

BUILDING A CENTER FOR LOCAL STUDIES: THE CASE OF THE CEBUANO STUDIES CENTER

Resil B. Mojares

Much of historical scholarship depends on pragmatic, mundane considerations: various forms of material incentives and logistical support, the accessibility of source materials and their organization in a form that makes them easily retrievable, the presence of channels for a current and continuing exchange of ideas with mentors and peers, and that climate of interest that assures the researcher that his labor will be acknowledged and recognized. If the quality of Philippine historiography is uneven and leaves much to be desired, much is traceable to the factors just cited.

This paper is in the nature of an outline of a program of work to help reduce the problem and narrow the gap between our desire to produce sound history and the fact of our actual accomplishment. It is also in the nature of a report on what we are doing at the University of San Carlos in Cebu City in building a library and research center for studies pertaining to Cebu.

In 1975, the University of San Carlos, impelled largely by interest within the university in local history and literature, established the Cebuano Studies Center as a special library and research center for studies pertaining to Cebu. At that time San Carlos already had a rich Filipiniana collection and it was initially a matter of moving source materials on Cebu from the university's Filipiniana Library to new, separate quarters. These materials comprised items acquired through the years by the University Libraries under then Director of Libraries Joseph Baumgartner, SVD, as well as materials that had been collected in a year-long field-collecting project which I carried out under the auspices of the university's Office of Research & Scholarships under then Director Joseph Goertz, SVD. These materials formed the core of the Center's collections. Since then we have tried to sustain efforts at expanding our collections through various modes of acquisition. At the same time we embarked on various research and educational activities related to Cebuano studies.

The Center is located on the main campus and housed in an air-conditioned basement with a floor space divided into a library area,

with a seating capacity for 15 library users, and an office and microfilm workroom. It has among its facilities a microfilmer, two microfilm reader/printers, and taperecorders. As part of the university it can also avail of supportive services, (duplicated and photographic services, slide and film projectors, and others) in other offices like the Main Library and the Instructional Media Center.

The Center has a director, librarian, typist, two microfilm operators, and the occasional services of library assistants and secretarial apprentices. The Center is a non-circulating library open for free to the public. Our present pattern of library use shows a ratio of three users from outside the university to ten from within the university.

Aside from its activities as a special library, the Center also discharges research and educational functions. This covers a fairly broad spectrum of activities: the sponsorship of lectures, symposia and workshops, the holding of slide shows and book and photo exhibits, the design and execution of research projects (like the recording of oral traditions), the publication of research guides, the setting up of research grants, and others. As we are still on our third year of existence, we are on an exploratory stage, testing as to where our capabilities and usefulness lie. We still have to work out the most desired balance of our various activities and functions.

In terms of library holdings, our concentration lies in the social sciences and the humanities, with literature and history as our strongest areas. At present, our collections consist of approximately 1,200 book and periodical titles, 500 photographs, 80 maps, 30 microfilm rolls, and 100 microcards. In addition, we have recorded tapes, archival materials, music sheets, discs, vertical files, slides, and art objects.

The operations of the Center are financed by university funds, as an independent cost center with an annual budget of ₱ 15,000, excluding salaries. We have had support from private agencies and individuals in the community in the form of grants for specific projects and the donation deposit or loan of materials. Over the past three years we have had monetary grants totalling ₱80,000 for specific acquisition, research and publication projects. A fourth of this total comes from local sources. Most of the materials we have accessioned over the past three years have been donations, deposits or reproductions of loaned materials. We have an annual allocation of ₱ 3,000 for the purchase or reproduction of materials and we have found this more than sufficient inasmuch as we have met with great willingness in the public to donate materials to a library of this kind.

We would like to think that we have helped advance the cause of local studies — by collecting source materials that otherwise would have either disappeared or remained unknown, by preserving these materials, organizing them and making them really available for use, by encouraging through various research and educational activities an interest in local traditions, by offering reference and counselling services to researchers, by either making available research grants or by assisting students in search of funding, and others.

This brings me to the main report of this paper. On a number of occasions in the past and from various persons, the setting up of repositories of local history and traditions has been recommended.¹ Yet it is clear that this is still a pioneering area and that so much remains to be done despite the establishment in fairly recent times of regional/provincial libraries like the Hiyas ng Bulakan in Malolos, Coordinated Investigation of Sulu Culture in Jolo, Dansalan Research Center in Marawi, Leyte-Samar Research Center in Tacloban, and a few others. The need for such centers cannot be overstressed because we have in our localities endangered written and oral traditions and the times is long overdue for more institutions to embark on a systematic and sustained effort at the recovery and preservation of these traditions. Here we can outline some of the salient points involved in this task.

What goes into the making of a center of regionalia? Depending on local needs, resources and sanctions, the Center can be a library, museum, or archival agency, or a combination of two or these or all three. It defines its coverage as a municipality or city, a province or group of provinces. Defining limits may be geographical, linguistic, politico-administrative, or cultural.² The choice will be determined by present and expected institutional resources, the cultural homogeneity of the area, and other factors. One will have to find a balance between a scope too small and one too large. Covering too wide an area may render one's efforts diffuse, resulting for one, in large gaps in collecting. On the other hand, I do not feel that as a rule there should be sub-provincial centers as the scattered location of repositories would inconvenience researchers and the overlapping of activities a waste of resources. It is obvious that because of regional and local differences there cannot be a common blueprint for all these centers. Many decisions will have to be made along the way as one acquires a feel for the area. The state of Filipiniana and regionalia however is such that it is better to err on the side of the indiscriminate than on that of a too fastidious collecting.

Our case is instructive. When we started out we had in mind covering all predominantly Cebuano-speaking provinces but we soon found out that the area is much too unwieldy and we would be duplicating functions that were then beginning to be performed by, for instance, the Xavier University Foklife Museum and Archives for the Misamis Provinces and the Leyte-Samar Research Center for Cebuano-speaking Leyte. We thought of staking out the area of Cebu-Bohol-Negros Oriental, which is a natural area because apart from linguistic affinity, there is the factor of geographical proximity and the fact that these provinces comprise one administrative district (Region VII). We feel, however, that there will be a diminishing need for our doing work on Bohol and Negros Oriental as there are developing centers in these provinces (University of Bohol in Tagbilaran, Silliman University in Dumaguete) with the potential to do better work in these areas than we can.

At this stage, however, we do not think that we should be too discriminate. We collect practically anything where that can be found. Hence we carry items on Bohol, Negros Oriental, Leyte, the Misamis Provinces, and other Cebuano-speaking areas. They can be kept for future exchanges with institutions who will have more use for them or they can be weeded out and transferred to the university's Filipiniana Library whom the time comes that we will have to be more specialized.

We consider as regionalia (1) works on the region, irrespective of the place of origin of the author, (2) works by natives of the region, irrespective of the subject matter and place of publication, and (3) all materials published in the region irrespective of the origin of the author and subject matter treated in them.

A basic decision involves subject areas of concentration. One can set out to deal with everything that pertains to the region or locality. In the course of time one will see where one's field of concentration should be, depending on the resources available, the research needs of the institution and the community and the parallel activities of neighboring institutions. It appears basic, however, that these centers be interdisciplinary, as such an approach is needed to appreciate its parts, as well as its dependency on the larger sociocultural system. Such an orientation will also enhance the value of the center for a diversified clientele.

Administratively, the center can be many things. It can be a community extension service of a local college or university, a project of

the local church, a section of the local public library, or the project of a community foundation. What is important is that it is run along professional lines and with stable, continuing support. If it is a part of a public library its character as a special library or archive must be kept distinct.³ However the center may be structured, the community's involvement, in terms of funding and participation in activities, must be cultivated. This is basic as much will depend on the support generated within the locality, and it is primarily the locality which the center must serve.

How is a collection built up? Materials can be acquired in various ways: purchase, gifts or donations, deposits, or the reproduction of loaned materials. They are acquired from various sources, local as well as extralocal. Copies of materials can be acquired from other Philippine libraries and from repositories in the United States, Spain, and other countries. In this respect, the librarian must keep a file of finding lists (bibliographies, catalogues, directories, indexes, registers and others). The Cebuano Studies Center, for instance, has acquired materials from such places as Iloilo, Misamis Occidental, and Bohol, and from such foreign libraries as those of the Augustinian College in Valladolid, Spain, the U.S. National Archives and Library of Congress, the American Philosophical Society in Boston, and others. And as it stands we are still skimming over the collections of other institutions.

The more immediate responsibility of the center, of course, should be to collect materials from within the area or locality. These materials should be properly accessioned, indexed, filed and preserved. Finding aids should be prepared to facilitate reference service and retrieval of information. Copyright restrictions must be indicated.

Of special importance is the recording of oral traditions: folklore and interviews with both prominent persons, as well as average citizens for data on social and cultural life. Because of advances in historiography there will be a growing need for data and materials which for now are not popularly collected, like the biographies of ordinary men, records of trade unions and business organizations, and others. A controlling concern in all these is of course local history and culture.⁴

The range of collections can be very varied: printed materials (books and periodicals), manuscripts, typescripts, documents and archives, microforms (microfilms, microfiche, microcards), audio and visual materials (photographs, maps, paintings, slides, tapes, discs, film-

strips); ephemeral materials (clippings, broadsides, pamphlets, posters, brochures, unpublished reports, and others). The variety of holdings would require familiarity with the intricacies of library and archival science: how materials of different kinds are accessioned, catalogue and stored.

The center can perform many services, both in and outside the scope of its function as a library: it can make available photographic prints and xerox reproductions to clients; conduct language courses and arrange translator and clerical services for scholars; keep a directory of resource persons and carriers of tradition in the area; instill a consciousness in the community for the importance of documents, artifacts and other source materials; and encourage recognition of people with significant cultural contributions.

The Cebuano Studies Center, for instance, has organized free lectures on Cebuano language, literature and history, as well as photographic and book exhibits. It publishes an annual series of research aids: *Bibliography of Cebuano Linguistics* (1977) and *Sergio Osmeña Bibliography* (1978). Bibliographic guides to Cebuano folklore and the history of Cebu are now in preparation. The Center has on file a list of Cebuano pseudonyms and an inventory of parish records in the province of Cebu. It has given thesis grants that contributed to the production of a literary index to the Cebuano periodical *Bag-ong Kusog* (1915-41) and an index to the ordinances of the City Council of Cebu (1945-75). It has collected local folksongs and folktales and has published them in a series of bilingual child and adult education readers (*Cebuano Folktales 1* and *2. Cebuano Folksongs 1*), the bulk of the copies of which will be distributed for free with the assistance of local business firms. The interest the Center has helped generate in local studies can be seen also in the fact that there are at present twelve graduate theses in history, literature and library science being done in the University of San Carlos dealing with Cebuano topics.

The present interest in local history — which parallels similar developments in literature and other disciplines — is expressive of the need to focus attention on local or regional experience and traditions. Its corollary is the effort to gather, catalogue, store and preserve source materials on these traditions for present and future use. In this alone is rationale enough for the establishment of regional or provincial research centers, libraries, archives or museums.

There has been the tendency to centralize in Manila the reposi-

tories of source materials and artifacts. While much can be said about the benefits of such centralization we must nevertheless stress the need for the decentralization of diffusion of our repository system. The greatest number of interested scholars in the study of a region are logically from the region itself. Factors of convenience and use therefore dictate that source materials for the study of the region be housed in the region itself. The existence of a regional or provincial research center will act as a spur for efforts in the collection and preservation of source materials. Foreign scholars and researchers from other regions will find the presence of such centers of great benefit as they will most likely be doing work in the field. Unique materials in the Philippine National Archives, National Library, University of the Philippines, Lopez Memorial Museum, and others, including foreign libraries, can be acquired by regional libraries, thus bringing sources closer to students in the region. In these centers, too, the relationships among these materials can be better preserved as they are stored in a library of materials exclusive to the region.

There is also the need for this network of libraries and centers to be organized now, perhaps separately from the Association of Special Libraries of the Philippines, as the ASLP is made up almost entirely of libraries of government agencies, private to corporations, and others, as well as libraries specializing in certain disciplines (like theology, management, and others). Such an organization can facilitate the exchange of experiences as well as of materials.

These regional libraries and research centers will be an important instrument in encouraging studies in local history and culture, and generating intra- and extra-local awareness of regional traditions. They will be the rich quarry for the building blocks in the edifice of larger studies.

NOTES

¹ In 1971, Marcelino A. Foronda urged the formation of local/regional historical groups or centers to collect/preserve documents, publish checklists and bibliographies, sponsor local history writing contests, and similar activities. This was also the recommendation of the First Seminar for Provincial Historical Committees, sponsored by the National Historical Commission in Manila in 1972, which urged the creation of provincial historical committees to gather and store source materials for local history in a provincial/municipal/city museums. The building of "an infor-

mation center about the community" within each public Library is among the objectives of the National Library Extension Division. (See Marcelino A. Foronda, "Some notes on Philippine historiography," *Dialogue*, 7:15, Dec. 1971, 1-36; *Proceedings and Working Papers of the First Seminar for Provincial Historical Committees*. Manila: National Historical Commission, 1972, 112 p.; *The National Library Five-Year Development Plan (1973-1978)*, Manila: The National Library, 1975, p. 20.)

²For some considerations in the definition of a region or area, see Julian H. Steward, *Area Research: Theory and Practice* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1950), pp. 54-71.

³As a rule archivists do not recommend that public or private libraries collect and keep public archives. Local conditions however dictate that libraries do so if only on a temporary basis so long as there are proper sanctions and appreciation for the special character of archives. See T.R. Schollenberg, *Modern Archives, Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956) p. 20; Holland E. Stevens, *University Archives* (Champaign, Ill.: Illini Union Bookstore, 1965) 95 p.

⁴For local history in the Philippine setting, see Foronda, *op. cit.*; John A. Larkin, "The place of local history in Philippine historiography," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 8:2 (Sept. 1967), 306-317; and Leslie E. Bauzon, "Local history: rationale, problems, and prospects," Paper delivered at the First Cebuano Studies Seminar, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, July 16, 1976, 11 1.