**PAPER**

**Mapping the research on libraries, museums, and cultural centers in foreign policy and cultural diplomacy: a scoping review**

**Keywords: cultural diplomacy, foreign policy, libraries, museums, cultural centers**

**Introduction**

Libraries, museums and cultural centers have long been associated as foreign policy platforms and instruments for cultural diplomacy (Barnhisel & Turner, 2010; Chambers, 2016; Grincheva, 2019; Laugesen, 2019; Snow & Cull, 2020). Foreign policy is a set of actions, rules, visions, and goals of a nation-state that guides, positions, and places its national interests and principles in the international environment (Cooper et al., 2013; Morin & Paquin, 2018). Cultural diplomacy, as an international relations strategy, enables foreign policy to influence attitudes by implementing and communicating identities, ideas, values, and ideologies to the foreign public that leads to the creation of bilateral and multilateral relationships among actors and sectors in the international environment. Foreign policy reflects the nation’s domestic cultural policy that reaches out to both domestic and foreign public. (Cull, 2008; Gienow-Hecht & Donfried, 2010; Snow & Cull, 2020)

Cultural institutions such as libraries, museums, and cultural centers, act as a foreign policy resource of governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sectors to pursue cultural diplomacy and relations (Liland, 1993; Reimann, 2004). Commonly, governments establish cultural affairs department as part of the foreign affairs’ organizational structure to create and initiate cultural programs in foreign embassies’ libraries and cultural centers. The Institut Francaise (1907), Italian Cultural Center (1926), American Spaces, formerly known as the U.S. Information Agency (1927), British Council (1934), Indian Cultural Center (1950), Germany’s Goethe Institut (1951), Japan Foundation (1972), Spain’s Instituto Cervantes (1991), and Russian Cultural Center have been in the cultural diplomacy environments for quite some time building government-to-government, people-to-people cultural understanding and relationship. In the last decade, the People Republic of China’s Confucius Institute and Classroom (2004) and Korean Cultural Center (2009) have recently making waves in the cultural diplomacy scene. Prieto-Gutierrez (2016) found out that there are about 3,745 foreign cultural centers that actively promotes cultural diplomacy and cultural-political discourse overseas. This study indicated how the foreign cultural centers are organized by analyzing its library management and budget management processes. However, there is a dearth of in-depth knowledge about foreign policy goals, instruments, strategies, and processes being utilized by international actors such as the state, non-state, and the private sector.

With current the global information challenges we are facing in the 21st century foreign affairs such as fake news, post-truth, information warfare between nation-states such as the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal, US-China’s *Tiktok and Huawei* Tech Wars*,* the global COVID-19 *infodemic* crisis*,* and wide array of digital, reading, science and technology, and environmental literacy gaps that have emerged across the globe, the study on the essential role of libraries, museums, and cultural centers in foreign policy and cultural diplomacy among the international actors become perhaps more essential than ever, and significantly, a starting point for a research to revisit, map, summarize and look for gaps in the vast research literature.

**Research Questions**

Historical perspectives have dominated the literature about libraries, archives, cultural centers, and museums concerning foreign policy and cultural diplomacy (Barnhisel & Turner, 2010). With the growing literature about cultural diplomacy scattered across disciplines, including libraries, cultural centers, and museums, there is a need to embark on a scoping review study[[1]](#footnote-2) and map and explore the key concepts, evidence, and gaps in the existing knowledge.

This research summarizes the present knowledge about libraries, archives, cultural centers, and museums as instruments in nation-states' foreign cultural policies. It focuses on identifying the emerging area of information research within the broader international relations, social science, and library and information studies research traditions by studying the historical and current developments. We map research themes, research methods, and findings from the research on these cultural and information institutions’ roles combined, focusing on foreign policy and cultural diplomacy. The study's specific aims are the discovery of gaps in research and the formulation of novel research questions and perspectives.

RQ 1: What is known from the existing literature about libraries, cultural centers, and museums in foreign policy and cultural diplomacy practice?

RQ 2: What are the research gaps, emerging ideas, and practices involving libraries, cultural centers, and museums in cultural diplomacy?

**Theoretical and Methodological framework for the review**

This research employs a scoping review methodology that aims to summarize and map knowledge and concepts to describe and identify the gaps and trends (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014). A scoping review or scoping study is a form of knowledge synthesis and methodological framework that addresses an exploratory research question. It aims to map critical concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically searching, selecting, and synthesizing existing knowledge (Colquhoun et al., 2014). It is also similar to a comprehensive systematic review as it transparently identifies, appraises, and synthesizes the relevant studies on a topic (Gough et al., 2017). One of the essential factors of using a scoping study is that it can provide a rigorous and transparent method for mapping a particular research area in the social sciences (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). Scoping reviews differ from systematic reviews, but not systematic rigor (Munn et al., 2018). Systematic reviews usually pose more specific research questions to map the literature and evaluate and appraise research results, such as what treatments work for a specific condition and the usefulness of informing professional practice. Typically, systematic reviews are used in mature research fields as medicine and biology.

While searching the general databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, we have noticed that there were no scoping review or other relevant review articles on the topics of libraries, museums, cultural centers and cultural diplomacy. In recent research about cultural diplomacy, Cai (2013) points out that there is a need for attention to systematically develop a mapping framework to track and analyze theoretical and empirical data, particularly on the identities, perceptions, and behaviors toward cultural diplomacy and cultural institutions. With numerous case studies available, it is important to utilize a scoping literature review methodology to systematically explore and map the concepts revolving around libraries, cultural centers, and museums within the context of foreign policy and cultural diplomacy. A scoping literature review allows for identifying research themes, concepts, knowledge status, and research gaps using a scoping study methodological framework[[2]](#footnote-3) (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014; Munn et al., 2018, 2018; Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2016)

Building on the scoping review methodological frameworks of (1) PRISMA Extension for scoping review (Tricco et al., 2018) and (2) the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis: Scoping review (Peters et al., 2020), The authors of this study followed the structured checklist and guidelines which includes the following: (1) Title; (2) Abstract; (3) Introduction; (4) Review questions; (5) Review methods; (6) Eligibility/Inclusion criteria; (6a) Concept; (6b) Context; (6c) Study design; (6d) Field of study; (6e) Time-period; (6f) Other criteria (e.g. peer-reviewed documents and language); (7) Information Sources and Search Strategy; (8) Study/Document Selection Process; (9) Data extraction process; (10) PRISMA diagram; (11) Results/Findings; (12) Discussion; (13) Conclusion

**Results**

The findings from the review will consist of a presentation of study characteristics, theoretical approaches, and research themes.

**Discussion**

The discussion conveys the research questions regarding what is known in the vast literature including concentration and cluster of studies, research gaps, and interesting and emerging topics for further research.

**Conclusion**

Research about libraries, museums, and cultural centers in cultural diplomacy and foreign policy revealed a significant upward trajectory of publication in the wide time distribution of the studies, suggesting a growing interest in the field. The reviewers of this studies have identified interesting and emerging topics to extend and challenge what is known in the literature.

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1. Scoping review or scoping study is a form of knowledge synthesis that addresses an exploratory research questions aimed at mapping key concepts, type of evidences, and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically searching, selecting, and synthesizing existing knowledge (Colquhoun, 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Arksey & O’Malley’s six-step methodological approach to scoping study:

   (1) Identifying the research question; (2) Identifying the relevant studies (search strategy); (3) Study selection (inclusion and exclusion criteria); (4) Charting the data (data extraction, meta-analysis, or narrative review) ; (5) Collating, summarizing, and reporting the data (reviewing studies); (6) Consultation [↑](#footnote-ref-3)