

# A Space for Practice: International Learning Initiatives

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# A Space for Practice: Library Building and International Learning in an Applied Anthropology Lab

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## ABSTRACT

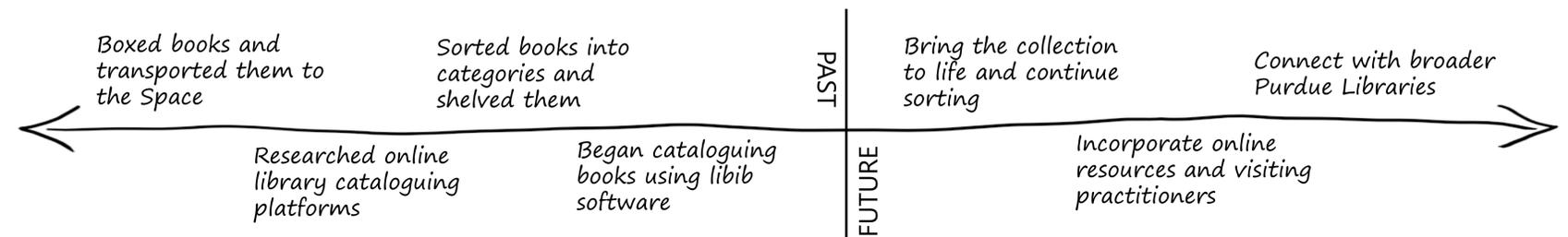
The Space for Practice is a new applied anthropology lab at Purdue University. Its purpose is to facilitate applied anthropology pedagogy and to provide programming to foster student-practitioner interactions and networking. Numerous beneficial resources on international learning and study abroad were donated by Dr. Riall Nolan, a senior practitioner and Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Purdue. The collection of materials will be beneficial to the development of aspiring applied anthropologists and practitioners in their endeavors as students and as pre-professionals. This undergraduate-led research project will involve organizing and cataloging the collection, literature review on library building, interviews with Dr. Nolan and others contributing to the growing collection, and other methods. The project will result in an organized library and a system for its management as well as a report for the Space for Practice development committee with recommendations on how we can foster international learning in this educational space.



## ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The Space for Practice is building a useful collection of materials related to applied and practicing anthropology. A major contribution to this effort came from a senior practitioner at Purdue, Dr. Riall Nolan, who provided materials dating back to the 1960s. While the topics represented in the collection are varied, they focus primarily on different areas of practice and applied anthropology. There are many resources on development, project management, methods, corporate culture, teaching, and intercultural communication. Many of the books do not directly discuss anthropology, and this represents an important theme of the Space: learning how to apply anthropology to real world situations and challenges.

My role in the development of the library is to sort the books into categories and catalogue them in an online system that will allow aspiring applied anthropologists and practitioners who utilize the Space to check books out. When I first got involved in the Space for Practice development project, I did not know what my role would be. I got involved with the transportation of the library, then research on library building and online cataloguing (see timeline below). Much like the Space itself, my role in its development has evolved over time.



## USING THE COLLECTION: QUOTES FROM A SENIOR PRACTITIONER

As part of Dr. Nolan's involvement in the project, he provided some suggestions on how to use the collection.

- "The answers are not going to be found in the books, I think the books are going to be the things you go to after you've figured out a few things. That's not to say that browsing isn't a good idea – sometimes random choices can be illuminating, but it's better to form an idea first."
- "Some of these books are useful not for telling you what to do, but telling you how to approach it."



**"Don't worry about whether it's anthropology or not; ask yourself how you can use anthropology to address it," because "every so-called scientific problem is a human problem."**  
-Dr. Riall Nolan

## NEXT STEPS

- Bring the collection to life:** Develop a library policy and loan system using the online cataloguing system to allow students to check books out.
- Continue to sort books:** Create cohesive categories as we continue to receive additional resources.
- Incorporate online resources and visiting practitioners:** Add a virtual library of recordings of video calls with practitioners
- Connect with Purdue Libraries:** Continue to work with our anthropology liaison in the libraries, Dr. Kendall Roark, who is an applied anthropologist by training to link this library with the broader university library system.



## CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CONVERSATION

- Purdue's aspiring applied anthropologists and practitioners can use the collection by browsing the stacks for inspiration, but they should not look to them for answers and to find direction; they are rather for exploration and further investigation of pre-established interests.
- Different parts of the collection are relevant to different groups. The methods and theories categories (to be used as tools for applied work) are relevant broadly, whereas the resources on the anthropology of institutions (universities, corporations, the military) are relevant to those interested in such areas.
- The collection can inspire curiosity and provide a baseline of knowledge for students to investigate their interests in greater depth.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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