general purpose of the library and their part in helping the library and the United States achieve their goals.	Each of the special programs links directly back to the goals of the United States Government.	The administration ensures that the larger goals of the United States Government are clear to each staff member.

Table One, cont.			
Question 3 What material does the library contain? Are there indigenous language materials included? If so, which languages and which materials?	All works are either in English or in Spanish; there are no materials in other languages.	The programs are designed toward native speakers of Spanish, to help them learn and become comfortable with English.	All materials in this library are either in English or in Spanish, because in a large metropolitan center like Mexico City, there are only patrons speaking Spanish, English, or both. However, in other states, such as Hidalgo or Mérida, the library sometimes encounters the unusual phenomenon of patrons or even employees who speak both an indigenous language and English, but have difficulty with Spanish. In that case, extra measures must be taken to allow for that linguistic challenge.
Question 4 Are the numbers of English and Spanish materials approximately equal? Why or why not?	About 15% of the materials are in Spanish, and the remainders are in English. This is because the primary emphasis is on the content of the book, not on its language. When developing the collection, the language of the work is not a concern to the staff.	The primary language of the programs is English, in order to familiarize patrons with the culture and environment of the United States.	About 15% of the materials are in Spanish. The others are in English.
Question 5 Who authors the works in the library? Are they Mexican? U. S. citizens? Both? Other?	The authors tend to be U. S. citizens. However, the nationality of authors is not a primary concern to collection development staff.	The programs are designed and run by U. S. citizens.	The authors of the works tend to be U. S. citizens.

Table One, cont.			
Question 6 How current is the information in the library? Do the works reflect recent methods of thought? How current are the periodicals?	The books are all published recently, in the last few years. The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Mexican news arrive daily. The other periodicals arrive in a weekly fashion and are still relatively current.	The programs reflect thoughts of the current diplomatic and library staff, and they express the current culture and music of the United States.	The library's materials all reflect recent methods of thought and directives from current appointees to the State Department and other current U. S. Government officials.
Question 7 Does the library provide a general overview of U. S. foreign policy, or does it focus on U. S. /Mexican history, relations, and culture?	The library focuses on the more relevant details of the situation between the United States and Mexico in its outreach to Mexican patrons. They do, however, have information on general foreign policy.	The library and its programs focus more on the specifics of the situations more relevant to its predominantly Mexican patrons.	The library understands well its place in the foreign policies of the United States; however, from a collection point of view, the focus is more on the specific situation at hand. The reference materials cover more general information.

Table One, cont.			
Question 8 In what way is the library organized? Why is it organized in that way?	The library has mostly Dewey Decimal organization. However, there is also a collection of fiction books along the wall that are organized with an internal system developed by the catalogers in the library. The library has no Library of Congress classification. Although some Mexican universities have Library of Congress organization, it is very rare. Since most patrons are longtime patrons, they do not generally need help finding specific materials. However, most new patrons do require this assistance.	The materials are not organized with Library of Congress call numbers, since that system of organization is not common to libraries in Mexico.	The library is not organized with Library of Congress call numbers, since it is unusual to find Library of Congress classification outside the United States. La Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) is one of the few places that uses Library of Congress classification.
Question 9 Are there many patrons that visit both the library and the embassy?	Many patrons of the library, both United States citizens and Mexican nationals, seek different information from the library from that at the embassy.	Many presenters of larger events at the library, such as the recent talk by Senator McCain, are originally presenters for the embassy, who end up at the library because it is easier to enter the library.	A distance of six blocks separates the library from the embassy. There is not much traffic in clients of the embassy who are also patrons of the library. Since the services each offers are so different, most people either go to one or to the other. However, presenters at the embassy sometimes end up presenting at the library for the widened access of press and others that the embassy provides.

Table One, cont.			
Question 10 How is this library a model for similar libraries in other locations?	It is unique in the way it provides services and information to its patrons. Many other libraries in Mexico City and throughout the world seek to follow its example.	The Benjamin Franklin Library is unique in this hemisphere. Most other libraries with embassies are actually Information Resource Centers (IRCs) and are not public - they require appointments. This library also has Interlibrary Loan privileges with a group of libraries in the United States (called Grupo Amigos) that includes UT Libraries.	The library is unique in its relatively autonomous structure. Many libraries in Mexico and other nations are governed by a central library. ³ However, this library is also a center for the community. In that way it is a model that other libraries try to copy. One other different aspect is that the patrons have a sense of proprietorship over the library, since they contribute in part to its maintenance and events. There are a few similar libraries in Mexico. ⁴ One other difference from other international libraries is that it has open stacks. All in all it is a symbol for open access and transparency. Internationally, the U. S. is one of the few nations with diplomatic libraries. ⁵ The Benjamin Franklin Library is the oldest U. S. library outside the United States. ⁶

³ For example, a similar system in the United States would have each U. S. library controlled by the Library of Congress.

⁴ Examples include the Vasconcelos Library in Mexico City and cross academic/public libraries in Guadalajara and in Puebla.

⁵ In Mexico City there are libraries for the embassies from Germany, France, Great Britain, China, Italy, India, and Spain. Internationally there are typically libraries associated with Germany and Great Britain.

⁶ The only other comparable repository is located in New Delhi, India. There are also a few small but popular libraries in other locations, especially Asia.

Table One, cont.			
Question 11 How is the library considered legally?	The workers in the library are Mexican nationals who are employees of the U. S. Government. They receive salaries in pesos, but undergo U. S. Government training in Washington, DC. Relying upon other assistance, such as volunteers, can be difficult, since it can be considered lobbying.	Many of the special programs rely, along with the Mexican nationals staffing the library, on native speakers of English or U. S. citizens. However, since volunteerism is a tricky subject in the legal situation of the library, the administration and other librarians and staff must navigate carefully around these issues.	This is what is called an American space, but it is on Mexican soil, and has Mexican nationals as employees of the U. S. Government. In the consideration of the government, the library is a part of the State Department's Public Affairs, which also works with press and cultural affairs, such as international visitor programs and visitor alumni programs. It arranges U. S. speakers and webinars, many of which take place in the library.
Question 12 To what do the reference questions tend to pertain?	The reference desk fields many questions, much like a public library. The type of question has changed over time, especially with the rise of the Internet. For example, while many of the past questions would be about the address of the White House, now more of them are about the law, statistics, or environmental situation of the United States. The method of asking reference questions has also changes over time. While past questions were face-to-face encounters or phone calls, now emailed questions are more common.	Since this was a question directed to the work of the reference librarians, I did not ask the other two groups this question.	Since this was a question directed to the work of the reference librarians, I did not ask the other two groups this question.

Table One, cont.			
<p>Question 13 What sorts of special events and outreach programs does the library use to assist patrons? What is the success rate of these programs?</p>	<p>Since this was a question directed to the work of the special events librarians, I did not ask the other two groups this question.</p>	<p>There are many English Language programs. For example, there is a Conversation Club, which practices conversational English or specific topics, such as debating practices. This club is led by a native speaker of English. However, there is no possibility for more formal classes at the library, since the library offers all of its programs for free. Many U. S. citizens in Mexico City are teachers of these clubs. The clubs are very particular, and each teacher chooses his own students. As a result, many potential participants are turned away due to the restrictions on class size. The library does, however, offer suggestions for formal English classes. The library also benefits from a Fellow English program, in which a designated speaker of English is based in Mexico City but then travels throughout Mexico to spread the English language. The library also host cultural events such as movie showings and game nights. The movies are typically related to U. S. music or culture; however, there are special movies shown for holidays or events such as President's Day or Black History Month. At times there are other activities, such as a hip-hop session or a celebration of U. S. holidays. Also, several speakers from the U. S. come in to give talks at the library, such as a female scientist from NASA who spoke about women in science. Other speakers, such as Senator McCain, end up speaking at the library instead of the embassy because of the difficulty in getting into the embassy, and because the library provides more access to journalists and to an audience.</p>	<p>Since this was a question directed to the work of the special events librarians, I did not ask the other two groups this question.</p>

Post Interview Notes

On the following day, I returned to the Benjamin Franklin Library. In order to enter, I underwent exactly the same process that I had the day before. In the library, I had a chance to observe with special care the parts of the library corresponding to the interview responses. I was especially able to view and verify the situations specified by the Special Projects Group. I noticed several patrons in the general reading room of the library, and even more in the side rooms participating in the Conversation Club and in similar projects. With information to verify the amount of activity in the library and in the special programs, I concluded my study after finishing writing down my notes from the visit.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Overview

During the course of my interviews and other research opportunities at the Benjamin Franklin Library, I added my own observations to the above results of each question. I later looked closely at my notes together with other information from the remainder of my paper. When put together with the literature review portion of this paper's information, some of the details suddenly began to make more sense, while others were even more surprising than before. The surprises I found covered topics such as knowledge of the Government's general goals, the role of advocacy in the library, and the presence of indigenous languages in the library's material. The answers that confirmed my suspicions but enhanced them as well were regarding classification of the library, classification of its material, the importance of outreach to patrons, and the desire to reflect trends in Government transparency. There was an interesting trend in links between my expectations and the older and newer literature. Many of the surprising details resulted from my expectations that were based upon my perusal of older literature and my subsequent lack of information about the library's changes. Along the same lines, however, some of the less surprising responses developed from the theories expounded in more recent literature. Although the application of that to the specific library certainly was new information for me, the shift from general to particular was easier than the changes over time. However, in conversation with longtime employees of the Benjamin Franklin Library, I was able to determine that the older literature did provide an accurate picture of the library's circumstances in past times, especially during its initial development and past acceptance in the Mexican community.

Finally, this section of discussion of my research concludes with a discussion of possible future research topics that could also add to the body of knowledge of diplomatic librarianship. It is my sincere hope that readers of this paper take on a few of these possible topics, so that knowledge of diplomatic librarianship continues to develop in the future.

Surprises

One of the most surprising details resulting from the interview was the quantity of similar and even identical qualities in the responses given by each of the three groups of librarians I encountered in my visit. I had expected to find that the understanding of the library's primary mission would be diffused over the various positions and points of expertise of the staff. I especially thought that would be the case between the Information Resource Officer, a U. S. citizen, and the remainder of the staff. However, all of the staff not only had similar ideas of the Government's mission through the library, they also answered my two general research questions using similar stories and phrases. The reply, noting the importance of education and of mutual understanding, also recalled the same mission statement from the library's founding in 1942, for the same promotion of U. S. cultural values and understanding. Nor was it an endeavor of rote memory; the three groups also used examples from their personal jobs in the library to illustrate the point they were trying to make. Even though the three group interview sessions took place in different locations and in different times, the training and continued communication between the staff kept their positions on the questions and similar issues identical. Their understanding of these goals was assisted by their familiarity with documents detailing the United States' efforts, both in terms of general foreign policy and with respect to the library. For example, I received from the reference librarians a sheet (excluding any confidential information) stating the goals of the U. S. Government, revised and resubmitted each year. The

contents of that paper appear as a footnote to the reference response to the first research question and cover all branches of international relations with a special focus on education. This document supported what I had already heard from one interview group and still had yet to hear from others. The librarians also demonstrated an ability to relate their individual tasks to the repository's larger goal by referring back to my two overarching research questions as they answered each of the other questions in the interview. Overall, their individual familiarity with the library and with the State Department in general left me with a feeling of confidence in the United States' portrayal abroad.

One other topic that mildly surprised me was that of advocacy. The idea of the library having to advocate for support was not difficult to understand; however, the drastic changes over time were more extreme. During the BFL's foundation in 1941, the American Library Association (ALA) was very involved in the library's progress, helping the library to secure a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and even overseeing the hiring of its first director, a U. S. citizen. Now, however, the ALA is no longer the primary supporter of the BFL. The director of the library, now a Mexican national, is a member of ALA, and he does advocate for the library's support, but its primary connection is with the Mexican Library Association, the sister organization in Mexico of the ALA. Furthermore, the library's administrators also related to me that the library suffered from a decrease in funding and had to downsize dramatically during the Clinton administration in the 1990s. This lack of funding from notable United States sources was exactly contrary to my expectations of a prosperous diplomatic library. However, I was pleased to hear that the library had not admitted defeat, retreating in ever-diminishing proportions; instead, it uses creative advocacy efforts and networking to gather the funds required of such an institution. For example, the director uses his membership in ALA to join a subgroup geared

toward libraries with Latino patrons. This group is a supporter of a yearly book fair in Guadalajara which is the largest Spanish language book fair in Latin America. The library director then requests that each person attending the book fair from ALA bring back one work for the Benjamin Franklin Library. He also participates in other networking enterprises. For example, he occasionally asks that his friends from libraries in the United States send books on their cities or states of origin. The library is also a part of a network of Interlibrary Services called Grupo Amigos which includes, among others, borrowing privileges from University of Texas Libraries. Networking opportunities also exist through the library's location in Mexico and focus on Mexican nationals. For example, the library is a hub for some of Mexico's library science programs and is frequented by Mexican library science students, who benefit from the selection of English-language books on international librarianship and other library science topics. In return for the support of these emerging scholars, the library receives their support, as well as the prestige of being a sought-after location. Indeed, even though the library does not receive outside support as easily as it once did, the impressive advocacy and fundraising efforts of its staff means that the library still has the money it needs to continue to serve Mexican nationals and the purpose of the U. S. Government.

The situations surrounding a unique repository of this sort are often the most complex parts of comprehension of the library. The content of such an institution, on the other hand, at first glance seems fairly straightforward; it has information regarding various aspects of life and policy in the United States. However, the choice of languages for the texts was not quite what I expected: texts are only available in English (85%) or in Spanish (15%), not in any of the indigenous languages present in Mexico. Mexico as a country has more than 100 indigenous languages and is very proud of the indigenous part of its history and culture; Mexican offices

proclaim proudly their willingness to translate any document into an indigenous language for a client who does not speak Spanish. Therefore, it surprised me that this linguistic openness does not translate into the presence in the library of indigenous-language volumes. However, it also surprised me when I asked the reason for this lack of indigenous languages and received the answer that all patrons speak either English or Spanish (or both). Geographically, this makes sense: there are more speakers of native languages in other states, like Hidalgo or Chiapas. If the library was opened there, the director explained to me, it would of course have a program of outreach to indigenous persons. So this condition both is somewhat of a surprise and makes sense at the same time. In that way, the library provides support to its patrons without using the additional resources that rarer materials such as works in indigenous languages would require.

Expected Responses

One explanation that was easy for me to understand and that confirmed my expectations was the classification of the library within the United States Government. The library, as I expected, is governed by an Information Resource Officer. As an institution, it is a part of the Cultural Affairs section, a subgroup of the State Department. Since one of the primary motives for international libraries is to use them as purveyors of cultural details, and since the library also has the role of collecting information on Mexico's culture for the United States, this classification is not at all surprising. The one surprising fact about its classification is that it is legally located in Mexico, rather than in U. S. territory, like the embassy or other location where a U. S. citizen could hide and take refuge. However, the library's employees are, with the exception of the Information Resource Officer, Mexican nationals under the employ of the U. S. Government. This is a very powerful asset for the United States, to have Mexican nationals who work for and enjoy learning about the U. S. Government. It therefore is a great boon to the U. S.

diplomatic mission that the library helps it to carry a diplomatic message to the people of Mexico.

Another detail that makes sense is the library's internal system of classification, using primarily the Dewey Decimal system rather than the Library of Congress. Although there is also an internal system of organization used for the library's few fiction books, the main reliance is upon the standard system of Dewey Decimal. Library of Congress classification is rare in public libraries in the U. S. and almost impossible to find in libraries in Mexico. In fact, it is only present in a small handful of academic institutions in Mexico.⁷ Many patrons are already accustomed to the use of Dewey Decimal call numbers, or at least more familiar with them than with Library of Congress. For the patrons unfamiliar with any call numbers of any kind, the library has several fliers and posters displaying location information, both in Spanish and in English. Therefore, a use also of the Library of Congress system would not be a classification particularly familiar or useful to patrons of the library. Since the patrons form such a large part of the working of the BFL, their needs and abilities form a large part of the library's most efficient means of information distribution and communication.

Since the library patrons are so integral to the library, it is relatively simple to guess that one very large part of the library's function would be a series of outreach programs. Indeed, the library hosts programs in a vast number of topics related to U. S. life and culture. Examples include English language practice clubs, information literacy, various webinars and other speakers from the U. S., game nights, video screenings, and music and dance sessions. Because of the library's essential function as a public institution, all of these meetings are free. They are, however, very restricted in number, since the library lacks the space to house all interested

⁷ Most notable among these is la Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM).

parties comfortably. During my own second visit to the BFL, I witnessed an English language club taking place in a side room, and therefore can add my own testimony to that of the event planners with whom I spoke. The outreach programs do indeed have many interested parties, but the library attempts to keep classes small for personalized attention. Many people apply for a class but do not get a seat. Although it seems almost contrary to the idea of patron significance to continue turning patrons away from the library's function, the purpose behind doing this actually reaffirms the library's commitment to its users. The primary reason more people try to attend than can be supported is a desire on the part of the library to retain many free services rather than one of exclusion. Due to this, the library keeps true to its theme of placing the patron at the highest level of importance in the library.

Similar to the system of outreach, one other possible reason for the accessibility the library shows to patrons is the idea of transparency. The theme of transparency has become a large topic recently, and one way to demonstrate distribution of information is through having many outreach programs. The number of outreach programs, as previously discussed, conveys the idea that such a large part of the library's daily actions must also be an important part of its core purpose, and the impressions of the library reflect upon those of the U. S. Government. One other way to demonstrate transparency, in which the library also participates, is through the providing of unequivocal access. Any person who can successfully navigate the three armed guards then receives access to all of the library's materials, and any person who lives in the metropolitan Mexico City area has privileges to borrow items as well. The restrictions on borrowing privileges stem from the library's fear that nonresidents may not return items rather than from a desire to exclude people from the library. For that reason, both the borrowing privileges and the unequivocal access give the impression that the library, and indeed the U. S.

Government, has nothing to hide and shares the whole truth with all people, both citizens and noncitizens alike. This impression that the materials in the library demonstrate the whole truth about the United States permits its patrons to feel familiar with the nation and its people in a way that would not be possible without a complete trust in the information source, either in Mexico City or in Washington, D. C.

Future

Due to the past lack of information regarding diplomatic librarianship in general or the Benjamin Franklin Library in specific, this paper information is a matter of national importance to the United States. It is also important to United States citizens, who can use the information in the study to inform their opinions and decisions more thoroughly. However, since in the future there will be considerably more literature regarding the library in recent times, the possibilities for future research will be much broader. One would be a look into the librarians staffing the library, and how they come to attain their current positions. This information would add to the significant field of job-seeking librarians. Another could be a closer investigation of a few items this paper touched on briefly, such as the content of the library or its contrasting systems of outer security and internal access. Further information on these details could lead to other studies, comparing the content normal to public libraries or to special collections to the content present in the Benjamin Franklin Library. It could also compare the access possible in the BFL to that possible in other public libraries in Mexico and with those in the United States. Still another option would be to look at the same subject matter but to apply it to outreach to a different audience, such as one of international Governments, convincing them either to host or to create a selection of diplomatic libraries or information centers. This could take the theories expounded in newer literature and see how they could be reapplied to fit other country-specific situations. It

could also take a new look into the history of the library to see what processes led to its creation, and into cultural affairs' recent policies to see how locations for the diplomatic libraries are chosen, or how the host country decides which diplomatic libraries should be there. All of these research options would add dramatically to a topic that has been virtually unexplored in over twenty years.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The world is made up of countless interactions between different nations. To control and assist with these interactions, there now are many embassies in almost every country. Within that vast network of embassies, there is a small collection of diplomatic libraries. They are common to nations such as Great Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. Since each diplomatic library focuses on the particular aspects of its own foreign policy and cultural outreach, these libraries all differ greatly in terms of the library's content. However, there are also many similarities, even between one location and another, governed by a completely different nation, halfway across the world. These similarities and differences create in the world of international activity a vast network of potential diplomatic institutions.

Despite the multitude of international interactions, the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City is a fine example of a diplomatic library. Through its careful selection of material that is particular to the relations between Mexico and the United States, it provides a clear representation of U. S. policies, values, and facts. Also, true to its intention to be similar to many public libraries in the U. S., it spends much time and effort on the needs of each patron. There, all patrons feel that they are integral parts of the library. It especially connects its patrons with the general goals of the State Department. It should be noted that many nations do not have corresponding diplomatic libraries or information institutions. Therefore, if a nation did have the intention of opening such an institution, the BFL would be one model of a successful diplomatic repository. Through a successful mixture of outreach to patrons and communication with both the United States and Mexico, the BFL conveys the diplomatic message of the U. S. successfully, in a way that other nations could seek to imitate.

This paper has intended to explore the specific message of the United States' diplomatic repository in Mexico City. As each staff member has related, this message is one of mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and Mexico, and to take a look at the way the library's structure helps it to convey that message. The results overwhelmingly have shown that every aspect of the library, from its physical appearance to its staff, content and organization of information, and patron outreach, links directly back to the specific goals set out by the State Department each year. This direct connection gives each patron a feeling of connection with the United States upon entering the library. This provides the necessary ambiance in order to accompany the facts in a realistic and honest manner. In order to accompany this purpose of assistance to the United States, one other significant purpose of the Benjamin Franklin Library is to provide support to Mexican nationals who wish to learn about the United States. The multitude of outreach offerings makes each individual feel a true part of the multinational partnership. The working together of these two goals allows the Benjamin Franklin Library to focus on the overall goal of portraying the United States in a positive light through multiple approaches.

This paper has discussed several aspects of the workings of the library. The introduction described the general topic of diplomatic librarianship, and then the overview brought that general topic into the scope of the paper by focusing it on one specific library, the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City. After these introductory statements, the paper explored the relevant literature already in existence, separating them into groups to address more easily the distinct gap in available literature. Once the literature was exposed as incomplete, I set out to remedy that scarcity of information by visiting the library myself, asking two research questions and thirteen more specific questions. I then read carefully both the questions and answers, noting

similarities to and differences from my previous expectations. Finally, I conclude this paper and this project with a series of statements bringing this information back into the context of the paper's beginning.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Research Question 1: What message does the United States hope to address with the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City?

Research Question 2: How does the library's material organization and content assist the U. S. in relaying that message?

Question 1: Who are the library's prospective users? Mexican nationals? U. S. citizens? Both?

Question 2: How have the library's purposes been translated over different situations and personnel?

Question 3: What material does the library contain? Are there indigenous language materials included? If so, which languages and which materials?

Question 4: Are the numbers of English and Spanish materials approximately equal? Why or why not?

Question 5: Who authors the works in the library? Are they Mexican? U. S. citizens? Both? Other?

Question 6: How current is the information in the library? Do the works reflect recent methods of thought? How current are the periodicals?

Question 7: Does the library provide a general overview of U. S. foreign policy, or does it focus on U. S. /Mexican history, relations, and culture?

Question 8: In what way is the library organized? Why is it organized in that way?

Question 9: Are there many patrons that visit both the library and the embassy?

Question 10: How is this library a model for similar libraries in other locations?

Question 11: How is the library considered legally?

Question 12: To what do the reference questions tend to pertain?

Question 13: What sorts of special events and outreach programs does the library use to assist patrons? What is the success rate of these programs?

Appendix B: Images of the Benjamin Franklin Library

Image One



Image Two



Image Three



Image Four



Image Five



Image Six



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