

HRAF AND THE HRAF FILES

The Human Relations Area Files, Incorporated (HRAF), centered at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, is a non-profit international research organization sponsored and controlled by 22 major universities and museums. It has over 300 participating member institutions in some two dozen countries. For over 37 years HRAF has been developing programs and services to encourage and facilitate area studies and the worldwide comparative study of human behavior, society, and culture. HRAF's basic program, called the HRAF Files, is available on a membership basis to any non-profit educational or research institution.

Nature of the HRAF Files

"Files" is a rather dull term for denoting what may well be one of the most important resources available for teaching and research in the social-behavioral sciences.

Essentially, the HRAF Files constitute both a major cultural data archive and a rapid and efficient data retrieval system. In more specific terms, the HRAF Files are a continually expanding collection of mostly primary source materials (i.e., published books and articles plus some unpublished manuscripts) on a large sample of cultures or societies representing all areas of the world. The materials include many rare sources not generally available and many exclusive English translations of foreign texts.

Organization of the HRAF Files

This collection of material is organized first of all into separate Cultural Files, each of which contains descriptive information on one or a closely related group of cultural units such as the Zuni Indians, the Rural Irish, or the Yoruba of Nigeria. These cultural units are selected from a manual entitled the *Outline of World Cultures (OWC)*, which presents a systematic listing of the contemporary and historic cultural units of the world known to history and ethnography. Over 320 cultural units are now represented in the Files.

The second basic organizational principle of this collection is that the information within each Cultural File is arranged according to a special subject classification system consisting of over 700 numbered subject categories grouped into 79 major topical sections. This classification system is presented in another manual entitled the *Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM)*.

Using this subject classification system, each text page of every source selected for inclusion in each Cultural File is analyzed and annotated in the margin with the category number of every subject treated on that page. The page is then reproduced in multiples to provide a copy for inclusion in each applicable subject category within that File. Thus, all materials dealing with a particular subject are brought together under a single subject category within each File.

Efficiency of the HRAF Files

The HRAF Files are designed for the rapid and accurate retrieval of data on specific cultures and topics. The proof that the Files do accomplish these goals is available in published studies. For example, in 1950 a distinguished anthropologist, G.P. Murdock, presented a vivid demonstration of the amount of time saved when producing a research report based on the Files in comparison to the amount of time that

would have been required using the ordinary laborious process of library research (29 hours vs. 29 days). As for accuracy, our own studies of the reliability of the subject classification process indicate that a user of the Files may expect to find up to 90% of the *major topics* described in a source appropriately classified by subject categories.

Advantages of the HRAF Files

To the Library—

- ✓ They greatly reduce the task and cost of acquisition of library resources in the social and human sciences, and in area studies.
- ✓ They can be used as a data resource throughout the curriculum, although their special value is for the social sciences.
- ✓ They are easy to file and require minimal storage space.
- ✓ They are accompanied by a variety of user aids that make accessibility to and control of the collection much easier.
- ✓ They provide a range of material on cultures and societies that is rarely available in any one library.

To the Student, Researcher, Scholar—

- ✓ They greatly reduce research time.
- ✓ They enable a researcher to focus on analyzing data rather than searching for relevant materials.
- ✓ They afford simultaneous access to the same source by several researchers through the multiple filing system.
- ✓ They provide a system for rapid and accurate retrieval of information on a particular culture, on a particular topic, or for comparative research.
- ✓ They include exclusive English translations of texts from 15 different foreign languages.

To the Teacher—

- ✓ They provide a unique, organized resource for the preparation of courses or lectures on a particular culture, area, or topic.
- ✓ They have proved to be an effective tool for training students in comparative research.
- ✓ They offer an especially useful resource for class assignments and collaborative class projects.

OCM SUBJECT
CATEGORY CODE
NUMBERS

OWC
CODE

NAME OF
CULTURAL UNIT

CARD SERIAL
NUMBER

Category 619-648

NF6 Blackfoot
Card 036



SAMPLE MICROFICHE (actual size)

This is a 105mm positive microfiche of the HRAF Paper Files produced in a conventional 4" x 6" size on either silver halide or diazo film. The reduction ratio is 20 to 1 for the first 28 Series, and 24 to 1 starting with Series 29. Each continuously filmed fiche can accommodate up to 168 pages at 20:1 or up to 240 pages at 24:1. Eye-readable numbered flasher pages inserted throughout the collection instantly signal the beginning of each OCM category of information, and describe the category. The top portion of each microfiche carries the coded identification of the material produced on that particular fiche. Each Cultural File is made up of a varying number of such microfiche, each fiche being consecutively numbered to facilitate filing.

Any microfiche with a defect caused by material or workmanship is replaced free of charge.

(size: 105 x 148mm)

AUTHOR'S TRAINING
(Ethnologist)

SOURCE EVALUATION
(Excellent Secondary (4)
and Primary (5) data)

OUTLINE OF WORLD CULTURES CODE
(Indicating Location of Text
Category)

SOURCE
NUMBER

AUTHOR'S
LAST
NAME

DATE OF
FIELD-
WORK

DATE OF
PUBLICATION

NAME OF
SOCIETY

OUTLINE OF WORLD CULTURES CODE
(Indicating Location of Category
Pages)

1: Wissler E-4,5 (1906) 1911 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

24 *Anthropological Papers American Museum of Natural History. [Vol. VII,*

social order in its broadest sense. Of this, he is fully conscious; as, for example, no man of importance will accept an invitation to visit for a time in a distant band or tribe without calling a consultation. Should some head men of his band indicate disapproval, the invitations will be declined. The theory is that the welfare of his band is endangered by his absence. Above all, the head men are expected to preserve the peace. Should a dispute arise in which members of their band are concerned, one or more of them are expected to step in as arbitrators or even as police officials if the occasion demand. When it is suspected that a man contemplates a crime or the taking of personal vengeance some head men go to his tipi and talk with him, endeavoring to calm him, giving much kind advice as to the proper course for the good of all concerned. If he has been wronged, they often plead for mercy toward his enemy. Again, the head men may be appealed to for redress against a fellow member of the band. In the adjustment of such cases the head men proceed by tact, persuasion, and extreme deliberation. They restrain the young men, as much as possible, after the same method. In all such functions, they are expected to succeed without resort to violence.

For mild persistent misconduct, a method of formal ridicule is sometimes practised. When the offender has failed to take hints and suggestions, the head men may take formal notice and decide to resort to discipline. Some evening when all are in their tipis, a head man will call out to a neighbor asking if he has observed the conduct of Mr. A. This starts a general conversation between the many tipis, in which all the grotesque and hideous features of Mr. A's acts are held up to general ridicule amid shrieks of laughter, the grilling continuing until far into the night. The mortification of the victim is extreme and usually drives him into temporary exile or, as formerly, upon the warpath to do desperate deeds.

When there is trouble between members of different bands, the head men of each endeavor to bring about a settlement. Thus, if one of the contending party is killed, the band of the deceased sends notice to the murderer's band that a payment must be made. In the meantime, the murderer may have called upon a head man of his own band to explain the deed. The head men then discuss the matter and advise that horses and other property be sent over to the injured band at once. A crier goes about with the order and members of the band contribute.¹ This offer may be refused by the injured band and a demand made for the culprit's life. No matter how

¹ One informant commented on this paragraph as follows: When the payment is made it is through the head men of the bands concerned. The head man of the band to which the wronged party belongs is given the offerings and he passes on them. When he judges them ample, he takes them to the wronged party and tells him to drop the case now since he has received full damages.

622 HEADMEN

622 HEADMEN
627 INFORMAL INGROUP
JUSTICE

626 SOCIAL
CONTROL

[622] HEADMEN

622 HEADMEN
628 INTER-COMMUNITY
RELATIONS
682 OFFENSES AGAINST
LIFE

[203] DISSEMINATION OF
NEWS AND
INFORMATION

SAMPLE FILE PAGE (reduced size)

This sample page is a copy of the paper original, and is reproduced here solely to demonstrate HRAF indexing techniques.

The source materials are not abstracts or excerpts from documents, but exact reproductions of the original text. English translations of foreign texts are included.

Complete pages, not separate phrases or sentences, are filed by subject categories. Thus no single passage is torn from its surrounding discourse.