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From the Chairperson

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FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

From May to July this year, CEAL has conducted a survey among its member libraries on the Pinyin and Wade-Giles switch question—a question that has been generated by the LC document "Pinyin: Possible Approaches for Cataloging and Automation" which was distributed at the CEAL Annual Meeting on April 3, 1990 in Chicago (a copy of this document is appended in this issue of the CEAL Bulletin.) To those libraries which have given their input to the survey, the Chair wishes to express his thankfulness. The following is a letter the Chair has sent to the Library of Congress which sums up the general opinion of the libraries which have responded.

In publishing this letter, the Chair wishes to encourage CEAL member libraries (especially those which have not responded to the CEAL survey) to respond also individually to the Library of Congress on this important issue, whether to further emphasize their support for the points expressed in the CEAL letter, to present a view that has not covered by the CEAL response, or to comment on any specific, detailed point or proposal in the LC document. The only request here is that if you do write to the Library of Congress individually, please remember to send a copy of your letter to CEAL. Thank you.

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July 20, 1990

Ms. Lucia J. Rather
Director for Cataloging
Collections Services
Library of Congress
Washington, D. C. 20540

Dear Ms. Rather:

I am writing, on behalf of the East Asian libraries whose names appear at the end of this letter, in response to the Library of Congress' proposal "Pinyin: Possible Approaches for Cataloging and Automation," copies of which were distributed at the CEAL Annual Meeting on April 3, 1990 in Chicago.

We appreciate LC's courtesy in consulting the East Asian library community on this very important question and that we are impressed by the thoughtful deliberation that you have given to the problem. We also applaud your consideration of the impact such a shift might have on the users. As the proposal makes clear, a shift from Wade-Giles to Pinyin for cataloging and automation has many ramifications, all of which are difficult to deal with given our lack of financial and human resources and our limited technological capability at the present time.
When the decision was made in 1981 to stay with the Wade-Giles system, we remember LC's admonition that the decision was final and that East Asian libraries should not ask for a change of policy. And we have not. The 1981 decision was made only after a careful and thorough review of all the issues involved, including those mentioned in the LC document distributed at the CEAL meeting. We find no new or compelling reason to overturn that decision at this time. Some maintain that since Chinese is now taught in most schools using Pinyin, libraries should therefore use Pinyin also, because students are unfamiliar with the Wade-Giles system. This seems a specious argument. East Asian libraries are research libraries, and the scholars who use them must by necessity know the Wade-Giles system, because such standard reference works as Hummel's *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, Goodrich and Fang's *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, Boorman and Howard's *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, and Klein and Clark's *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Communism*, and other older works on China, which still are regarded as classic in the field, all use it. All of the leading university presses—including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, California, Stanford, Oxford, and Cambridge—continue to publish monographs using Wade-Giles as well as Pinyin. And all of the most respected journals in Chinese studies—including the *Journal of Asian Studies* (published by the Association for Asian Studies), *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (University of London), and *Tong Pao* (Leiden and Paris)—continue to accept either romanization system. Even the Board on Geographical Names follows Wade-Giles in using "T'ai-pei (Taipei)" and not "Taipei," and "Kao-hsiung" and not "Gaoxiong". The point here is that no scholar of Chinese can function knowing only the Pinyin system; and it is unnecessary for East Asian libraries to switch to Pinyin when their primary clientele are comfortable using Wade-Giles. Furthermore, the liberal use at present of cross references from Pinyin to Wade-Giles in the authority file and the use of Pinyin added entries for titles, when such appear in the publication, should help those library users who are uninitiated in the Wade-Giles system. If additional assistance is needed, there is always a reference librarian ready to help.

Another important consideration is standards. Interlibrary communication cannot be effective without standards. In the case of Pinyin, there are no standards either in China or elsewhere regarding word division. Even if American libraries established their own standards in this regard, it would serve no useful long-term purpose unless those standards were also agreed to in China, because the vast majority of the Chinese publications we acquire come from China, and our ultimate aim should be some kind of linkage between American and Chinese databases or some form of records exchange. If Pinyin must be used to facilitate this, our first priority must then be the establishment of a set of standards that are satisfactory to both Chinese and American libraries. For us to adopt Pinyin unilaterally, in the absence of any agreed standards, would seem to be putting the cart before the horse.
Some claim that since Pinyin is the national system of romanization in the People’s Republic of China, we are obligated to use it also in the United States. Of course, there exist also the national romanization systems of Japan and Korea, neither of which is used in American libraries.

We believe the question of Pinyin vs. Wade-Giles for American libraries should be properly addressed, but we do not believe the solution is to make a wholesale shift from Wade-Giles to Pinyin. Rather, we suggest that libraries seek a solution in technology. You are probably aware that several years ago Karl Lo, formerly at the University of Washington Library and now at UC-San Diego Library, conducted a successful experiment in automatic conversion between the Pinyin and Wade-Giles systems. Karl has just developed a new version of the software for this purpose. If LC, RLIN, and/or OCLC can refine his experiment and introduce it into use, then we shall not have to tear down the foundation upon which our cataloging is based—as shifting from Wade-Giles to Pinyin would require—in order to meet the needs of those familiar only with one romanization system. Such a conversion system would also have wider applications far beyond library use.

The needs of American East Asian libraries are many. Retrospective conversion, the development of a capability for local systems to accept CJK vernacular scripts, and more adequate budgets for acquisitions and staff are the most pressing. In our view, they all demand higher priority than a change in the romanization system. We therefore urge the library of Congress to stay with the Wade-Giles system.

Thank you again for giving us the opportunity to comment on your proposal.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Thomas H. Lee
Chair, CEAL

Supporting East Asian libraries/collections:

Arizona State University*
Brown University
Center for Chinese Studies, UC-Berkeley
Cleveland Museum of Art
Cornell University
Harvard-Yenching Library
Hoover Institution
Indiana University*
New York Public Library
Ohio State University
Princeton University
Royal Ontario Museum
Spencer Art Reference Library (The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art)
U.S. Army Academy Library, West Point
University of British Columbia
University of California, Berkeley*
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, San Diego
University of California, Santa Barbara*
University of Hawaii*
University of Kansas
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota
University of North Carolina
University of Pittsburgh
University of Texas, Austin*
University of Toronto*
University of Washington, Seattle*
University of Wisconsin
Washington University
Yale University

*These libraries have also expressed their interest in considering the LC specific proposal of including an additional added title entry in Pinyin in bibliographic records while waiting for the development of a satisfactory automation solution for the Pinyin and Wade-Giles problem, provided a standard for Pinyin word division can be established.