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Special Reports

Nelson Chou

Boksoon Hahn

Key Paik Yang

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SPECIAL REPORTS

I. China Revisited

After being absent from the Chinese Mainland for 35 years, the often dreamed-of homecoming finally became true. Through the Exchange Program between Jilin and Rutgers Universities, I was able to spend a month and a half in China during July and August 1983.

For the first three weeks, I stayed in Changchun, Jilin, as a guest lecturer of the Jilin University Library. The curriculum was designed to cover most of the aspects of academic librarianship. Originally, the audience was supposed to be the staff of the Jilin University Library. Later, however, the audience was expanded to include the staff of other libraries, both academic and public, in the Changchun area, and also the teachers of library schools of the nation who happened to be in Changchun for a national conference of library school teachers.

I spent the first two days in Changchun in visiting "brother" libraries (i.e. Northeastern Normal University Library, Jilin Medical University Library, Changchun College of Geology Library, and the Provincial Library of Jilin). I learned a great deal of the current state of the libraries from these visits. My feelings were quite mixed. First of all, there seemed to be an increased awareness of the importance of the library and its services by the administration, the library staff, and, especially, the library users. The Central Government in Beijing has begun to treat library development as one of the national priority items. Some of the administrators of universities showed great enthusiasm in improving library services. While these developments are all encouraging, the working conditions in libraries are usually unpleasant and some of the library policies undesirable. The following observations are just some examples:

1. The manual process of master-card making and card reproduction: The catalogers have to use a stencil pen to write on a piece (roughly, 3" x 5") of stencil paper as the original, and then reproduce each card by hand by a mimeographic process.
2. The shipping of printed materials: The library staff have to carry the cartons of printed materials upstairs, or downstairs, (sometimes, several flights) to the often crowded processing rooms.
3. The accommodations in the reading rooms and the time schedule: The accommodations and facilities of the reading rooms are usually inadequate and uncomfortable. Normally, these reading rooms are open only 6 hours a day, except Sunday, to the users.
4. Closed stacks: The stacks are sometimes scattered, and their arrangements inappropriate. They are usually closed to the ordinary users.

5. The lack, or delayed supply of up-to-date foreign language materials: Due to the fact that the acquisitions of foreign language materials is centralized in Beijing, timeliness in acquiring up-to-date foreign language materials is almost impossible. Hence, cancellations of orders are abundant and tardiness in distribution of the fortunately acquired materials to the proper users is a common phenomenon.
6. Lack of subject access: Most of the libraries do not provide subject access to the users.
7. Last, but not the least, the personnel policies: Most of the library staff are reassigned from or rejected by the other departments, or institutions. The library has no power to either select its own staff, or reject any of the people assigned to it. Consequently, a lack of self-respect and a lack of a sense of professionalism among the library staff are common problems.

During the following two and a half weeks at Jilin University, I conducted 7 seminars on the following subjects: (1) Collection building; (2) Bibliographic organization; (3) Serials control; (4) Information services; (5) Library architecture and equipments; (6) Library education; (7) The current state of the Jilin University Library and its future development. I also gave five lectures: (1) Library and Community in the United States; (2) University Libraries in the United States; (3) Scientific Management of University and College Libraries; (4) Automation in Research Libraries; (5) Present Services and Future Trends of University Libraries. I developed my lectures around the basic concept of "service." Judging from the reactions from the audience, up-to-date foreign expertise (in librarianship) is very much needed in China for the modernization of their libraries.

After my stay at Jilin University, I was able (thanks to the generosity of Jilin University) to travel to Beijing, Sian, Changsha, my hometown Zisi, and Shanghai. Although at each place my visit was short, yet I did see most of the places and people I wanted to see. I am grateful to the well-planned guide service. Obviously, China has gone through great changes, both physically and culturally. Construction was going on in all of the big cities. People were looking ahead instead of just taking care of the present. They also showed tremendous energy. The one thing that remains unchanged is the warmth of the Chinese people toward foreign guests, especially overseas Chinese.

(Nelson Chou)

II. Korean Romanization

Confusion arising from the use of several different romanization systems, including the McCune-Reischauer and that of the Ministry of Education, has led the Korean Government to consider seriously the desirability of agreeing upon the use of single system. The Government has finally decided to adopt the McCune-Reischauer system, one of the best known phonetic approaches to the romanization of Korean, in the hope of preventing further confusion.

The distinctive feature of the McCune-Reischauer system is that in general words are spelled as they are pronounced, rather than as they are spelled in Hangul (the Korean phonetic script). Under the McCune-Reischauer system, all the consonants are transcribed "K," "T," "P," and "CH" (ㄱ ㅋ ㆁ) when they are initial sounds. Under the Ministry of Education system, they are transcribed "G," "D," "B," and "J." (ㄱ ㄷ ㅂ). For example Kyongju (Korea) and Gyeongju (Korea) represent the same place. It is true that some foreigners residing in Korea do not support the McCune-Reischauer system; but many persons in foreign countries, including librarians, use the McCune-Reischauer system to transcribe Korean personal and geographical names.

Adapted from The Korea Herald,
November 26, 1982.

(Boksoon Hahn)

III. Yijo sillok (이조실록), Korean language edition

It has been reported that The Academy of Social Sciences of North Korea has recently completed a seven-year project to translate into the Korean language and to publish the Yi dynasty (1392 - 1910), annals Yijo sillok. Issued in 380 volumes, this is reported to be a complete translation of the original 1,763-volume work which was written in Chinese. The Library of Congress is making efforts to secure a copy of this translation but has not yet succeeded.

(Key P. Yang)