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What's New in Technical Processing

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In the spring of 1985, the Oriental Library at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) began a project to convert manual serials records online with the ORION system (UCLA Online Information System). A series of tasks such as preparing bibliographical records in MARC format, keying, coding, and straightening out the library's holdings had taken place. This online conversion work provided me with a good opportunity to review and evaluate the entire collection of Japanese serials publications that the library was receiving at that time. As I was engaged in critical evaluation of serials subscriptions as well as serials received by gifts and exchanges, I found that the Eastern Consortium's recently published Japanese periodicals union list was a useful tool for making judgments on curtailing or adding subscriptions. When I completed the evaluation of our library's serials holdings, I felt impelled to compile a union list similar to that of the Eastern Consortium's for the West Coast, thinking that it would help my work as a bibliographer for Japanese materials as well.

I proceeded with the compilation of the Western States union list in this manner: first I asked the ORION System Office in the UCLA Library to produce the Oriental Library's serials list on floppy disks. After receiving the floppies, I deleted all Chinese and Korean titles, leaving only Japanese titles. In the Japanese entries I deleted all the fields except title information, frequency, place, publisher, and holdings. Then I changed each entry of the Japanese serials to a format similar to that found in the Eastern Consortium's list. At that time I also asked librarians at five major East Asian libraries on the West Coast, which included the University of British Columbia (UBC), University of California (UC) at Berkeley, the University of Hawaii, Hoover Institution, and the University of Washington for their library's serial holdings. I requested that each library provide me with their lists on floppy disks so that my time spent typing could be minimized or eliminated altogether.

The compilation of the union list was carried out by using WordPerfect software on an IBM PC. Mr. George Bing, a computer consultant for my project, and I had decided to use WordPerfect over other software like dBaseIII. The main reasons for choosing WordPerfect were: it could store a larger file; sorting and alphabetizing entries could be done easily, almost instantaneously; macros could be generated to change a portion of each entry easily and conveniently. Also, the length of each entry, especially for titles and publishers, could be as long as was required. It was not necessary, therefore, to limit the spacing for entries as would have been had we elected to use a data base program. In total, we found WordPerfect to be a very flexible and useful word processing program for generating a list of this magnitude.

On the completion of UCLA's list it became the fundamental data base. As I received a serials list from another library, I changed each entry to the format of the structure needed by the union list and then merged the list into UCLA's data base. The list from
needed by the union list and then merged the list into UCLA's data base. The list from the Washington, Hoover, and Hawaii libraries were matched and merged one by one without much difficulty. However, problems arose when I started to work with the lists from Berkeley and UBC. These two libraries hold the greatest number of titles, in part because they are depository libraries for Japanese government publications. These two lists contained not only current serials titles, but also ceased titles and monographic series. Moreover, holding information provided for some titles was difficult to ascertain. It took me an excessive amount of time just to distinguish between current and ceased titles, and between serials and monographic series. Frequent consultations about titles and holding information occurred between staff at these two libraries and myself. These were the areas with which the compiler most needed cooperation from the contributing libraries.

After all five lists were matched and merged, the tasks of proofreading along with adding see references were carried out. Considered in retrospect, it would have been wise to have another person besides myself proofread in order to minimize typographical errors in the end product. When these tasks were finally completed, I transferred the entire data file to an IBM 5550, a Japanese multistation word processor, in order to add the vernacular characters for each title. Japanese characters were typed in directly following the title entry below by creating spaces for it. It is worthwhile to mention here that the IBM 5550 computer used is not sold in the United States; therefore, in order to acquire parts such as printer ribbons and a file transfer diskette, I had to place orders directly to Japan. It was a rather frustrating experience to find the right dealer to supply these parts.

I had originally begun this project for my own purposes. However, when the Second Western Regional Japanese Library Conference was held at UC Berkeley in 1987, librarians decided to adopt the printing and distribution of the union list as a project of the Conference. Dr. Donald Shively of UC Berkeley wrote a proposal and received a grant on our behalf from the Japan-United States Friendship Commission. Dr. Shively put his efforts into the printing and distributing of the union list. I am grateful to Dr. Shively as well as to Dr. Eric J. Gangloff at the Japan-United States Friendship Commission for the financial support to enable us to make the union list available to East Asian libraries nationwide and overseas.

Japanese serials lists of the Eastern Consortium, Midwestern states, and, finally, Western states have come into existence. Now the time has become ripe to merge the three regional lists into a national union list of Japanese serials in North America. I hope we will undertake this project in the future.