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Raymond Lum: A Tribute on the Occasion of His Retirement

Wen-ling Liu

Indiana University

A native of Chicago's Chinatown, Dr. Raymond David Lum (林希文) grew up in an apartment building on Alexander Street and attended St. Therese School, a Maryknoll missionary school for Chinese children. His father was an immigrant from Xinhui County in Guangdong Province (although his grandfather was born and raised in Honolulu's Chinatown when Hawaii was still an independent kingdom) and his mother, an Illinois Caucasian, enrolled him in a two-hour after-school program for learning Cantonese when he was 10 years old, but with little success. He later claimed that he never really learned Cantonese from the school, and it was not the language spoken at home. However, this did not hold him back from later learning Mandarin Chinese, as he received his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from Harvard University in 1985. Since his move to Boston, Lum taught Chinese as an instructor at the Boston Center for Adult Education from 1971-1974 and at the Harvard Extension School from 1976-2007. In 1999, he received the Carmen S. Bonanno Award¹ for Excellence in Foreign Language Teaching from the Harvard University Extension School.

Growing up exposed to the intellectual catalysts of the Hippie Movement and the Vietnam War between the early 1960s and the early 1970s, Lum was inspired to expand his horizons by traveling to many different places around the world, with a focus on Asia. Through training, traveling, philanthropic opportunities and education, he became well versed in many different fields.

Lum received his Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Chinese from Washington University, St. Louis in 1968. During his undergraduate studies, he took a year-long leave, during which he took a Chinese freighter from Long Beach, California, to Taiwan, where he stayed a year, studying Chinese and teaching English. After this break, he returned and finished his degree. From 1968 through 1970, Lum was a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Sarawak, a Malaysian state on the Island of Borneo. He regularly traveled to jungle schools, where he advised teachers on teaching methods he learned from his attachment to the Department of Education. He learned Malay during this period, thus explaining why later in his career, he was assigned to serve as the librarian for South and Southeast Asia. During his service, Lum met his wife, Susan, while at training in Hawaii, and they married in Sarawak. In 1971, after finishing his Peace Corps service in Malaysia, he went back to Taiwan for 8 months.

¹ Established in 1990 by the family and friends of Carmen S. Bonanno, who studied a foreign language in the Harvard Extension School many years ago, this award recognizes excellence in foreign language instruction.

Upon their return to the U.S. in 1971, the newlyweds went to Boston, and Lum started to pursue a Master of Arts (M.A.) in East Asian Languages & Civilizations at Harvard University. After receiving his M.A. degree in 1975, he then moved on to Harvard's corresponding Ph.D. program. Before the start of his Ph.D. studies, Lum worked as a graduate student assistant at the Harvard-Yenching Library where he met Dr. Kaiming Chiu (裘開明), who was already retired at the time, but continued to work as the consultant on Chinese rare books in the Harvard-Yenching Library. With a recommendation from Dr. Chiu, he took a leave from his Ph.D. studies to study for a Master of Library Sciences (M.L.S.) degree at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, which he received in 1975. Afterwards, he went back to Harvard to continue his Ph.D. degree, and in 1976 he was appointed as the Librarian for the Western Languages Collection at Harvard-Yenching Library and as East Asian Specialist (later renamed Asian Bibliographer) with, eventually, responsibility for collection development for East, South, and Southeast Asia at Harvard's Widener Library. He held these additional positions until the financial crisis of 2008, the economic implications of which affected Harvard University heavily, causing many library positions to be eliminated.

In 1985, Lum received his Ph.D. in Chinese History from the East Asian Languages & Civilizations Department with a dissertation titled "Philanthropy and Public Welfare in Late Imperial China." In this thesis, which was one of the earliest book-length works on Chinese philanthropy, he argues that organized Chinese public welfare and philanthropy pre-dated missionary presence in China. Drawing from relatively meagre Chinese records and published missionary accounts, in his thesis, Lum examined certain permanent, non-emergency relief activities of the Chinese state and private organized philanthropies in the nineteenth century with focus on Canton, a treaty port with a large number of foreign residents as well as a large number of indigent Chinese.²

As the Librarian for the Western Languages Collection (1976-) at Harvard-Yenching Library and Asian Bibliographer (1976-2009) for the Widener Library at the same time, Lum has carried the responsibility for acquisitions of Western-language publications from East, South, and Southeast Asia, as well as for Sanskrit publications. Geographically, the areas and regions extend from East Asia to South and Southeast Asia, and Tibet. Over the years, he took on additional responsibilities such as overseeing collecting for Tibetan studies, Sanskrit studies, photography, ephemera, and for exhibitions. Lum served as curator of the historic photographs collections at the Harvard-Yenching Library and liaison for various departments and classes at the university. He also co-authored the *Research Guide for East Asian Studies*³, which

² Lum, Raymond David. *Philanthropy and Public Welfare in Late Imperial China*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Dissertation Information Service, 1989.

³ The URL of the Guide is <http://guides.library.harvard.edu/EAS>

provides a starting point for researchers in East Asian studies at Harvard University. Supportive to his colleagues, he prepared most of the exhibits at the Harvard-Yenching Library and has served as an important resource for his colleagues.

As a bibliographer, Lum has carved a career that reveals a wide range of his interests and expertise. He attributes his success to what he learned as a Peace Corps volunteer; that is: when something needs to be done, do it, then move on. However, a historian by training, Lum's passion can be seen by how immersed he becomes when he finds a subject of interest and with the various projects he undertakes, not only at Harvard-Yenching but all over the place. After thirty-five years of service, he is one of the very few librarians who has served under all three Librarians of the Harvard-Yenching Library: Kaiming Chiu, Eugene Wen-chin Wu (吳文津), and James K. M. Cheng (鄭炯文). In 2007, he authored the article, *East Meets East: A History of the Harvard-Yenching Library*,⁴ detailing the developments, evolution, and changes the library has undergone since its first books, brought by Ko K'un-hua (戈鯤化) in 1879, to its present state.

Lum has displayed a unique ability to recognize the hidden worth of sometimes overlooked treasures. One day in 1985, while looking at a missionary journal in the stacks, Lum discovered two parched and partly torn pages written by a member of the Macarntey Mission sent by England to open relations with the Chinese emperor⁵. It was claimed to be the biggest discovery in the then 53-year history of Harvard-Yenching Library. Lum later prepared a rough transcription of the notes for the public. This finding may have stirred a component in him to further explore historical evidence and significance of China's ephemeral materials and photographs in the Harvard libraries.

Harvard-Yenching Library holds around 70,000 photographs of East Asia. When James Cheng became the Librarian of Harvard-Yenching Library in 1998, he saw several large boxes of photographs, which had been sent by the estate of Hedda Morrison, and he said to Lum, "Let's do something about those." In January 1999, Lum successfully applied for Harvard Library's very first Library Digital Initiative (LDI) Grant (\$180,000) to catalog, digitize, and make available online the nearly five thousand images in Hedda Morrison's presentation photo albums of China⁶. With Lum as the project manager, the two-year project was completed in April 2001.

⁴ Lum, Raymond. "East Meets East: The Harvard-Yenching Library." *Collecting Asia: East Asian Libraries in North America, 1868-2008*. Edited by Peter X. Zhou. Association for Asian Studies, March 2010. pp. 32-53.

⁵ "Harvard Librarian Finds 18th Century Manuscript." *The Harvard Crimson*. March 2, 1985.
<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1985/3/2/harvard-librarian-finds-18th-century-manuscript/>

⁶ The Harvard Library's Library Digital Initiative (LDI), established in 1998, aims to maintain and grow collections and services in the digital era and to support the "collecting" of digital resources at Harvard. For more detail, please visit its web site <http://hul.harvard.edu/ois/ldi/>
URL of the digital collection of "The Hedda Morrison Photographs of China, 1933-1946" is at <http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/harvard-yenching/collections/morrison/>

Again, in September 2002, Lum received funding (\$60,000 over three years) from the same LDI Grant funding to catalog, digitize, and create a finding aid for 1,000 photographs, books, and ephemera from a unique collection of materials from the Rev. Claude L. Pickens, Jr., on Muslims in China⁷. The project also cataloged and digitized several hundred photographs relating to the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (the Edward Bangs Drew Collection). All of these images can be viewed in Harvard's online Visual Information Access (VIA) catalog.

Lum's promotion of the importance of the otherwise unknown photos and ephemeral materials in Harvard libraries did not stop with the completion of the two projects. He wrote two articles: "Send Help at Once. Pay Bearer 500 Taels': China's Ephemera as Historical Documentation [Harvard-Yenching Library]" and, with Rubie Watson, "Camera Sinica: China Photographs in the Harvard-Yenching Library and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology," to detail the rich collections. He believed that the "images amassed by countless Chinese and non-Chinese photographers have become increasingly valuable as historical documents of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Asia."⁸

Lum was recognized as an instrumental researcher at the 75th anniversary celebration of Harvard-Yenching Library with the contribution of these two articles, both of which became chapters of the exhibition catalogue entitled *Treasures of the Yenching* (2003). In addition, he collaborated with the Peabody Museum as curator of the exhibition "Portraits from China 1923-1946," and mounted a third exhibition of East Asian ephemeral materials in Harvard's Pusey Library, as well as an exhibition, in Harvard's rare books library, of rare materials from Harvard-Yenching. In 2004, he was one of the two recipients of the Carol Ishimoto Award for Distinguished Service⁹ at the Harvard College Library.

In pursuit of books for Harvard, Lum has been going to Asia every two or three years to buy books for almost three decades. Like the fictitious Indiana Jones looking

⁷ URL of the digital collection "The Rev. Claude L. Pickens, Jr. Collection on Muslims in China" is at <http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/harvard-yenching/collections/pickens/index.cfm>

⁸ Lum, Raymond and Rubie Watson, "Camera Sinica: China Photographs in the Harvard-Yenching Library and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology," in *Treasures of the Yenching: Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Harvard-Yenching Library: Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Patrick Hanan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard-Yenching Library, 2003), 285-316.

ed. Patrick Hanan (Boston: Harvard-Yenching Library, 2003), 295.

⁹ An endowment established in 1991 by Carol Ishimoto, former Associate Librarian of Harvard College for Cataloging and Processing, annually provides a cash award and citation for creative professional achievement of a high order. The award recognizes a member of the professional staff who has advanced the mission of the College Library through exceptional contributions and leadership. For detail, see http://hul.harvard.edu/publications/hul_notes_1317/ishimoto.html

for legendary archaeological treasures in remote regions, Lum went to great lengths and braved through humidity, cultural differences, and bureaucracies of government agencies in countries such as Vietnam, Burma, Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia to acquire books and materials from street vendors, new and used bookstores, and government agencies. He has shared the pleasures and challenges of book-buying trips in a few candid and funny travelogues about Southeast Asia and provided inside-look experiences and resources with colleagues who also travel in Asia. In his 2002 trip article, he wrote about necessary travel tips, such as hotel reservations, visas, internet cafes, health, transportation, travel guides, money, credit cards, and museums because he knows that book-buying trips usually contain several short stops. During this 2002 trip, he took twenty flights.

Lum's trips were full of both publications and adventures. In his 2009 talk, Lum explained that he had been "arrested in Hanoi, mugged in Saigon, evicted from Brunei, hit by a car and [required to push] a taxi in Malaysia, fallen into a sewer in Laos ..."¹⁰ In his 2007 travelogue,¹¹ readers will find that he needed to work in and with countries that do not have mainstream publishing systems. He bought so much material that, at each stop, he negotiated with bookstore owners and officials in order to ship his selections back to Harvard before heading to the next destination. In Singapore, Lum received a printing block for Buddhist charms from a temple that decided to drop Buddhism and become Taoist. During his travels, Lum made sure to make the most of his visits. While abroad, not only did he select and purchase material, but he also made and maintained long-lasting relationships with contacts, as well as meeting and making new contacts and friends along the way. Aside from searching for books and absorbing trade news in each area, Lum also enjoyed being entertained with fabulous and exotic foods wherever he went.

In Lum's distinguished career, he has participated as member, Chair, web liaison, and webmaster to almost every committee at the Harvard College Library. He organized and chaired influential and key programs at the annual conferences of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS), International Institute for Asian Studies Conference, and several universities in North America. Select programs include "Saving Asia (on Microfilm) (2005)," "Libraries and Institutes for Overseas Chinese Studies (2000)," "Collecting on the Chinese Diasporas (1998)," "Asian Collections at the Library of Congress: policies and Directions (1995)," "Doing Research in an Electronic Age: Teaching the Resources for East, South, and Southeast Asia (1994)," and "Asian Collections of the Future: Challenges for Scholars and Librarians (1993)." He gave many presentations, in the U.S. and abroad, on topics related to collection management

¹⁰ By Raymond Lum for *Travelling Librarians* presentation, Harvard College Library, April 2009.

¹¹ Lum, Raymond. "A Book-Buying Trip to Asia: Travelogue 2007." https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/816707/wiki/week-10-the-big-picture-and-looking-ahead-consortial-collection-development?module_item_id=4755091 This article was incorporated into a spring 2013 course LIS 522 A (Collection Development) taught by Helene Williams, Information School, University of Washington, Seattle.

and the development of Asian acquisitions, historic photographs of Asia, and internet resources for South Asian, Southeast Asian, and East Asian studies. He served as a consultant to libraries' projects at Harvard, in China (Fudan University and Zhongshan University), and in Thailand. He served as editor for several journals, including the *Bulletin of the International Association of Orientalist Librarians* (1994-1997). In the 1990s, he gave lectures on overseas Chinese education and co-taught Overseas Chinese history in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations with Professor Philip Kuhn. Moreover, he has prepared over 70 library exhibitions at Harvard-Yenching and Widener Libraries on a wide range of Asian topics.

Outside of Harvard, Lum's contributions, achievements, and influences shine beyond the field of Asian studies. Several of his professional activities stood out; most of these were projects and services related to South and Southeast Asian studies and libraries. He provided intellectual and personal leadership and contributed a great deal to the Committee on South Asian Libraries and Documentation (CONSALD) and the Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia (CORMOSEA). Both Committees are affiliates of AAS. He served as a member (1990-1994), part of the Executive Committee (1997-2000), and as Chair (1992-1994) of the Sub-Committee on Revision of By-Laws in CONSALD. In CORMOSEA, he served six years in a row as Chair (1998-2004), and re-organized committee structures and by-laws during his tenure. He was engaged in several significant projects over the past three decades pertaining to the overall improvement of Southeast Asia librarianship in collection development, technical processes, production of research tools, and microfilming.

Lum served as the Harvard representative to both the Southeast Asia Microform Project (SEAM) and the South Asia Microform Project (SAMP) of the Center for Research Libraries, and served in key positions for both projects. He has also served as the Harvard representative to the South Asia Consortium-East since 1995. This Consortium consists of major East Coast research libraries with strong collections of South Asian publications. He was also the founder of the Asian Librarians Liaison Committee of AAS, and served as its Chair from 1992-1995.

With thick dark hair, a mustache, and glasses, Lum stands out in crowds at conferences. He is always stylishly dressed in suits with a bright-colored shirt that adds a touch of smartness to his otherwise formal attire. Highly respected by his colleagues, he is usually surrounded by librarians and scholars during such occasions. According to his friends and colleagues, Lum is friendly and supportive, talks straightforwardly, and is always alert of his surroundings while on trips. For example, during one of his many trips to Asia, he caught a pickpocket in the process of robbing his friend.

However, the best way to get to know Lum is through his writings. Lum, whose expertise spans a significant number of different subject areas, has published extensively and prolifically. He transformed from a Peace Corp volunteer to an academically trained modern Chinese historian, to a bibliographer for East Asia, South, and Southeast Asia, and to a well-known writer of a wide variety of subjects related to modern Asia. Writing on subjects as diverse as historical accounts of Western

photographers to Asia (China specifically) during the mid-Nineteenth Century, China's Cultural Revolution, and Chinese family-run restaurants in Chinatowns in different cities throughout the U.S., Lum has instructed and exhilarated his readers. The tone of his book reviews is clear, frank, and sometimes provocative with the usual account of historical contexts done in an effortless way. In his articles, he vividly depicts the relationship between Asia and the rest of the world in the modern era and points out to readers valuable tidbits of history through minutely described photos and ephemera.

Since the summer issue in 1996, he has contributed over 49 annotated articles to the column, "Asia Resources on the World Wide Web," of the *Asian Studies Newsletter* of AAS. Its coverage includes wide online resources, such as journals, newspapers, dictionaries, videos, and diaspora topics, etc., from regions in East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Asia diaspora. There were special issues, for example, the spring issue of 2012, in commemoration of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquakes and tsunami, features resources related to natural disasters across Asia. The online version of the extensive list related to web resources can be found on the AAS website (<http://www.asian-studies.org/links/asiawww.htm>). In addition to many of the articles directly or indirectly related to his work, he regularly contributes book reviews to *China Insight*.¹² He also serves as the Reviews & Resources Editor of *TransAsia Photography Review* (<http://tapreview.org>), a free, scholarly, peer-reviewed online journal since its inauguration in fall 2010.

As a librarian, a writer, a teacher, a critic, and a colleague, Raymond Lum has dignified and enriched the field of Asian librarianship. He plans to retire from Harvard on January 31, 2014. Neither his expertise nor his interests will change because of retirement. It will give him more time to continue to work on what he is most passionate about and allow him more time to travel with his wife. He will continue serving as President of the Board of Directors of the Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust, Inc. (www.oldschwambmill.org). He will also continue to write reviews for *TransAsia Photography Review* and *China Insight*. In fact, he is now finishing up two chapters of a book on China photo books to be published by Aperture and writing a history of Chicago's Chinatown and a long article on the forged *Memoirs of Li Hung-chang* 李鴻章. And on top of everything else, Lum plans on studying Italian and the ukulele.

¹² Published monthly online <http://www.chinainsight.info/> by China Insight, Inc., an independent, privately owned company started in 2001 and headquartered in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. Its goal is to promote or sponsor events that foster U.S.-China cultural and business harmony.

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Fig. 1. In quest of books in Laos -- The building behind (on a rented bicycle) in Vientienne, Laos, is the Geographic Institute, where Raymond Lum had gone to acquire sheet maps and atlases. The photo was taken by his friend Susan Go of the University of Michigan Library.



Fig. 2. With Bac, Librarian of General Sciences Library, Ho Chi Minh City, in front of Harvard's Widener Library, 2007.



Fig. 3. With colleagues at Harvard-Yenching Library: Daisy Chia-yaung Hu 胡嘉陽, former Chinese Bibliographer (retired in 2004); Song Lisheng 宋立升, visiting librarian from Peking University Library; and Sharon Yang 楊麗瑄, Head of Access Services.