

From out of the past

The Historical Intelligence Collection

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Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

George Santayana
The Life of Reason

The CIA's Historical Intelligence Collection (HIC), with its 23,000 volumes of intelligence history, gives the Agency a running start in avoiding the fate that Santayana posited for those without mnemonic resources to fall back on. When Allen Dulles ordered the establishment of the HIC in 1954, he envisioned the collection as a working repository of books and periodicals on all aspects of intelligence, beginning with the earliest written accounts of intelligence operations and continuing to the present. He wanted it to be used by members of the Intelligence Community as a law library is used by lawyers.

The Founding Father

As a lawyer and as a charter member of the Intelligence Community, Dulles saw the common need of both groups for access to historical research, and, lest the point be missed, he assigned another lawyer, Dr. Walter L. Pforzheimer, as the Special Assistant to the Deputy Director for Intelligence to serve as Adviser on the HIC. The appointment was effective 31 January 1956, but the HIC had already begun operations officially on 1 January 1956 under Pforzheimer's supervision.

Pforzheimer, the Agency's first legislative counsel, was an enthusiastic book collector in his own right who had begun shortly after World War II to assemble a private collection of intelligence literature, including rare books and manuscripts. He discussed his inchoate collection with Dulles from time to time, and Dulles eventually asked Pforzheimer for an evaluation of the Agency's intelligence collection. "Negligible," was the one-word response. Dulles assigned Pforzheimer to change that.

Marching Orders

The initial notice, No. 1-130-3, established the specific scope of the duties and responsibilities of the Special Assistant. The collection was to concentrate on "all aspects of intelligence operations and doctrine in the past." The Adviser was to provide staff advice for the development and maintenance of the collection, prepare a master bibliographical checklist on the subject of the history of intelligence, and make recommendations for the purchase of appropriate items for the collection. The notice of establishment also gave the Adviser general authority to request support from other Agency components as needed and placed him under the Office of Central Reference (OCR) for logistics and administrative support. A separate personnel notice, No. 20-190-92, dated 31 January 1956, designated Pforzheimer as the Special Assistant, a title that was soon replaced by Curator.

Early notes and memorandums by Pforzheimer indicate the interest displayed by the higher levels of the Agency. One draft for Dulles to sign begins, "It is my desire that the CIA collect and preserve material of historical significance. . . ." Though written by Pforzheimer, it clearly reflected Dulles's inspiration. Then, in April 1957, Pforzheimer wrote, "A little over a year ago, the DCI expressed a desire that CIA should develop the best intelligence library in the world." To accomplish that goal, Pforzheimer initiated the transfer of 1,190 appropriate books from the CIA library to the collection, located first in Room 134B, M Building, at the E Street complex.

Building the Collection

Pforzheimer then began to scour the world for additions to the collection. In the first year of the collection's existence, it expanded to 3,570 books. A trip

to Europe by Pforzheimer yielded 1,308 new books, bought in 10 European countries, at a cost of under \$2,500. Other books were purchased from special funds or by OCR for the collection. By this time, the collection was no longer negligible.

The first year also saw a detailed definition of the scope of the collection. In April 1957, Pforzheimer emphasized that the collection should include such topics as military, strategic, and national intelligence, as well as espionage, counterespionage, unconventional warfare in all of its aspects—guerrillas, resistance movements, partisans, special forces, escape and evasion, subversion, clandestine press—and such other subjects as economic and psychological warfare, prisoners of war, cryptography, loyalty and security, and the various elements of intelligence tradecraft. As far as Pforzheimer could determine, “nowhere else in the world is there a collection of similar size and scope.”

To ensure that the collection continued to be the best, Pforzheimer enlisted the support not only of Agency overseas posts, but also prevailed upon the Department of State to add his criteria to its list of publications to be procured by regional and part-time Publications Officers (POs) stationed overseas. An August 1962 Airgram served “as a guide to regional and part-time POs in their selection of the following intelligence materials.” The list followed closely the criteria Pforzheimer had established for the collection. In addition, the Airgram said, “The only works of fiction appropriate to this requirement are those publications clearly based on fact, or on the actual intelligence experience of the author.”

Lodged in the Library

With the construction and dedication of the new CIA Headquarters building in Langley, Virginia, the collection got more space and a new administrative master. On 24 September 1963, per CR 1-130-8 “the Historical Intelligence Collection and the personnel assigned to it are transferred to the CIA Library.” Initially, the collection’s new home was a small room in the library, but it was shortly moved to quarters on the library’s mezzanine floor. It still occupies that location.

Quantity and Quality

The size of the collection continued to increase. Other trips by Pforzheimer helped to build the collection to 8,000 volumes by 1961. At the time of Pforzheimer’s retirement in 1974, the collection numbered 22,000 volumes.

A mere statement of the quantity, however, does not do justice to the collection. Breadth and depth have to be considered to appreciate its real worth. Sun Tzu, the Chinese strategist from before the Chin Dynasty, is included, as well as at least 150 different volumes on the Dreyfus affair; Reilly, ace of spies, is present in all his mendacious glory; the unriddling of Enigma and the discoloring of Purple are laid out in decrypted splendor; and 7 December 1941 lives in full-color photographs of Pearl Harbor and over 50 volumes explaining the intelligence failure that took place on that date. Separate collections document intelligence during the Civil War and the Revolutionary War, and a rare book collection goes back to 1683, when Johann Lerch in Vienna, Austria, exposed a Turkish spy. The rare book collection also includes a small, privately printed volume on the Boer War written in 1907 by an 8-year-old Allen Dulles. He directed, at the time, that all royalties go to a fund to help the victims of that war.

A New Curator

Edward Sayle was appointed to replace Pforzheimer. The new Curator came to the collection from the Office of Security, further establishing the principle that the Curator need not be a historian. Sayle contributed most to the collection, however, in just that area where a historian would have been most effective: he had a strong interest in the uses of intelligence in the American Revolution, and he organized the collection’s material on that subject into a separate section. He also wrote a monograph on the historical underpinnings of the US Intelligence Community, for which he received awards within the Agency and outside. The National Intelligence Study Center viewed it as the “best scholarly article in 1986.”

Imposing Duties

Sayle's arrival occurred under the aegis of the Central Libraries Division, which wrote a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on 22 November 1974 to guide him in his activities. At the end of three pages, the MOA has listed five duties under which are sublisted 14 tasks that, if undertaken seriously, would have required a staff of dozens instead of the single assistant assigned to the collection.

The detail in the MOA reflects the increasing complexity of life in the Agency during the 20-year existence of the collection. The Curator in 1955 was "to collect and preserve material of historical significance relating to the development of US Intelligence." To do this he was to "survey available overt and classified documentary material in Agency repositories and make appropriate recommendations for purchase and acquisition." By 1974 the duties read:

Duty 1: Manage and maintain the HIC and direct the activities of the library assistant assigned thereto.

Duty 2: Analyze new materials for effect on the Agency and initiate appropriate action where necessary.

Duty 3: Provide support and guidance regarding the literature of intelligence to appropriate Agency organizations.

Duty 4: Conduct liaison necessary to the effective operation of the HIC.

Duty 5: Study and develop improved systems for the retrieval of the large volume of clippings, items, and ephemera contained in HIC; translate into meaningful schedules, resource projects, and procedural requirements.

In addition, Sayle was to maintain the HIC "as an attractive and well-ordered work area; provide briefings concerning the collection; foster, where practicable, a greater awareness and use of HIC materials; and think about management problems and solutions in the division, office, and Agency context." Finally, he was to identify materials suitable for inclusion in the Intelligence Museum.

Professional Care

Sayle retired in 1984. His tenure encompassed the appointment of William Casey as DCI, which presented him with the delicate problem of servicing the Director's interest in Revolutionary War intelligence and assisting him in producing an expanded volume of his original work on that topic without misusing government funds and without "affording him services not commensurate with that given other Agency employees performing similar personal research." This perhaps overscrupulous approach to a unique situation indicates the highly professional care that Sayle gave the collection.

Under Sayle, the collection continued to grow in concert with the publication of new works in intelligence, the basic body of the collection having been completed by the time he took over. During Sayle's tenure, the collection expanded its responsibilities to support the Agency and the rest of the Intelligence Community, as set forth in Volume 40, No. 168 of the *Federal Register*. Sayle's 10 years as curator defined in practice what these instructions described in theory. As a result, he left an expanded opportunity for his successor, Kinloch Bull, who arrived in January 1984. Bull was not able to take full advantage of the opportunity, however, because of health problems that resulted in his retirement in July 1985.

The Fourth Curator

Bull was replaced by William Henhoeffter, the first professional historian to hold the post. Henhoeffter came from the Directorate of Intelligence, where he had served as an analyst. As Curator, he concentrated on the historical underpinnings of the Agency—the OSS and Gen. William Donovan—and produced presentations on both, as well as written histories of events in the life of Donovan and of various DCIs.

Changed Emphasis

The collection continued to grow slowly under Henhoeffter because new material was published infrequently and because a purging of some unnecessary

works had begun. At the time Henhoeffer became Curator, the emphasis had moved more toward service to the community in the form of research and analysis and away from expanding the collection. Henhoeffer also stressed the exhibition of intelligence artifacts, which had grown to be a large part of the Curator's duties by 1985.

Emblematic, perhaps, of the changed emphasis was Henhoeffer's 1989 speech to a Jedburgh reunion that wove the strands of William Donovan and the OSS into the memory of William Casey, the last OSS veteran to head the CIA. He ended his speech to the appreciative Jedburghs with the same words of the poet, Laurence Binyon, that Casey had used in his tribute to the Agency officers who had died in the bombing of the US Embassy in Beirut:

They shall not grow old,
As we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We will remember them.

Ability To Survive

Throughout its history, the HIC collection has been a target for reform or elimination. As early as 1957, an inspection report from the Inspector General's Staff recommended that it be consolidated as part of the regular Agency library, apparently on the belief that a separate collection had little use to the Intelligence Community. In 1980, under the zero-base-budget program, the Central Libraries Division considered elimination of the collection because it "was not part of the normal production process," in the words of the Library Chief at the time. On both occasions, the Curators were able to argue successfully for its retention.

On Henhoeffer's retirement in 1990, the question of the collection's future was once again addressed by Agency management. Acting DCI Richard Kerr

eventually decided to transfer the exhibition function to the Office of Public Affairs, to keep management of the collection under the Office of Information Resources, and to change the Curator's function from a staff to a contract position under the control of the Center for Studies in Intelligence in the DCI's office. The responsibilities of the Curator were changed at the same time to reflect the turnover to an independent contractor and to enlist the Curator in the effort to implement the openness proposals of DCI Robert Gates.

A Testimonial

At this point, the collection may be fairly said to have reached Allen Dulles's goal. It is almost certainly the finest collection of its kind in the world, and it provides useful information from the past to help build our understanding of the future.

When one observes the number of books written by former intelligence officers or the even greater number written from open and covert conversations with former intelligence officers, it is easy to deplore the lowering of security standards. The collection, however, shows clearly that this has been a long-standing problem.

The oath of secrecy meant little to Matthew Smith, a British secret agent who, in 1699, explained in his *Memoirs of Secret Service* that he was obliged to publish the papers, not for ideological reasons, but for "the utmost necessity . . . and no worse fate can be procured me by those who I may displease by starving, which is almost my present condition." In other words, he needed money. Three hundred years later, Peter Wright, a British intelligence officer published his memoirs, *Spycatcher*, because the British Government had shortchanged him on his pension. Santayana must have smiled. The HIC, of course, contains both books.