



2-1-1984

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Yang, Key P. (1984) "Library Resources and Needs for Korean Studies," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 1984 : No. 73 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol1984/iss73/5>

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LIBRARY RESOURCES AND NEEDS FOR KOREAN STUDIES

Key P. Yang

Library of Congress

An attempt is made in this paper to present briefly some of the essential tasks which deserve our immediate concern and attention. Library resources and needs are economic and human processes involving materials, documentation and bibliography, as well as librarians and users. My approach to this topic is necessarily limited to the experience I have gained as a Korean area specialist in the Library of Congress, the responsibilities and prestige of which have made it a national and international library.

Korean resources in this country have grown steadily during the last few decades. Now more than a half dozen libraries, including the Library of Congress, are seeking to build viable research collections for Korean studies. Due to the special position of Korea vis-a-vis America since 1945--the result of a strange historical turn of events--comprehensive information, including commercial development in Korea, has been sought by various sources in both public and private sectors. At the same time, academic and scholarly activities are conducted at frequent intervals. Despite all these welcome signs, Korean studies has yet to find its way into some academic and scholarly communities in this country.

1. Materials

The Korean resources in the Library of Congress occupy a preeminent position compared with other American libraries. This position results from the encyclopedic character of its collections, the variety of materials held, and the diversity of specialized developments and services. The extent of a library's Korean collection certainly is the determining factor for successful research, but is not the most important element in the enhancement of Korean studies. Continual efforts are required to stimulate greater interest in Korean studies.

A few examples which call for future exploration are as follows:

- 1) Provincial periodical publications in Korea. Missing from the LC collection are over 550 of these materials, which provide invaluable first-hand information on educational and social conditions in Korea today;
- 2) Japanese publications dealing with both North and South Korea. Politically neutral, Japanese studies on the two opposing sides in Korea often provide missing links in our knowledge of this divided land; equally important is 3) the selected acquisition of North Korean publications, for scholarly endeavors in North Korea are in increasing demand. For instance, I recently learned of the publication in North Korea of Yijo sillok in 380 volumes, which is a complete translation into modern Korean of the 1,763 volumes of this work which was originally written in Chinese.

2. Documentation

The growth of knowledge on Korean affairs is left virtually undeveloped, due

to the lack of any documentation service (including indexing and abstracting). An enormous increase in the number of Korean publications, including ephemeral materials, poses a dilemma for Korean specialists.

Bibliography, is, in a sense, one aspect of documentation. Special, technical, or company reports, house organs and unpublished research reports may be lost to all but one or two persons or libraries. Without documentation, including indexing, recorded observations appearing in such materials are merely scattered items of little use, which get buried in the great mass of literature like needles in a haystack.

Keenly felt is the need for bibliographies and readers' guides to English-language articles on Korea. Unnoticed is the existence of prolific and copious writings on Korea in the English language. Due to the increasing trade between Korea and this country, information on Korea in English is acutely needed more than ever. The more than 600,000 Korean-Americans in this country create complex political problems in the Korean homeland. Numerous Korean-American associations' organs and tabloids appear in increasing numbers every year. Because of the comparatively isolated position of Korean-Americans from Korea proper, their announcements, declarations, statements, and reports critical of politics in Korea appear practically every day. Concerted investigation of these matters along with accounts of their cultural isolation in this country would serve as indispensable resources for the study of Korea today, as do the Japanese records on pre-1945 Korean publications abroad, which have proved to be useful now.

3. Bibliography

The eminent former Librarian of Congress, Luther Evans, eloquently stated, "Without bibliography the records of civilization would be an uncharted chaos of miscellaneous contributions to knowledge, unorganized and inapplicable to human needs." A library without bibliographic control of its resources is unthinkable. Annotated and critical bibliography is the pilot that guides ships toward an unknown shore.

One great need is a comprehensive bibliography of works on North Korea and North Korean publications. Along with an index to North Korean periodical articles, such a bibliography would provide an epochal service to students interested in the contemporary affairs of Korea.

4. Librarianship

The nature and effective use of library resources largely depends on the intellectual ability of the librarians who service them. Frequently I hear more praise for the accomplishments of librarians than for the merits of the library collections. The librarian plays an essential part in the enhancement of library resources and needs.

He or she should be familiar with the various branches of research on Korea, and should be equipped with mental and intellectual soundness in comprehending the complexity of Korean problems and the diversity of materials resulting

from the political division of Korea. A personal interest in the various subjects of Korean studies and in the duties of librarianship needs to be augmented in order to keep up with the pace of Korean studies. A rewarding task and the inescapable responsibility of the librarian is to serve a diverse public, including intellectuals, scholars, and students, in helping them find and make effective use of Korean materials.

5. Users and conclusion

Conspicuously missing is, among other things, a widespread scholarly interest in Korean culture and philology. The reason must be found in part in the very nature of Korean cultural forms and content; however, it may also be traced to the scholarly disciplines and preferences among our contemporaries. Past scholarship eloquently endorses the fact that library resources and needs were inadequate for serious research on Korea.

As evidenced during a period of dire paucity in library resources, the mid-18th century saw the emergence of the Sirhakup'a (Korean Philologists; literally, scholars of practical learning); the dawn of the twentieth century created two giants on the Korean cultural ethos, Dr. James Scarth Gale and Homer Bezaleel Hulbert; and the Japanese period produced learned philologists, like Ayukai Fusanoshin (author of Zakko), and the encyclopedic bibliographer Maema Kyosaku (author of Kosen sappu).

Are we not beckoned to emulate them?