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A TRIBUTE TO T. H. TSIEN

Eugene W. Wu

In terms of seniority in library service, T.H. was a couple of decades ahead of me. When, upon his graduation from the University of Nanking, he began his library career in 1932, I was not even in middle school. But that did not prevent us from becoming good friends later, although I always revered him as my senior. I don't remember exactly when we first met. It must have been in the mid-1950s at an annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS). I was then a cataloger at the Hoover Institution and he was already the curator of the Far Eastern Library (later East Asian Library) and Lecturer (later Professor) at both the Graduate Library School and the Department of Far Eastern (now East Asian) Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. My first impression of him was that of a quiet Confucian scholar, unassuming and unpretentious, and this was confirmed in subsequent years as I came to know him well.

As a scholar, teacher, and curator, T.H. was one of a kind. His book, *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions* (Chicago, 1962), remains a classic in the field, as is his *Paper and Printing*, written at the request of Joseph Needham and published as Part 1, Volume 5 of the *Science and Civilization in China* series (Cambridge, 1985). These seminal works have been widely praised elsewhere, as has his daring and imaginative scheme in 1941 sneaking, under the watchful eyes of the Japanese, some 30,000 volumes of rare Chinese books out of Shanghai to the Library of Congress for safekeeping. His success in building up a first-rate East Asian library at the University of Chicago has likewise been widely acknowledged. What has received less attention is his contribution to the early development of East Asian libraries in the United States and his pioneering effort in training East Asian librarians in this country.

East Asian libraries in the United States developed rapidly after WWII. For a number of years, this took place without the benefit of a professional organization, although there was at various times a committee under either the Far Eastern Association (predecessor of the Association for Asian Studies) or the American Library Association (ALA), or under both jointly. But as the number of East Asian libraries grew and problems facing them became more complex, there was a feeling prevailing among East Asian librarians that a formal professional organization ought to be established and its functions institutionalized. In 1963, the Committee on American Library Resources, or CALRFE, which had been operating without a charter and run almost singlehandedly by a person appointed by the Board of Directors of the AAS,

was reorganized with an executive group of seven members, also appointed by the AAS, and a general committee of unspecified membership in addition to the chairperson. But matters such as the nature of membership (institutional vs. individual) and voting procedures remained to be clarified. The new Executive Group deliberated on these matters at length, and a set of Procedures was adopted at CALRFE's annual meeting held in Chicago in 1967. It was at this time that the name of the organization was changed to Committee on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) (now Council on East Asian Librarians, AAS).¹ Many people today are unaware of the crucial role that T.H. played as an active member of the CALRFE Executive Group and then as chairperson of CALRFE from 1966-1967 in shaping the organization and its procedures. He facilitated the adoption of the Procedures (now Bylaws) which, with some modifications and amendments in subsequent years, still govern the function of CEAL as a professional organization today. As the Chinese saying goes, "The earlier generations plant the trees, the later generations enjoy the shade." We should all be very grateful to T.H. for his contributions in this regard.

T.H. rendered another outstanding service to the profession with the analytical survey he conducted in 1967 of East Asian libraries in the United States and Canada, a survey he repeated at five years intervals until his retirement. As he acknowledged, the survey, the first of its kind, was influenced by a course he took earlier from the renowned Prof. Leon Carnovsky at the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago.² It covers the libraries' holdings, current status of acquisitions, and sources of financial support. While the quantitative information presented was in and of itself very useful, the accompanying analysis provided additional insights. For instance, we learned from the 1967 survey that, *inter alia*, "the total acquisition of almost 300,000 volumes during 1966-1967 represent a 15% increase over that for the previous year and are the largest in the history of American acquisition of East Asian materials. This figure may be compared with that of about a decade ago when the average annual increase was 80,000 volumes in 1950-1955. The total holdings in 1967 also are double those in 1955, which is generally comparable to the trends of many individual collections toward doubling their size every two years."³ Such analyses provide rare perspectives extremely valuable in management and planning. The 1974/1975 survey was the last conducted by him but it has since been ably continued by CEAL as a simple statistical compilation containing the same categories of information as before, but without analysis. It has been appearing each year in the February issue of *Journal of East Asian Libraries*.

Yet another contribution T.H. made to the profession was the training of librarians for East Asian studies. In this he was the pioneer, and his impact was wide and deep. He laid out the *raison d'être* for the special training in a

paper presented at the 28th International Congress of Orientalists held in Canberra, Australia in 1972 entitled "Education for Far Eastern Librarianship."⁴ He maintained that knowledge of the language or languages and of the "Far Eastern library subjects"—the book trade, printing, publishing, cataloging, indexing, bibliographies, and reference tools—should all be required qualifications for East Asian studies librarians, as is knowledge and understanding of the modern library system. But library schools in America did not offer instructions on these subjects, and many East Asian studies librarians were found lacking in their knowledge of them. He believed that a special training program was therefore needed to train future East Asian librarians in this country. The idea of a combined discipline of Far Eastern studies and librarianship was thus born.

In 1964, the University of Chicago established a Joint Program on Far Eastern Librarianship leading to the MA and Ph.D. degrees, offered by its Graduate Library School in cooperation with its Department of Far Eastern (now East Asian) Languages and Civilizations, and T.H. was appointed director. The program, another first in this country, was eminently successful, but it came to an end with T.H.'s retirement in 1978. It was unfortunate that the program was not continued, and no other university has taken it over, most likely because the combination of an innovative leader and a congenial and supportive academic environment such as that existed in Chicago did not exist elsewhere. But the legacy of T.H.'s accomplishment lives on. Hopefully, the time will come one day for the program to be revived somewhere. No list of all the graduates under the joint program exists, but the number is estimated to be about 40.⁵ Three of the MA theses written under this program were published in 1983 by the Chinese Materials Center in Taipei under the series title *Studies in East Asian Librarianship*, with an introduction by T. H. to each.⁶ Among well-known graduates from the program are Tai-loi Ma (formerly Director of East Asian Library of Princeton University), James Cheng (Librarian of Harvard-Yenching Library of Harvard University), and Ed Martinique (formerly Bibliographer of the East Asian Library of the University of North Carolina, who was also the editor of *CEAL Bulletin* from 1987-1996). Much less known are those who did not remain in the United States, such as Ms. Lu Shiow-jyu 盧秀菊 who became a professor in the Department of Library and Information Science at the National Taiwan University, Mr. Huang Shih-hsiung 黃世雄, University Librarian and Professor in the Department of Library and Information Science at Tamkang University in Taiwan and later Dean of the Faculty of Arts at that university, and the late Lucie Cheng 成露茜, the publisher of the prestigious *Biographical Literature* 傳記文學 also in Taiwan.⁷

While developing the joint program, T.H. also promoted the idea of summer institutes as in-service training programs for working East Asian

librarians. In 1969, with the support of the U.S. Office of Education, an intensive six-week institute on Far Eastern librarianship, organized by T. H., was offered at the University of Chicago and attended by 31 people.⁸ In the same year, a two-week "Summer Institute on East Asian Bibliographical Services" attended by 20 people also took place at the University of Wisconsin, organized by Ms. Dorothea Scott, University Librarian at Hong Kong University before she moved on to the University of Wisconsin Library School faculty. Following a long pause, a two-week "Summer Institute on East Asian Librarianship" attended by 20 people took place in 1988 at the University of Washington, under the direction of the late Karl Lo, with funding also from the Department of Education. Lectures on the use of computer technology in libraries were given for the first time at that institute.

While no more summer institutes were held until 2004, the three language committees (Chinese, Japanese and Korean) of CEAL did, in the interim period, hold workshops for their respective members. In 2004 the University of Pittsburg, with funding from the Luce Foundation and in cooperation with the Committee on Chinese Materials of CEAL, offered a three-week "Luce Summer Institute for East Asian Librarianship: China Focus," organized by Zhijia Shen and Karen Wei, to "provide professional training for Chinese studies librarianship, to enhance the core competency of Chinese studies librarians, and to develop leadership for East Asian librarians."⁽⁹⁾ Twelve faculty, including two from China, taught seminars on a number of subjects from Chinese books, printing, reference works, bibliography to library technology and library administration. Twenty-eight people from twenty-six libraries attended that institute. There was a one-week web-based distance learning prior to the start of the institute in late July, and a one-week follow-up trip to China in October of that year in which fourteen of the institute attendees participated. The group met with publishers, database developers, vendors and librarians.¹⁰ The last summer institute held was at the University of Washington in 2008. The two-week institute named "Chinese Studies Librarianship in the Electronic Environment" was the most comprehensive and the most international of all the summer institutes. Attended by thirty-eight people from thirty East Asian libraries, it was sponsored jointly by the University of Washington and the CEAL Committee on Chinese Materials, with funding for the most part from the Luce Foundation, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, and the Tongfang Knowledge Network Technology Group, and was directed by Zhijia Shen and her management team. The lecturers included senior librarians and library school faculty from mainland China, Taiwan as well as the United States. East Asian studies faculty and senior librarians from the University of Washington and elsewhere in the United States also spoke, on trends in Chinese studies and on the use of technology in the library. There was a two-day pre-conference, *Symposium on CNKI Standards and Chinese e-Publishing*, co-sponsored by

the Tongfang Knowledge Network Technology Group in Beijing and the University of Washington Libraries (CNKI stands for China National Knowledge Infrastructure), and an optional post-curriculum field trip to Mainland China where some twenty of the thirty-eight institute participants visited major libraries and electronics resource providers in Beijing and Shanghai.¹¹

While the summer institutes were a poor substitute for the Joint Program T.H. directed at the University of Chicago, they did fulfill admirably the purpose for which T.H. created them, that is, helping working East Asian studies librarians to better equip themselves through a rigorous in-service training program. The question might be asked here: what influenced T.H.'s education philosophy and why library education was so important to him? The fact that he came from an academic family is of course part of that influence. His great-grandfather served in the Hanlin Academy in late 19th century China and his father was a Buddhist scholar. But many of T.H.'s contemporaries also came from similar scholarly family background. What sets him apart, I believe, is his own education experience. He studied under pioneering giants in the emerging new field of library science both in China and Chicago. In China his teachers and supervisors included Liu Kuo-chun 劉國鈞, Doo Ding-u 杜定友 and Li Xiaoyuan (Li Kuo-tung) 李小緣 (李國棟), and at the Graduate Library School in Chicago, he took courses from Jesse Shera, Lester Ashein and Herman Fussler. This kind of experience is unique and can hardly be duplicated. He appreciated the role his teachers played in his growth as a scholar-librarian, and he wanted the younger generation to have the same experience.

This brief account is an attempt to illustrate the width and depth of T.H.'s contributions to the development of East Asian libraries. His ingenuity and quiet leadership have contributed much to shape East Asian libraries in the United States as they are today, a strong and vibrant source for teaching and research on East Asia which may be the best in the Western world. He was erudite as a scholar and innovative as a librarian. With his passing his erudition will be missed by the scholarly community and his leadership by the East Asian library community. Personally, I have lost a good friend and a revered senior colleague.

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Notes

1. For a study of the history of CEAL, see Eugene W. Wu, "Organizing for East Asian Studies in the United States," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 110 (Oct. 1996), pp. 1-14.
2. Tsuen-hsui Tsien, "My Study at the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 130 (June 2003), p. 46.
3. *Library Resources on East Asia*, Reports and working papers for the tenth annual meeting of the Committee on American Library Resources on the Far East, Association for Asian Studies, Inc., at the Palmer House, Chicago, March 21, 1967 (Zug Switzerland: Inter Documentation Company AG, 1967), Appendix D, p. 91.
4. Tsuen-hsui Tsien, "Education for Far Eastern Librarianship," *International Cooperation in Oriental Librarianship*, Papers presented at the Library Seminar, 28th International Congress of Orientalists, Canberra, 6-12 January 1972 (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1972), pp. 108-116.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 116. Note 8 reads: "Since 1964/65, over a dozen students including two in the Ph.D. program have graduated under the Joint Program on Far Eastern Librarianship at the University of Chicago." Also, Zhijia Shen and Karen Wei, "Chinese Studies Librarians Training and the Luce Summer Institute at the University of Pittsburgh," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 130 (2003), p. 42. The number here is given as "six PhDs and about 35 graduates."
6. The three are (1) Edward Martinique, *Chinese Traditional Bookbinding: a Study of Its Evolution and Techniques*, (2) Constance Miller, *Technical and Cultural Prerequisites for the Invention of Printing in China and the West*, and (3) Shio-jyu Lu Shaw, *The Imperial Printing of Early Ch'ing China, 1644-1805*. Information by courtesy of James Cheng and Sharon Yang.
7. Information from Tai-loi Ma, June 2015.
8. It might be mentioned in passing that among the 31 participants was James Soong (宋楚瑜) then on the Center for Chinese Research Materials (CCRM) staff in Washington, D.C. He later returned to Taiwan and entered politics. He was elected Governor of Taiwan in

1994 and served in that capacity until 1998. He founded the People First Party and has been serving as its chairman.

9. Zhijia Shen and Karen Wei, *op. cit.*, p. 43. The Luce Summer Institute was held under the direction of Hong Xu, successor to Zhijia Shen at Pittsburg, following Zhijia Shen's departure from the University of Pittsburgh to the University of Washington.
10. Hong Xu and Sarah Aerni, *Report of the Luce Summer Institute for East Asian Librarianship: China Focus (July 26-August 13, 2004)*. This report was made available through the courtesy of Zhijia Shen.
11. Zhijia Shen, "Training to Meet the Digital Challenge: Report on the Summer Institute on Chinese Studies Librarianship in the Electronic Environment," *Journal of East Asian Libraries* 147 (2009): 43-49.