

Transformation and Continuity in Rockefeller Philanthropic Boards: Implications for the Emergence of Communications as a Field of Concern ¹

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There is a hunger in the world which economists and political scientists cannot relieve. As they have in all ages, men turn today for their ultimate satisfactions to humanism—to the philosophers, the teachers, the historians, the artists, the poets, the novelists, the dramatists—all those who fashion ideas, concepts, and forms that give meaning to life and furnish patterns of conduct. It is they who really construct the world we live in, and it is they who with sensitive awareness of human perplexity and aspirations can speak effectively to a distracted age.²

Rockefeller related philanthropies began to seriously fund communication technologies in the late 1930s as part of a program to adjust society and especially youth to the effects of the Depression in what can be called a distracted age. Rockefeller support for communications as aspects of their educational, humanities, and social science programs were critical to the development of this new field, which took off with the onset of World War II.³ A critical understanding and ability to interpret and manipulate meaning and patterns of conduct seemed essential if humanity was to survive in a changing world. The objective of this paper is to examine the role of Rockefeller philanthropic support for the social sciences and humanities in the 1920s and 1930s and how that contributed to Rockefeller interest in contributing to the development of a new field in communication in the 1940s.

The first great Rockefeller philanthropy, the General Education Board established in 1903 under the guidance of Wallace Butterick, with its partner Rockefeller fund the Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease under philosopher Wickliffe Rose, drew a connection between a physical health campaign and public education. It demonstrated that research based knowledge from professional educational institutions could be applied with dramatic results in the field. The dominant philanthropy, the Rockefeller Foundation founded in 1913, elevated these lessons to an international level. While the arts and humanities were

recognized as viable areas of support, Jerome Greene as executive secretary pursued general education and public health almost exclusively. Importantly, the mandate for public health included mental health from the earliest days of the Foundation. Preserving mental health and thus social stability became a rationale for reinterpreting the humanities as an applied field in the 1930s. Communication studies grew out of the perceived usefulness of the humanities in the effort to adapt personality development to cultural change through the use of media as an educational technology.

The LSRM Program in Social Science, Technology, and Child Study

In 1918 the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial [LSRM] was established in honor of the family matriarch. The LSRM was to further her interests in the welfare of women and children, which had been previously supported through family charity. The establishment of the LSRM formalized these interests in an independent philanthropy and the family relinquished the right to designate the recipients of the funds that were dispersed.⁴

Beardsley Ruml and the Potential for a Science of Society: The Memorial did not find its niche in the development of the social sciences until Beardsley Ruml became the director. Ruml held a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Chicago. He was particularly interested in the organization of business, government, and universities.”⁵ His assistant, Lawrence K. Frank, was interested in child development and socialization. Under Ruml, the LSRM’s established a three- pronged approach to creating a technology of social control through research and its application. The objective was to produce a “technical science” of public administration and parenting through the development of the social sciences and related child development research.⁶ One of Ruml’s first actions was to have Lawrence K. Frank

conduct a survey of the social science fields associated with the welfare of women and children in the period from 1919 to 1920.⁷”

The social sciences were to be developed in four stages. The first stage was to concentrate on classes of related problems as “opportunities for coordinated effort” in interdisciplinary inquiry. The second phase was to promote institutions that already demonstrated their capacity for successful projects in “a range of professional opinion, the existence of scholarly and professional standards,” as well as the potential to secure “intimate contact of the social scientist in the university with concrete social phenomena.” The third phase was to “increase the highly visible able men working in the field.” Communication was the fourth and final phase. The development of the social sciences was linked to the traditional role of the humanities in creating and monitoring various means of communicating knowledge. “The most fundamental truths will automatically get into textbooks, and will effect in some cases the teaching context in elementary and secondary schools.”⁸ The mandate to include the dissemination process became an essential part of social control associated with the field of communication. The first “tentative” steps toward the dissemination and control of information were taken through the “preparation of teaching materials for use in connection with secondary commercial instruction” and the advance of libraries internationally.⁹ Supporting libraries later became part of the mandate of the Humanities Division of the RF.

Child Study and Parent Education: The child development research and parent education program of the LSRM built on previous work and other agencies that were funded through the social service and child welfare appropriations with a total expenditure of \$4,458,754.07. Funds for child development research and demonstrations were primarily devoted to university based research programs between 1921 and 1928. The Child Study

Association became the arm of the parent education program that dealt with the dissemination of information including collecting bibliographies, the publication of books and pamphlets, and child study magazines as well as articles in magazines.¹⁰ The interest in and use of media was not limited to print. In 1924, fourteen radio broadcasts were used to give talks on numerous topics that generated between 30 and 50 letters a week. The questions were answered by mail or through the *Women's Home Companion* magazine.¹¹

The Humanities in the GEB

In the 1920s Abraham Flexner, an officer in the GEB since 1913, argued that American universities were neglecting the humanities and liberal arts. He felt that there was an imbalance in the stress on curriculum, programs and research where American colleges and universities were operated by professors that lacked a broad background in the classical and liberal studies. Further, he felt that this problem extended down into the secondary curriculum. In 1923, a new Division of Studies was created in the Rockefeller Foundation. Edwin R. Embree became the first director and also gave an impassioned speech in favor of support for the humanities at a joint meeting of the trustees of the RF and GEB in 1924. He noted that medicine and public health were not “the only fields in which organizations can do notable work.” He went on to ask, “of what good is it to keep people alive and healthy if their lives are not to be touched increasingly with something of beauty?”¹²

In 1925, Flexner was made the chief officer of a new GEB Division of Studies and Medical Education. He was also made director of Educational Studies on a newly formed International Education Board [IEB] as part of the Rockefeller Foundation. The IEB was devoted to carrying the GEB's work over seas.¹³ He set about developing a program in the humanities and what he considered to be “real universities.” His plan was to eliminate “worldly

distractions” and to allow serious scholars and students a chance to pursue classical scholarly research. To this end, he advocated the elimination of undergraduate programs at select universities so that the faculty could concentrate on graduate training and research in the humanities similar to the Rockefeller Institute in medicine founded in 1901.¹⁴

The first major grant of the GEB in the field of the humanities was to the University of Chicago for \$780,000 to the Oriental Institute, home to James Breasted, the first Egyptologist in the United States who was originally privately funded by both JDR Sr. and JDR Jr. Other grants of over \$2,250,000 went to the universities of Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, Michigan, Princeton, Yale, Vanderbilt, and Virginia. The American Council of Learned Societies, a federation of organizations devoted to humanistic studies, also received grants. As director of the newly created International Education Board, Flexner spent \$1 million on the American Academy in Rome, \$500,000 on the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, and \$8 million on archaeological work in Egypt and the Near East. The narrow conceptualization of the humanities supported by the formal foundation boards did not go without criticism and comment. Anson Phelps Stokes in a letter to Flexner reflected that the “humanities should be more broadly interpreted.”¹⁵

The 1928 Reorganization of the Rockefeller Boards

A 1925 report found a redundancy in the operation of the multiple Rockefeller philanthropic boards. The convergence of the various overlapping concentrations among the boards, the report suggested, required cooperation “from different angles.” The report concluded that the “constituent boards and divisions might...look forward to a reorganization.”¹⁶ Officers and trustees opened a discussion of the possible restructuring and reorganization of the philanthropies.

The Committee to Reconstitute the Boards: Between 1926 and 1927 plans were drawn up that restructured and reoriented the boards of the Rockefeller philanthropies. The plan was to bring all of the boards into the general framework of the Rockefeller Foundation's mandate to "advance human knowledge." January 3, 1928, the LSRM was incorporated into the RF and the programs in the social sciences, social technology with a concentration on management and administration, and the application of knowledge on children and adolescence to parent and adult education were transferred to the GEB, RF, and a new fund, the Spelman Fund of New York. The GEB was to continue work in child study and parent education but the focus was to be on adolescence. A program begun in 1927 centered at the University of California Berkeley and the city of Oakland was followed by L. K. Frank, as head of the child development research in the GEB, and Robert J. Havighurst, his assistant, a new officer in the GEB who had previously worked with Raymond Fosdick.

The Rockefeller Foundation was internally reorganized in order to assume new responsibilities. The Medical Education Division organized in 1919 and broader Division of Studies organized in 1923 were collapsed into the Medical Science Division. A Natural Science Division was formed to carry on the work initiated by the RF in physics and chemistry as well as Rose's projects originally supported by the GEB. A Division of Social Sciences was created in order to carry out the development of the social sciences started by Ruml in the LSRM and SSRC. The Social Sciences Division was to continue to perfect applied social technologies and to professionalize experts in management. The Spelman Fund of New York was also a vehicle for this effort especially in the area of social technology. It was at first to continue with related adult education and training efforts in cooperation with the GEB. This was to be phased out and the Fund was to concentrate on developing a technology of government administration as well

as a technology of labor management. The Humanities Division was to continue to support the work initiated by Embree and Flexner in the RF and GEB.¹⁷ Experiments had been conducted that implicated the need for an applied field in the humanities. Research needed to be applied to practice, new modes of delivery in education seemed possible through the use of new and expanding technologies for organizing and transmitting knowledge through the radio, visual imagery, and faster means of printing newspapers, magazines and other texts to a popular audience.

A Watershed in Leadership: As if with foresight of the changes that were to take place in the 1930s, the end of the 1920s witnessed a watershed in Rockefeller philanthropic leadership. In 1928, Abraham Flexner resigned from the Division of Studies and Medical Education in the GEB rather than face the reorganization and diminished power in a direction he did not want to pursue.¹⁸ Wickliffe Rose, former head of the Sanitary Commission and champion of the natural sciences as president of the GEB, reached mandatory retirement and also resigned. Rose's initiative in the natural sciences survived as a new division of the RF. Trevor Arnett, secretary of the GEB between 1920 and 1924, succeeded Rose as GEB president. Arnett also became a trustee of the RF. George Vincent, president of the Rockefeller Foundation from 1919 to 1929, retired and Max Mason, director of the new Division of Natural Science from 1928 to 1929, became president. Warren Weaver became director of the Division of Natural Science in the RF to replace Mason.

Weaver's interpretation of the natural sciences was that they were to promote the "analysis and control of inanimate forces." He was skeptical of Rose's support for physics, chemistry and astronomy. Rather, he stressed human sensitivity and believed in the moral conviction that progressivism would benefit humanity more than pure science.¹⁹ The program

in the natural sciences under Weaver stressed the field of biology especially as it related to the “new psychology,” or psychiatry, in the prevention and cure of mental illness.²⁰ In 1929, a final \$100,000 was given to the NRC for academic science and the program was terminated in 1934.

Robert Fosdick described the mood that dominated the reorganization: “This divergence between the natural sciences and the social sciences, between machinery and control, between kingdom of this world and kingdom of the spirit — this is where the hazard lies. Science has exposed the paleolithic savage [in modern humans], masquerading in modern dress, to a sudden shift of environment which threatens to unbalance his brain.”²¹ Fosdick, who had been a trustee of the RF since 1921, chairman of the GEB, as well as advisor and friend of J.D.R. Jr., succeeded Max Mason as president of the Rockefeller Foundation in 1932. In 1936, Fosdick became president of both the RF and GEB, positions he held until 1948.

The Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation was created in the 1928 reorganization. Princeton classicist Edward Capps, who continued to fund the grants orchestrated by Flexner, headed the division for the first two years. David H. Stevens, vice president of the GEB from 1930 to 1938 and Director of Education in the GEB followed Capps as director of the Humanities Division in the RF from 1932 to 1937. John Marshall served as Stevens’ assistant in these capacities and became an active force in the reinterpretation of the humanities into the field of communication. He is credited with inventing the term “mass communications” in his letters inviting scholars to participate in the 1939-1940 Communications Seminar supported by the RF.²² Stevens credited the Flexner and Capps programs in the humanities with “having a sense of magnitude.” However, he felt it also had the negative effect of “buttressing scholasticism and antiquarianism in our universities.”²³

Stevens fostered a new definition of the humanities as a contemporary field with an educational mission similar to the social sciences in applied knowledge.

Transitions in the Definition of the Humanities

The arts and humanities were first defined as “those studies that represent the accumulated heritage of mankind in literature and art and music.” The humanities from Stevens perspective were not about esoteric forms of knowledge for elite patrons and scholars in museums castles, archives, and elite theatre performances. The humanities fundamentally came to encompass all forms of exchange between human beings. In 1929, Charles Burgess raised the question of the impact of different forms of communication: “ What are the facts of the growth in extent and speed of communication and what social effects do this diffusion and invention produce?” He went on to list what he meant by communication: “highways, automobiles, autobuses, steam locomotive passenger traffic, electric transportation, air travel and mail, moving pictures – news of the world, newspaper circulation, telephones, telegraphs, and radio.”²⁴

The humanities were to take on a whole new field beyond the contents of museums, libraries, parks, theatres, literature, rhetoric, performance, and the academic study of related fields and texts. The humanities were to be concerned with the expansion of modes of interaction and interface. Disseminating and controlling information and human interaction came to be recognized as a key feature of every applied program the philanthropies pursued by the mid-thirties.

The Humanities’ Mental Health Objectives: Lawrence K. Frank “pointed out that if nations had characters, then it made sense to think of society as the patient.”²⁵ The humanities were to socialize the personality of individuals and interactions between them. The humanities

also served to facilitate mental health by providing basic skills in communication and language use as well as cultural interests and tastes that would promote the “happiness of the individual and hence his value to society.” Intercultural understanding was to be fostered through the humanities. Individual satisfaction with life, it was thought, would be increased and conflicts decreased if individuals developed a “sympathetic point of view towards others through their vivid images of various national and social groups in contemporary society.” This knowledge of the culture of others would promote self-understanding and better social relationships between individuals and groups. The stress on culture and cultural awareness utilized the language of anthropology in the social sciences as well as a mental hygiene focus on the public promotion of mental health. The arts and humanities were allies in the adjustment process. Adolescents in the transition from childhood to adulthood would profit especially from a conscious use of the humanities to promote “an objective attitude toward the self and that sympathetic interest in others that is essential to the conduct of all human relations.”²⁶

Personality and Culture as Intersecting Themes: In a 1930 summer conference held by the Policy and Programs Committee of the Social Science Research Committee areas of research concentration were addressed.²⁷ An emphasis was placed on nationalism and “personality and culture.” Edmund E. Day, director of the social sciences division of the RF, and Beardsley Ruml met with other philanthropies such as the Commonwealth Fund, Rosenwald Fund, and others as well as the National Committee for Mental Hygiene. Day and Ruml along with Lawrence K. Frank created a list of research areas in business and employment, international relations, urban life, personality and culture, and public administration. The humanities were to facilitate the management of human behavior and to prevent “cultural lag” by applying knowledge about the relationship between personality

development, the ability to adjust to cultural disruption, and social change. If the pursuit of the social sciences was a response to the perception of social crisis so was the inclusion of the humanities as a field of pursuit. The new humanities should also further individual “adjustment by giving an understanding of the cultural progress of the human race and appreciation of its achievements.” The humanities were to deepen the value of daily life” and provide a “retreat from its exigencies.”²⁸

From the Humanities to Social Science: In 1930-1931, the SSRC identified six interdisciplinary fields of interest that “represented areas of possible interest in scientific research having to do with certain striking developments in our social system and emergence of fairly definite problems.”²⁹ Advisory Committees created on Consumption and Leisure (1931-1932) and Pressure Groups and Propaganda (1931-1934) fed respectively into the humanities and communication fields. Harold D. Lasswell was appointed chair of the latter in 1931. Lasswell had published his pioneering study of propaganda in the First World War, *Propaganda Techniques in the War* in 1927; and *Psychopathology and Politics*, in 1930. With Rockefeller support he advanced interdisciplinary work in behavioral psychology, public relations and communications studies based on quantitative procedures. An annotated bibliography on the subject was published in 1935.³⁰ Lasswell’s work beginning in the humanities was transferred to the social sciences as concerned fundamentally with better understanding social organization and human behavior in response to the media.

Recent Social Trends: Transitions in the Conceptualization of Progress³¹

With the economic collapse of 1929, it became apparent that the crisis struck at fundamental institutions and crossed with the most basic and evolving interests of Rockefeller philanthropy. The economic collapse and loss of jobs for adults was felt also by youth. One

quarter of the labor force or thirteen million citizens were unemployed and by 1933 millions of families faced serious hardship.³² Young people who would have left academic training after the elementary grades stayed in school. High schools were unprepared for the demographic onslaught. Between the 1929-1930 school year and 1931-1932 school year an additional 704,058 unexpected students remained in school. Further, school officials strongly argued that the additional students did not meet high school standards much less were they prepared for the college-oriented curriculum that prevailed. The National Education Association estimated that half of the students were unqualified for academic work. The future of the nation, its citizens and schools looked bleak unless something was done. Overall in the 1930s to 1940s there was a fifty percent increase in enrollment from 4,399,422 to 6,545,991 students. In 1930, slightly more than half of the age group between 14 and 16 were in school. In 1940, two-thirds of this age group remained in school.³³

The New General Education Program, 1933-1941

The first general education campaign by the GEB, 1903-1917, successfully promoted the availability of elementary schooling in the South. High schools remained largely for the middle classes and elites with an esoteric curriculum oriented toward university training even though most students did not necessarily seek university studies. University and professional education retained the major thrust of pre 1930 philanthropic work. The consolidation of the Rockefeller boards allowed for a coordinated response to the crisis of education and governance caused by the Depression. A massive effort in social engineering was undertaken.

In 1947, Gordon Allport, the co-author of *The Psychology of the Radio* published in 1935 with John Marshall, observed that “to overlook children is to be stupidly inefficient from the standpoint of social engineering.” In fact, he went on, “social scientists might reasonably

advise that adults be largely disregarded in favor of children.”³⁴ In April 1933, the Rockefeller boards took up a mutual effort that envisioned their work as that of one body instead of three philanthropies, GEB, SF, and RF including all of its four new divisions. The “new” general education program was a massive undertaking to restructure society through restructuring schools. The crisis demanded largess in Edmund E. Day’s words: “Old beliefs are outmoded. New faiths must take their place. Meanwhile culture lags and individuals find no secure intellectual anchorage.”³⁵ The major thrust was from the work of the LSRM, whose endowment funds were used to support the Spelman Fund, which would eventually be funded by the RF. The educational and public health focus of the early GEB and Sanitary Commission were to come together with the advances of Chicago and LSRM promoted social science in an applied program to resolve the current crisis by restructuring the future through resocializing youth in a comprehensive reconstruction of secondary education and their interface with colleges. High schools were to be restructured, curriculum revised. Teachers, parents, communities and administrators were to be reeducated. The effort was to apply all of the previous research in interdisciplinary studies on human behavior to a kind of demonstration project using educational institutions as a vehicle of advancement. Educating the next generation, it was argued, would ensure economic prosperity, political stability, and social order.

The new general education program adopted a broad based range of projects coordinated by the General Education Board, which had joint leadership with the RF and its divisions including the humanities.³⁶ The Spelman Fund looked to the education of efficient and informed public managers and administrators. Both trajectories of the project required the handling and dissemination of data. Research was required on how new technologies could be used to socialize individuals and to organize social interactions in ways that would prevent

economic and political disorder. As the political climate escalated in the late 1930s controlling and shaping public opinion and social thought became essential and Rockefeller philanthropies looked to expand and determine how to use media as the program took off in 1934-1935.³⁷

Edmund E. Day, director of the Social Science Division of the RF was made director of General Education in the GEB in order to head the project. Day joined the RF as director of the division of the social sciences in 1928. He was a former chair of the department of economics at Harvard and dean of business at the University of Michigan.³⁸ He left the philanthropies in 1937 to become president of Cornell University and Robert Havighurst, who served as Day's assistant from 1934, became the director.³⁹ David Stevens and John Marshall in the RF Humanities Division were also responsible for the project and shared mutual appointments in the GEB and RF. Beardsley Ruml directed the Spelman Fund in public administration and Lawrence K. Frank, his former assistant in the LSRM, continued to work on child study and parent education through the GEB and Spelman Fund.

Surrogate Agents of Reform

Officers in the Rockefeller philanthropies early learned that direct intervention in social policy attracted controversy and it was best to work through other established agencies. The new general education program was put into action by funding projects conducted by the National Education Association [NEA], Progressive Education Association [PEA], American Council on Education [ACE], American Council of Learned Societies [ACLS], National Research Council [NRC], and the Social Science Research Council [SSRC]. The Rockefeller boards looked for innovative projects that were already underway that could be developed through funding. In 1930, the PEA began work on a study of college entrance requirements and its articulation with high school curriculum. A survey was conducted in 1931 to identify

colleges to participate in a larger study. In 1932 the project became officially the Commission on the Relation between School and College. The Commission on the Relation between School and College and two other PEA commissions, the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, and the Commission on Human Relations, became an important part of the new general education program supported by \$1,622,000 in grants from the RF and GEB.

In 1934 the Committee on Records and Reports was created under the direction of Ralph Tyler from the Bureau of Educational Research at Ohio State University. Tyler moved this monitoring body to the University of Chicago when he succeeded Charles Judd as chair of education. The most well known project in the general education program was the Eight-Year Study that accumulated comparative data on high school curriculum and college entrance.⁴⁰ With Rockefeller funding the study became a way to demonstrate change and to actually change the structure and purpose of high school education. “Communication” was expressly noted as an important part of any “core” curriculum. Colleges were encouraged to experiment with interdisciplinary programs commonly identified with “the general education movement” to provide “integrative, common learning experiences that are significant to all students regardless of their fields of specialization.”⁴¹ Major publications came out in 1939 and 1940 that dealt with secondary curriculum and general education.⁴² The final results of the study were published in five volumes between 1942 and 1951.⁴³ The influences on secondary school curriculum were felt for more than two decades.

In 1943, the GEB funded a Center of Documentation and Collaboration for the Study of Human Development and Behavior at the University of Chicago. The center collected and evaluated research on human development from infancy to old age. Robert J. Havighurst, who assisted Lawrence K. Frank as director of the GEB’s child development research in the 1930s,

joined the Chicago faculty in 1941 to coordinate the center.⁴⁴ The Center for Documentation and Collaboration also continued the work of the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council on Education set up with GEB funds in 1938 with a grant of \$250,000.⁴⁵

In the mid 1930s the humanities were ultimately seen as responsible for defining the American character and culture. The personality and culture field of concentration elevated the concept of “national character” in the mid -1930s. In 1934 and 1935, the general education program supported Conferences on Human Relations.⁴⁶ A Commission on Human Relations was formed under the auspices of the Progressive Education Association headed by Alice Keliher. With a grant of \$223,670 the group wrote books to address “the adolescent in terms of his personal and social problems.” The commission also experimented with literature, drama, and film as educational tools. A Motion Picture Project made arrangements with Hollywood to portray human experiences and to “illustrate points of tension in human living, such as problems of the family, marriage, individual adjustment to life, group relations, and the relationship of the individual to society.” Sixty-eight such films were made by 1939.⁴⁷ Half a million dollars were spent in the production of films for educational purposes in the general education program.

Radio broadcasting had been an experiment of the parent education program of the LSRM in the 1920s and it continued to be an area of interest and possibility. The general education program directed \$370,000 toward four educational radio projects. All of the funds went to projects that originated independently of the Foundations. The largest sum went to the very successful school broadcast “Ohio School of the Air,” at Ohio State University, which first aired in 1929. The university hosted an annual Institute for Education by Radio in 1930 that brought together commercial broadcasters with academics interested in educational

broadcasting. The University of Wisconsin initiated the first university based radio station in 1916 and developed the “Wisconsin School of the Air” in 1931, and a “Wisconsin College of the Air,” in 1933. The third group to receive funds was the Cleveland School Board’s efforts to use local stations to broadcast to public schools in the area.⁴⁸ The PEA, which had first shown interest in radio in 1919, was also funded in radio to complement its active film project.

In 1935 the trustees of the RF authorized the officers to develop projects in the general areas of radio, moving pictures, drama, libraries and museums, the collection of cultural materials associated with national identity, and international communication through the development of language teaching particularly associated with Latin America and the Far East.⁴⁹ The GEB in its 1936-1937 *Annual Report* hailed educational research projects in radio as a wave of the future but enthusiasm waned as radio took on other roles as war approached.⁵⁰ A series of grants to the World Wide Broadcasting Foundation, for example, operated a short wave station in Boston that was intended to become an educational station. Instead its facilities became the *Voice of America* in World War II. Other projects in radio were supported in Chicago, and the Rocky Mountain Radio Council in Colorado and Wyoming.⁵¹ The general education program of the Rockefeller philanthropies in the late 1930s supported a variety of media including broadcasting, motion picture(s), music, drama, and handicrafts. Nearly \$1 million was spent to advance communications projects in colleges and universities prior to the end of the program in 1940. It furthered the work of institutions of common interests with schools and colleges devoted to public education such as museums and libraries. The program also funded traditional text as a form of communication but addressed “special techniques” in printing and the creation of illustrated educational materials for school age children, college,

and university programs, as well as adult educators from parents to teachers and administrators.⁵²

Conclusion: Convergent Paths to Communication Studies

In 1934, the Program and Policy Appraisal Committee of the RF summarized the changing objectives of the philanthropies. The committee found that “the advance of knowledge, if rigidly defined, is too limited and confining an objective.”⁵³ Rather, the trustees voted to pursue “projects that have to do with the *application of knowledge* in fields where human need is great and *opportunity is real* [my emphasis].”⁵⁴ Programs such as those in the humanities and social sciences that centered on “fields of concentration” were to be preferred. While research was central to producing knowledge about a field of concentration, it was “a means to an end, and the end [was] recognized to be the advancement of human welfare.”⁵⁵ A report of a special committee concluded that “a program in the humanities, based on a cloistered kind of research, is wide of the goal which the Foundation should have in mind.”⁵⁶ Robert B. Fosdick in his annual review for 1937 as president of the Rockefeller Foundation cited the change in the field of the humanities over the past few years:

From the aristocratic and exclusive, culture is becoming democratic and inclusive. The conquest of illiteracy, the development of school facilities, the rise of public libraries and museums, the flood of books, the invention of the radio and the moving picture, the surge of new ideas—and above all, perhaps, the extension of leisure, once privilege of the few—are giving culture in our age a broader base than earlier generations have known...New interests are in the making—an adventurous reaching out for a fuller life by thousands to whom non-utilitarian values have hitherto been inaccessible...Any program in the humanities must inevitably take account of this new renaissance of the human spirit.”⁵⁷

In 1939 and 1940 conferences were held with Rockefeller Support for the establishment of a new discipline to systematically study the dynamics and uses of the new technologies of

mass communication.⁵⁸ Communication, the fourth stage of the social sciences, encompassed the language arts of the humanities as a way to study and appease human nature and to reconcile it with social change. This effort to heal society through a general education program and to adjust personality to a changing culture led to direct support for a fledgling new field in communication.

Communication studies was first directed toward human development and the most effective way to use technology to inform the public and shape mass views on issues central to the business of the state. This became more critical as war overtook Europe and engulfed the United States in 1942. Communication took the form of intelligence for the military and propaganda for the people. To make these efforts successful it was necessary to create experts with specialized knowledge. The social sciences and humanities as constituted did not address the process of how to understand the efficacy of different ways to manipulate the media, produce, and transmit information for specific purposes to a range of audiences. The early experiments with school age education did not grow as fast as the need for persuasion and propaganda for public consumption, which included manipulation and pacification in shaping leisure time. After the war the use of media in motion pictures, broadcasting in radio and television as it became commonly and personally available on a widespread basis, was even a larger concern for parents and teachers as well as researchers. This became a subject of critical studies in the field of communication.

Endnotes

¹ Paper prepared for the Rockefeller Archive Center Workshop, "American Philanthropic Support for Communication and Culture," hosted by William Buxton, August 19-20, 2004.

² Robert B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harpers & Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 237.

- ³ William J. Buxton, "Reaching Human Minds: Rockefeller Philanthropy and Communications, 1935-1939," in Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher, eds, *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy* (Stamford, CN: Ablex Publishers, 1999), pp. 177-192.
- ⁴ The Memorial's total expenditure from 1918 to 1928 in areas related to family interests was \$4,907,235.85, "LSRM Appropriations, Social Service and Welfare," 18 October 1918 to 30 April 1928, RFA, RG 3, Series 910, Box 2, Folder 11.
- ⁵ Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Rockefellers: An American Dynasty*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 143.
- ⁶ L.K. Frank, "Memorandum, Research in Social Science," April 26, 1924, LSRM Series II, Box 2, Folder 22.
- ⁷ Committee Review of Social Science, Lawrence K. Frank author, "The Status of Social Science in the United States, 1919-1920," Report 22, LSRM III, 6, 63, 679, RAC; Frank, trained as an economist with a doctorate from Columbia University, served as business manager of the New School for Social Research in New York City before becoming affiliated with Rockefeller Philanthropy. His interests in social science tended toward social psychology. His fascination with the problems of childhood reflected his mentors at Columbia, Wesley C. Mitchell and his wife Lucy Sprague Mitchell, an innovative educator and pioneer in community laboratory schools and the child study movement in New York. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation*, p. 265. "Memorial Policy, Social Sciences, Extracts," October 1922, Spelman Fund of New York II, 3, 108, RAC, p. 7.
- ⁸ "Memorial Policy, Social Sciences, Extracts," October 1922, Spelman Fund of New York II, 3, 108, RAC, p. 7.
- ⁹ Ibid; "Social Science – Library Assistance, 8 October 1918 to 30 April 1928," RFA, RG 3, Series 910 Box 2, Folder 11
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- ¹¹ "Child Study Association of America, Inc., Summary of the Season's Activities, 1924-1925," LSRM Series III, Subseries 5, Box 27, Folder 285.
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