Student Research at Yale University Library Exhibit Features MSSA Student Assistant

The exhibit corridor in Sterling Memorial Library currently features an exhibit celebrating Student Research at Yale University Library [2]. The exhibit will be on view through the end of October 2015, and features research projects by four Yale students, shown here left to right at a reception for the opening of the exhibit: Andrew Cordova, History, Silliman College ’15; Caroline Sydney, Humanities, Silliman College ’16; Miranda Melcher, Political Science, Branford College ’16; and Scott Stern, American Studies, Branford College ’15.

Manuscripts and Archives is happy to highlight the work of Andrew Cordova, who has worked in the department as a student assistant for the past two years, digitizing collection material for patron requests and doing quality control for the Kissinger Papers digitization. Andrew’s senior essay, “Re-Engineering the Environment: Chester Bowles and Indian-American Relations During the Cold War,” was done under the supervision of Associate Professor of History and American Studies Paul Sabin and heavily engaged the Chester Bowles Papers (MS 628) [4] in Manuscripts and Archives. Several images from the Bowles Papers, including two used in Andrew’s student research exhibit case, are viewable in the Manuscripts and Archives Digital Image Database [5].
Bowles, among other public service posts, served as United States ambassador to India and Nepal from 1951-1953 and again from 1961-1969, and it is on this aspect of his career that Andrew focused in his senior essay research. He argues that Bowles “criticized the military as an instrument to influence foreign policy during the Cold war [and] that it damaged America’s reputation as the protector of freedom.” Cordova explores Bowles’ desire “to build partnerships that satisfied the needs of foreign governments while ensuring U.S. national security issues.

From his exhibit case introduction panel: “Specifically with India, Bowles centered his policies on the maximization of agricultural production. Understanding that India’s lack of food resources could cause political instability that threatened the young democracy, the ambassador persuaded the state Department to export grain to India, finance the construction of irrigation projects, and provide new agricultural technologies to Indian cultivators. In doing so, Bowles contended that India’s young democracy would be strengthened and stabilized, which translated to the decreased likelihood that it would adopt communist ideologies. India is often disregarded as a commanding actor in Cold war international politics. As a key endorser of the non-alignment movement, India is seen as particularly removed from the United states’ mission to limit the spread of communism in Asia. Moreover, U.S. food exports to India have rarely been seen as a diplomatic tool used to gain influence in a region that largely objected to U.S. initiatives. Chester Bowles, however, harnessed the power of agriculture to influence India, which he saw as the linchpin to U.S. strategic interest in Asia. Bowles’ divergence from military engagement allowed the United States to achieve its interests in a region marked largely by American failures.”

The reception for student curators that marked the opening of the exhibit was a relaxed send-off to Andrew and co-curator Scott Stern, both of whom will be graduating from Yale College this coming Monday. Andrew will be heading for Alaska for a year of non-profit work in fisheries management before starting law school, focusing on environmental law.

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