AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES

A Summary Statement of its work and its plans for
A Fiftieth Anniversary Capital Development Program
**CONSTITUENT SOCIETIES**

American Philosophical Society, 1743
American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1780
American Antiquarian Society, 1812
American Oriental Society, 1842
American Numismatic Society, 1858
American Philological Association, 1869
Archaeological Institute of America, 1879
Society of Biblical Literature, 1880
Modern Language Association of America, 1883
American Historical Association, 1884
American Economic Association, 1885
American Folklore Society, 1888
American Dialect Society, 1889
Association of American Law Schools, 1900
American Philosophical Association, 1901
American Anthropological Association, 1902
American Political Science Association, 1903
Bibliographical Society of America, 1904
Association of American Geographers, 1904
American Sociological Association, 1905
College Art Association of America, 1912
History of Science Society, 1924
Linguistic Society of America, 1924
Mediaeval Academy of America, 1925
American Musicological Society, 1934
Society of Architectural Historians, 1940
Economic History Association, 1940
Association for Asian Studies, 1941
American Society for Aesthetics, 1942
Metaphysical Society of America, 1950
American Studies Association, 1950
Renaissance Society of America, 1954
Society for Ethnomusicology, 1955
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Introduction

In a period of rapid scientific and technological advance, the humanities require special nurture. They enable us to understand our own society and its heritage; they permit us to gain insights into other cultures which form the surest guide to mutual understanding, and they provide the means to make our increased leisure rich and satisfying. "Without knowledge of the humanities," as Glenn Seaborg has said, "science would lack vision, inspiration, and purpose." It is to the advancement of humanistic learning in all its universal contexts, and its absorption at every level of education, that the American Council of Learned Societies is dedicated. To these ends the ACLS has labored since its founding in 1919.

As the Council now approaches its fiftieth anniversary it looks with pride at a record of considerable accomplishment, and is confident that the means will be found to assure its future. This confidence is based upon the conviction that, as an organization representing the humanities in the United States and serving as the nation's representative abroad, it merits a level of financial support commensurate with its influence, its uniqueness, and its worth, and that it will not be allowed in the future to suffer such threats to its survival as the great depression, shifts in foundation objectives, and war-related circumstances have engendered in the past.

To this end, the ACLS seeks to raise a capital fund of $5,000,000 or the equivalent in fixed income sufficient to assure its existence as a fully independent organization. It intends to continue fulfilling its special functions by seeking support for specific programs and projects on their individual merits, but its central establishment requires stable and dependable financing if the Council is to operate effectively.
Functions

The Council's first role was, and still is, to serve as a private national representative of the humanities in the world of learning. It was established in 1919 in response to the need for the United States to have a spokesman in the International Union of Academies, and it has served that role with distinction for nearly fifty years, in recognition of which its delegate was recently named President of the Union. Through its membership in the U.A.I., the ACLS participates in the work of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies. The Council is also represented on the United States National Commission for UNESCO; it represents the United States in the exchange of humanists and social scientists with the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., and has taken the lead in establishing a formal cooperative arrangement with the Academia Sinica of the Republic of China. Through an ACLS committee, American scholarship is formally represented in the International Association of Southeast European Studies. The Council's American Studies Program, which encourages teaching and research about the United States in selected foreign countries, has established relations with universities and scholars in all of Western Europe and large parts of the Far East. Through its support of international scholarly congresses in the humanities and social sciences and through its informal relations with many other scholarly organizations abroad, the American Council of Learned Societies has come to be well known by scholars and professional associations throughout the world.

The ACLS also functions as a research council, and as such it is one of the four members of the Conference Board of Associated Research Councils, with the Na-
ational Research Council, the Social Science Research Council, and the American Council on Education. One of the principal functions of the Conference Board is supervision of the Committee on the International Exchange of Persons which administers exchanges under the Fulbright Program at the advanced scholar level. The ACLS also has close relations in an advisory capacity with several U.S. Government agencies, especially the Department of State, the Office of Education, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Library of Congress. The Council is frequently invited to testify, as the spokesman for the humanities in this country, at Congressional hearings on legislation pertaining to its fields of research interests and its areas of educational competence.

The Council is, by its charter, a federation of national professional and honorary societies concerned with the humanities and the humanistic aspects of the social sciences. The fact that its constituency, now thirty-three in number, has nearly trebled since its founding, and that requests for membership continue to increase, is indicative of its standing with the professions and its recognition as the representative of the humanities in this country.

More important than its structural design, however, is the fact that the ACLS represents the field in the eyes of individual scholars in all areas of humanistic research. It is vital to the Council's role as a research council and promoter of humanistic learning that scholars think of the Council as their own. That they do so is shown in many ways—by the prestige they accord to ACLS fellowships, by the value placed upon ACLS sponsorship of their conferences and research projects, and by their
willingness to serve the Council without compensation. At present approximately two hundred scholars serve as delegates to the Council, as members of the Board of Directors, and as members of the Council’s numerous committees. Without their voluntary participation the Council could not function.

Historically, the ACLS has sought both to give sustenance to traditional fields of study and to develop new fields and new relations between disciplines. It has consistently attempted to be innovative rather than operational and to be responsive to needs that could not be met by other organizations. Its principal instruments of endeavor have been planning committees and conferences to stimulate research, fellowships and grants in aid of research, preparation of the tools of research, and publication of the results of research. To a lesser, but still important, degree, it has fostered programs in teaching and education. The activities described below indicate the range of ACLS interests over five decades.

Support of Traditional Fields of Study

From its earliest years the ACLS has stimulated scholarship in Oriental studies, and through its efforts has built up a corps of sound scholarship in these fields. Today it offers grants for research in Asian studies; it has a special Committee on Studies of Chinese Civilization which sponsors research conferences and projects, and it maintains a cooperative program with scholarly institutions in the Republic of China to promote scholarship in both our countries.
The ACLS pioneered in the application of modern linguistic science to the preparation of language teaching materials, supervised the Army Language Program, the English for Foreigners Program, the Program in Oriental Languages, and many other projects which stressed the importance of scholarly work in so-called exotic languages. When the National Defense Education Act stressed the importance of such languages, it brought to public attention a cause for which the ACLS had worked for many years. Upon passage of the Act, the ACLS was asked by the U.S. Office of Education to submit a report which would set priorities for the Government's foreign language program, and in 1959 the Office awarded the ACLS a contract under which work has been completed in one hundred sixteen projects providing language teaching and background materials for Hungarian, Baltic-Finnic, Turkic, Mongolian, and other Uralic-Altaic languages.

**Development of New Fields of Scholarly Endeavor**

Through its committees the ACLS has encouraged the development of research in many fields, set criteria and professional standards, planned and accumulated bibliographical and reference materials, and established scholarly journals. Several national societies of scholars now in existence had their beginnings in ACLS committees. Among these are the Mediaeval Academy of America, the Renaissance Society of America, the Far Eastern Association (now the Association for Asian Studies), the American Studies Association, and the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies.
The development of area studies in this country owes much to the impetus provided by the ACLS. The original concept of organizing scholarly expertise around an area or cultural region grew out of the Council's early work in Oriental studies and language training, and its ability to bring a wide variety of humanists and social scientists together in interdisciplinary work made it possible to launch area studies and sustain them over an extended period. Since World War II, when the practical need for such competence was evident, the ACLS has organized and developed Asian, Latin American, Near and Middle Eastern, and Slavic and East European studies. In all these areas, plus Africa and Contemporary China, the ACLS has worked in recent years jointly with the Social Science Research Council.

**Promotion of the Humanities at Large**

Perhaps the most important work in promoting the humanities on a broad front that the ACLS has performed in its half-century of life is the initiative it took in establishing a national Commission on the Humanities in 1963. The Commission, sponsored jointly by the ACLS, the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States, and the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, consisted of distinguished humanists and scientists, educators, businessmen, and interested citizens under the chairmanship of Barnaby Keeney, then President of Brown University. Its *Report*, describing the state of the humanities in America in the mid-1960's, concluded that massive support of the humanities was urgently needed and recommended the establishment of a national humanities foundation. Published in 1964 and widely circulated, the *Report* had an impressive impact, and the legislation which established the National Foundation
on the Arts and the Humanities the following year largely reflected its recommendations.

In early 1967 the National Advisory Commission on Libraries asked the ACLS to study the present status and the future development of research libraries. The Council appointed a Committee on Research Libraries, which produced a wide ranging report on the problems of access and bibliographical control, on technological innovation, and on the establishment of a truly national library system.

The application of computers and other new forms of technology to humanistic research is an area of immense importance and promise, and the ACLS is playing a major role in helping humanistic scholars explore the impact of automation and computational science on their fields. Since 1964 it has developed a unique program of grants and fellowships designed to encourage new and significant use of the computer in humanistic research. The Council has also been working with scholars to find specific ways in which the high speed processing capabilities of computers can be harnessed to meet the scholar's traditional need for better research tools, such as bibliographies, indexes, and concordances. As the knowledge and publication explosions continue, the problem of locating and gaining access to scholarly materials becomes more critical. The ACLS has established a center for research into this problem and charged it with the responsibility of developing new techniques that will be applicable to all disciplines in the humanities.

*Publication Ventures and Study of Publication Needs*

The ACLS has made the problems of scholarly publica-
tion a continuing theme of interest. During its history it has conducted a survey of publication needs, established a publication service to advise scholars on inexpensive ways of communicating research, and aided scholars through subventions and by direct publication as it has had the funds. ACLS committees also planned and established journals, such as *Speculum* and the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, which continue to make notable contributions to scholarship.

Among its own publication ventures the most famous is the great modern reference work, *The Dictionary of American Biography*. This got under way in 1921 with original financing by The New York Times, and the first twenty volumes were published between 1928 and 1937. Two supplements have since been published, and a third is in preparation which will contain biographies of Americans up to 1945.

Since 1949 *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* has been published weekly by the Joint Committee on Slavic Studies of the ACLS and the Social Science Research Council. Its authoritative translations have made it a basic scholarly tool for Soviet studies at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, and its weekly index of *Pravda* and *Izvestia* is indispensable for contemporary research.

**International Programs and Intercultural Activities**

The ACLS maintains a program for the encouragement of American studies in Western Europe, Greece, Japan, the Republic of China, Australia, and New Zealand. Major areas of activities are provision of ACLS International Fellowships to scholars who wish to engage in
research in this country on some aspect of U.S. history and civilization, financial support to foreign universities for the establishment of permanent teaching posts devoted to such studies, and assistance in the expansion of library holdings or for other activities that will contribute to the program's objectives.

In 1961 the ACLS initiated a program of exchanges of scholars in the humanities and social sciences with the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. This parallels the program for natural scientists carried on by the National Academy of Sciences of the United States and the Academy of Sciences in the U.S.S.R., and it is conducted within the framework of the inter-governmental agreement between the two countries. The program enables American scholars specializing in Russian and Soviet affairs to undertake research in the U.S.S.R. for extended periods and gives equivalent opportunities to Soviet scholars.

A program to encourage the holding of international scholarly congresses and conferences in the United States was established by the ACLS in 1958, and since then international scholarly associations in most of the humanistic and social science disciplines have taken advantage of the opportunity thus provided. ACLS funds are used to enable American scholarly associations to plan and organize the meetings and to defray travel and subsistence costs of active foreign participants. The program has been effective in improving international scholarly relations and in making the United States intellectual contributions better known throughout the world.

The ACLS conducts a travel grant program which permits scholars to participate in international meetings
abroad either to communicate to their colleagues the results of recent research or to participate in the administrative and policy-making activities of international scholarly organizations.

Secondary School and Teacher Education Activities

In the post war years the ACLS, which had traditionally been more oriented toward research than teaching, attempted to incorporate the fruits of research in the curriculum of the schools and sought to awaken the interest of scholars in teacher education. The council established a Committee on the Secondary Schools to give its activities focus and direction; it requested its constituent societies to explore means to raise standards of instruction; and encouraged federal legislation in support of education. It convened conferences on teacher education and on curriculum problems in humanistic subjects and the social studies, and for three years it administered a pilot fellowship program for high school teachers of modern foreign languages to enable them to spend a year of residence and study abroad.

In 1960 the Council commissioned a series of nine papers by leading social scientists who set forth, in curriculum content terms, what they thought should be accomplished at the secondary level in history, geography, political science, economics, cultural anthropology, sociology, psychology, and selected area studies. The papers were subsequently published commercially in a volume entitled The Social Studies and the Social Sciences, and had an excellent reception from school teachers and administrators.
In 1960 also the ACLS began to support summer institutes for high school teachers in humanistic subjects not included under the National Defense Education Act. Over the years, until the Act was extended, the Council sponsored pilot institutes in art, English, history, Latin and music. These served to test procedures, to develop curriculum materials, and to demonstrate the feasibility of this method of advancing the competence of teachers. When the U.S. Office of Education began to administer NDEA institutes in history, it turned to the ACLS to conduct an evaluation, and the published reports of findings and recommendations are being widely used by institute directors today. With Federal programs of summer and academic year institutes now in operation in the social sciences and humanities generally, the ACLS represents the humanities at large in the Consortium of Professional Associations for the Study of Teacher Improvement Programs which undertakes systematic evaluations and seeks to raise the level of teacher education.

**Grant and Fellowship Programs**

Central to the Council’s work are its numerous programs of fellowships and grants in aid of research. These are specifically intended to help individuals of outstanding research ability to get their work done. Some of the programs are designed to encourage special fields of study and are open to scholars in both the humanities and social sciences. Others are in support of humanistic research in general. Both types of programs are conducted on a national competitive basis. The list below indicates the present range of ACLS grant programs.

*For Research in the Humanities*

ACLS Fellowships
Grants-in-Aid
Awards for Computer-Oriented Research
ACLS-Smithsonian Fellowships in History and the Arts

For Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences
Fellowships in American Studies for Foreign Scholars
U.S.-U.S.S.R. Exchange Grants
Grants for Research on Asia
Grants for Slavic and East European Studies

For Study
ACLS Study Fellowships
Grants for Summer Study in Linguistics
Grants for Study of East European Languages

The Future

The tasks ahead appear to be unending. The record described above reveals several continuing areas of concern—released time for research for scholars whose teaching load is crushing (a situation all too common in the humanities), restoration of balance in the nation’s educational system through increased aid to the humanities, combating over-compartmentalization of knowledge through encouragement of interdisciplinary projects, development of new disciplines, and the production of research tools and technical aids for the strengthening of all disciplines. These are needs to which the ACLS is ministering and to which it intends to minister as long as they exist.

New trends, however, are posing fresh problems. The accelerated pace of change and new perspectives derived from the growth and spread of knowledge will create many opportunities for action by the Council.
Science and the Humanities

It would seem safe to predict that the coming decades will see far greater cooperation between science and the humanities and a greater degree of understanding and literacy in both areas on the part of the educated citizen. This will open new areas of investigation and raise questions of new values. It will be particularly true in connection with genetics and other life sciences which promise to alter life patterns and raise problems of cultural and societal adjustment which will require the cooperative efforts of science and humane learning for their solution. One project to assist in providing historical perspective and literacy in science is a multivolume Dictionary of Scientific Biography, which the ACLS is sponsoring and which will be several more years in preparation. It will contain essays describing the careers and achievements of more than 4500 scientists and mathematicians as well as a comprehensive index for tracing the genesis and development of scientific ideas and principles.

Comparative Communist Studies

Among the significant changes occurring on the world scene is the shift in Communism away from a monolithic, totalitarian system in one country to a form of society dominating the bulk of the Eurasian land mass and compelled to adjust to local needs and circumstances. Comparative studies constitute a particularly promising means for understanding this phenomenon as an ideology, a power structure, and a form of command economy. The ACLS is responding to this opportunity with the establishment of a program in comparative
Communist studies, which will draw upon area specialists, comparativists, and experts on international Communism to develop the conceptual theories and empirical studies essential for sophisticated insights and basic research.

**Research Libraries**

An ACLS Committee on Research Libraries will continue in existence in order to work for the achievement of a modern library and information system which will serve the needs of those who do the nation's research.

**Computer-Related Studies**

The Council expects to continue to develop the work now getting under way in the field of computer studies and their application to the humanities. Experimentation in software applications, programming languages, and machine design can be expected to produce standardized procedures for wider and more significant scholarly research.

**International Scholarship**

It seems inevitable too that scholarship in the humanities will become less parochial, less exclusively Western, in the years ahead; the present cultural boundaries will change, and the community of scholars will become more and more internationalized. Certainly as the developing countries reach greater maturity in education, and art, and in their economies, the meeting of modern knowledge and indigenous cultures will produce new
creative efforts, new histories, and new disciplines. These will be exciting years for scholarship and will provide fresh opportunities for humanistic studies throughout the world.

**Structure and Financing**

The ACLS, in order to meet the future as imaginatively as possible, has a flexible and efficient structural organization. Its executive staff, which has deliberately been kept small, is none the less effective because the Council draws so heavily for policy, planning, management, and program direction upon the collective judgment of many distinguished scholars.

The Council itself is made up of one delegate from each of the thirty-three scholarly societies that are its constituents, plus the Board of Directors. The Council meets annually to provide general policy and budgetary supervision. The Board meets as necessary with the executive staff to exercise broad planning and management functions. The substantive programs of the Council are planned and carried out by an extensive network of committees.

Despite these structural advantages, which combine staff efficiency and economy with broad policy direction, the ACLS has had a perennial financial problem. Over the years specific programs of the Council have been supported in concrete terms by more than three dozen public, private and business foundations, by commercial publishers, and by Government agencies, such as the Department of State and the U.S. Office of Education.

Thus, as sound financial practice dictates, support of Council activities has been broadly based. Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons, overhead allowances on grants
for specific projects do not cover all of the running expenses of private, non-profit organizations. One basic reason is that overhead charges do not take into account the preliminary planning of projects, and this is often a lengthy and expensive process. Moreover, most organizations have expenses that are essential to institutional vitality and fulfillment of objectives which cannot be charged to specific projects. This is particularly the case with the ACLS which is a service organization as well as a research council. Its advice is regularly sought and freely given. The expense involved in representing and advancing the cause of the humanities, by identifying needs and opportunities and by exerting effective influence in public forum, is not always reimbursable. Support of the Commission on the Humanities and its recommendations is a case in point.

General funding of the ACLS as an organization, as distinguished from support of specific projects, has over the years come mainly from four foundations—the Bollingen Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Without this type of support the Council could not have existed, even in periods when it has been most successful in obtaining project funding. As both the foundations and the ACLS realize, however, it is not in the interest of either to perpetuate this relationship of dependence. The foundations, understandably, do not want to commit funds indefinitely to any one organization, and the ACLS naturally seeks stability and independence from changes in foundation policies and program emphasis.

The same can be said with even greater emphasis in regard to dependence upon Government support. Now
that Congress has established the National Endowment for the Humanities, federal funding can be expected in areas of scholarship and research which have suffered relative neglect as a result of the stress on the sciences and defense-oriented research. The ACLS welcomes the establishment of the National Endowment. It will provide support for the humanities on a level commensurate with the needs of a great nation—a task which far exceeds the resources of even our greatest philanthropic foundations. But the new Endowment does not make the ACLS any the less necessary. Indeed, it is more important than ever that a strong independent agency exist which represents the community of scholars in the humanities, and which will respond to the changing needs of scholarship with ample human and fiscal resources for planning and innovation. The National Endowment, we are confident, wants such a strong private agency in the field, not as a dependent or rival, but as a source of independent views and advice, as cooperator and critic. As Barnaby Keeney, its Chairman, has said:

The National Endowment for the Humanities operates on the principle that Federal and private activity are essential to the proper support of the humanities in the United States. Since the American Council of Learned Societies is the organization through which academic learning is brought together it is essential for the purposes of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Indeed if it did not exist the Endowment might have to create a similar organization. The support of scholar-
ship, however, is only one aspect of the mission of the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is, therefore, especially gratifying to observe that the American Council of Learned Societies has focused humane scholarship and the attention of humane scholars on some of the other essential needs of our society.

The Council’s small capital funds are at present insufficient to provide the income needed to give it independence. It has therefore decided to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 1969 by raising a capital fund of $5,000,000 or its equivalent in annual income to cover its central operating expenses of approximately $250,000 a year. The Council seeks to achieve this goal in several ways; first, by raising substantially the dues of its constituent societies and by inviting universities which wish to support the work of the Council to become Associates of the ACLS. The aim is to have these two sources together provide annual income equivalent to that from an endowment of $2,000,000. The balance will be sought from foundations, from business and industry, and from individuals by means of unrestricted gifts to the Fiftieth Anniversary Fund.

The Council’s experience over fifty years gives its Directors every confidence that the ACLS has an important role to play in the nation’s intellectual life, and that it has the resources for imaginative planning needed to cope with the problems of the next half-century. It is equally confident that the Council’s ability to fulfill its general goals will be recognized by all categories of prospective contributors.
Sources Of Support, 1942-1967
American Philosophical Society
Arabian-American Oil Company
Bollingen Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Charles E. Merrill Trust
Charles Scribner's Sons
Columbia Foundation
Coolidge Foundation
Corning Glass Works Foundation
Council on Library Resources, Inc.
Council of National Defense (Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs)
Edward W. Hazen Foundation
Ford Foundation
Fund for the Advancement of Education
Fundación Creole
General Education Board
George Karo Fund
Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.
Houghton Foundation
International Business Machines Corporation
John Hay Whitney Foundation
Marjorie C. Stern and Carl W. Stern Fund
John and Mary R. Markle Foundation
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
National Endowment for the Humanities
National Science Foundation
Oberlander Trust
Rockefeller Foundation
San Francisco Foundation
The New York Times
United States Steel Foundation
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U.S. Department of State
U.S. Navy Department
U.S. War Department