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Establishment and Spread of the US Cultural and Information Spaces

(Abstract)

This article explores the emergence and spread of American cultural and information centers and libraries around the world. The analyses shows that they were one of the first initiatives of the emerging American public diplomacy at the turn of the 20th century, which became an effective tool for reaching out to the outside audience, with a view to enhance the understanding and acceptance of the policies of the United States during the Cold War. In the mid-1990s the US Congress reduced their funding in an attempt to reduce the federal spending abroad. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the worsening of USA's appearance abroad, however, served as an indication that their closure was a mistake. In an attempt to remedy that mistake, the federal government has created a dense network of governmental and so-called American partner spaces of different size and type, but united by the mission of attracting foreign audiences through the development of numerous information, educational and training programs.

Keywords: binational centers, overseas libraries, American spaces