Meetings and Conferences

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A library panel, entitled "At a Time Like This: Organizational Restructures at East Asian Libraries," was held at this year's Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies (WCAAS) which took place at the Claremont Colleges in California on October 21-22. The panel was organized and chaired by Ai-Hwa Wu of Arizona State University and convened in light of the organizational restructuring that occurred on a number of campuses in the United States in recent years. The restructuring was due to administrative responses to budgetary constraints and to new management philosophies for running businesses, e.g., Total Quality Management. The departures of some senior or head East Asian studies librarians also provided an apt opportunity for their libraries to reexamine and bring their East Asian collections into the mainstream of current library administrative establishments.

The panelists were:

Tom Havens, Director of the East Asian Library, the University of California at Berkeley;
Shizuko Radbill, Fine Arts/Humanities and Bibliographic Access Teams Librarian and Subject Specialist in Japanese of the University of Arizona Library;
Amy Tsiang, Head of Cataloging Division of the Richard C. Rudolph East Asian Library, the University of California at Los Angeles;
Phyllis Wang, East Asian Studies Librarian of the University of California at Davis;
Richard Wang, Chinese Studies Librarian of the University of California at San Diego;
and William Wong, East Asian Studies Librarian of the University of California at Irvine.

The panel was presented in a round table format with each of the six panelists giving his or her report first before the audience was invited for questions and answers and to join the discussion. With the helpful coordination in scheduling by Tom Havens, who was also the organizer of the 10th annual meeting of the East Asian Academic Librarians of California (EAALC) that took place in conjunction with WCAAS this year, the panel was able to attract the attendance of many EAALC librarians, in addition to those who came from other states, and enjoyed a good exchange of opinions and experiences.

Havens provided a brief background and description of the recent organizational change at the University of California at Berkeley's East Asian Library. The language divisions of many years were abolished for several reasons such as the retirement of some librarians, the arrival of newly hired staff, some personnel issues, and a greater standardization of technical services practices across language lines which was increasingly being demanded by
Radbill gave a report of the revolutionary organizational restructuring at the University of Arizona Library which has made a name for the institution among librarians in North America who are interested in library management and trends. The reorganization was an inside-out and downside-up kind that affected every layer and aspect of the library structure. The change took place in 1992, one year after the arrival of the new library dean. The traditional library departments were completely done away with and a team management concept and vision for a library of the future was installed. Some department heads became team leaders; some lost their administrative positions. Total Quality Management ideas by private business companies like IBM and Intel were borrowed and incorporated into the Library's restructuring. The scale and magnitude of the change was extensive and the process of doing so astonishing.

The East Asian studies librarians along with their colleagues and support staff in the general library were assigned to different teams responsible for the execution of various library services. They are no longer working in isolation with their East Asian studies clientele; rather, they have been given an opportunity to acquire new knowledge skills and to participate in providing services to faculty and students in other subject disciplines. As a result, Radbill's title has changed from Japanese Studies Library Specialist to Fine Arts/Humanities and Bibliographic Access Teams Librarian and Subject Specialist in Japanese. Library users are now referred to as customers; user services are now customer services. Library staff have been empowered to play a larger role in setting library goals and in decision-making processes. Time spent in team meetings and training has been tremendous and, at times, overwhelming. Performance evaluation issues have not yet been fully addressed and resolved for the staff.

Tsiang shared the organizational changes at her East Asian library. Her library has maintained an organizational structure by function since July 1990. Before that, the library had been switching back and forth between organization by language and by function. The reason for choosing the present structure by function was to "centralize [the library] operations in order to develop a better workflow and to achieve better work efficiency as well as to maintain performance standards as the Library changed to a fully automated environment." Some of the problems that occurred following the reorganization were resolved by better communication among the staff and with the administration. In the past few years, some branch libraries on campus were either dissolved or merged together; it would not be a surprise if the technical and access services of her East Asian library were to be removed and placed with those of the main library in the future.

She considered collection size, budget, and staffing as the influential factors in determining the organizational structure. Regardless of the type of structure, a strong leadership, consistency in policy and procedural implementation, and a capable staff with language expertise could do wonders. Whether organized by function or by language, coordinators
for functions are a must in the library to ensure a smooth and successful working mechanism. East Asian studies librarians nowadays need to become knowledgeable about what is available and accessible elsewhere and skillful in using technology to provide better services.

P. Wang called our attention to the undercurrents which have caused the recent change in the role of East Asian studies librarians. The proliferation of information through electronic means has brought numerous citations in East Asian languages into many on-line databases such as CAB Abstracts and Medline. Library users, who traditionally did not need to use East Asian collections and library services before, are now calling upon East Asian studies librarians for a quick translation of these citations and demanding the availability of these journals. Bibliographic sources and full-text databases in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (CJK) languages are increasing in number and widely becoming accessible through the Internet and on CD-ROMs. East Asian studies librarians need to "explore and navigate through this information maze" knowledgeably in order to serve our users effectively.

The technological support on most campuses and libraries is not adequate to meet our need of transmitting CJK vernacular text. Computer and systems people are not necessarily knowledgeable about the CJK languages or able to solve our special problems without our unflagging insistence. Our awareness and involvement in campuswide electronic affairs are critical. [Bob Felsing of the University of Oregon advocated a similar need for technological support at the WCAAS in Mexico City last year and again at the Committee on East Asian Libraries' preconference workshop this past spring.]

Cultural diversity or multiculturalism is a significant change in our campus environment of late. The number of students and other community members whose native languages are in the CJK group has increased. Most of them study in areas other than East Asian studies. They have been using the East Asian collections for both informational and recreational purposes. We are finding ourselves more and more being required to provide library tours and instruction or distributing handouts in CJK languages. We "need to go beyond the traditional physical and subject boundaries to carry out our responsibilities." A reassessment of our services and ways of doing business is due.

Wong, with the assistance of Abraham Yu, also of the University of California at Irvine, described the reorganization at their library. The library’s Organizational Review and Design Project, recognizing access and collection being equally important, has adopted a team-concept approach to provide services. Like Radbill, Wong belongs to more than one team; unlike her, he reports only to one Associate University Librarian. Sharing of leadership and empowerment of staff to provide quality services were the underpinning principles of the new structure at Irvine. The restructuring, however, was not as drastic as that experienced at the University of Arizona Library, even though both libraries had the same consultant, Maureen Sullivan.
R. Wang, in his modesty and as pressured by the time constraint of the panel, gave a very terse report of the organizational structure of his East Asian Library. The East Asian component is present in each library function although it may not be so in the traditional sense of establishment or arrangement. For example, reference service is rendered without a reference desk; the patrons' information needs are filtered through the circulation staff before they reach the East Asian studies librarians.

(Ai-Hwa Wu)

International Seminar on Information Technologies and Information Services (Shanghai: 20-24 October 1994)

The International Seminar on Information Technologies and Information Services was held in Shanghai, China on 20-24 October 1994. It was cosponsored by the Scientific and Technical Information Association of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Documentation and Information Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shanghai Documentation and Information Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the China International Book Trading Corporation. Approximately 200 librarians and information scientists attended the seminar, representing seventeen countries. The Seminar emphasized information technologies and their application to information services. A total of 130 papers, with topics on telecommunication networks, electronic publishing, multimedia technologies, library and information automation systems, were presented in three categories: general research, information technologies, and information services. Committee on East Asian Libraries members participating in the seminar included Hsiao-chiang Chen (Yale), Andrew Wang (OCLC), and Karen Wei (Illinois). Andrew presented a paper on "The Computer Network and the Human Network: an OCLC Experience" and Karen Wei presented a paper entitled "A Decade of East Asian Library Automation at Illinois: From RLIN CJK to OCLC CJK Plus." A two-volume proceedings was published.

(Karen T. Wei)

European Association of Japanese Resource Specialists Fifth Annual Conference (Bonn: 5-8 October 1994)

The fifth annual conference of the European Association of Japanese Resource Specialists (EAJRS) was held in Bonn, Germany at the Universitätsclub of Bonn University. The conference organizer was Prof. Dr. Peter Pantzer of the University. The Japan Foundation and the German government (through the initiative of Senator Gunther Klinge) provided financial support for this meeting.
Approximately fifty librarians, historians, museum curators, and Japanologists gathered for the conference, representing eleven countries: Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States.

The conference was opened by Dr. Heinrich Menkhaus, Director of the European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS) and special guest of this conference. Dr. Menkhaus gave a warm welcome and a short address about the history of EAJS over the past two decades. Dr. Matthijs Forrer of Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde and President of EAJRS also gave a heartfelt welcome.

On the first day, three papers were presented. First, Dr. Gordon Daniels (University of Sheffield, former chairman of EAJRS) reported on some English newspapers which were printed in Japan in the early Meiji era. Second, Mr. Takao Murayama (National Diet Library (NDL)) addressed "The Present State of Japan/MARC and Its Future Plan", namely, NDL's retrospective conversion project of all the bibliographic data on Japanese books. Finally, "German Companies' Needs for Japanese Business Information", was presented by Ms. Junko Baumermeister (IFO Institut, Germany).

On the second day, a special workshop was held with the title "On Sources of Ryukyuan History and Culture in Europe" in collaboration with Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien, Tokyo. The day was divided into three sessions. Session 1, "European Contacts with the Kingdom of Ryukyu from the 16th to 19th Century," included the following papers:

"The Kingdom of Ryukyu and Its Overseas Trade" by Prof. Kurayoshi Takara (Ryukyu University),

"Dutch Encounters with the Ryukyu Kingdom and Ryukyuan Collections in the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden" by Dr. Ken Vos (National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden),

"Knowledge and Sources on Ryukyu in Germany and Austria" by Prof. Peter Pantzer (Japanologisches Seminar der Universität Bonn), and

"France and the Ryukyu: Scholarly, Governmental and Missionary Approaches" by Dr. Patrick Beillevaire (Université de Paris).

After lunch, Session 2, entitled "Historical Sources from Libraries and Museums," was held. Four reports were presented:

"Materials on the Ryukyu Islands in St. Petersburg" by Dr. Alexander Kabanoff (St. Petersburg University),

"Ryukyuan Resources in Japan and Database Projects in Progress" by Prof. Manabu Yokoyama (Notre Dame Seishin University, Japan),
"A Preliminary Survey of Okinawan Material in Britain" by Ms. Yu-Ying Brown (Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library), and

"Contact through Collectibles: Scandinavia and the Ryukyu Islands" by Dr. Arne Rokkum (Oslo University).

After a short coffee break, Session 3 was held. The main theme was "Museum Collections of Ryukyuan Art." Three reports were given and discussed:

"Ryukyu Lacquer Ware in Europe: Focussing on the Hakue Technique" by Dr. Hirokazu Arakawa (Tokyo National Museum),

"On Ryukyu and Dyeing and Weaving Art: Focussing on the Collection at the Museum of Ethnology, Berlin) by Prof. Kyoko Shukumine (Okinawa Prefectural Art University), and

"Historical Contacts Between Europe and Ryukyu as Seen Through Museum Collections" by Dr. Josef Kreiner (Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien, Tokyo).

On October 7 we returned to general presentations. The titles of the papers and the names of their presenters are as follows:

"The History of the Japanese Book Collection at St. Petersburg University" by Dr. Maria Toropygina (Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg),

"Raiden Daigaku Nihongaku Kenkyujo Toshokan Seisuishi" by Dr. Paul Wijsman (Center for Japanese and Korean Studies, Leiden),

"Japanese Books Donated to the University of Louvain, 1924-26" by Dr. Noboru Koyama (Cambridge University Library),

"Japanese Collections of the Main Moscow Libraries: Social Sciences and Humanities" by Dr. Olga Moroshkina (Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow),

"Japanese Company Histories in LJST" by Mr. Robert Phillifent (Library of Japanese Science and Technology, Newcastle),

"Tokyo Calling: BBC Resources on Japanese Broadcasting" by Ms. Jane Robbins (University of Sheffield),

"The Yakushi Nyorai Project: a Japanese National Treasure, Presented by Means of Virtual Reality Technique" by Prof. Kageyu Noro (Waseda University, Tokyo),

"The Study and Research Material on Raicho Hiratsuka" by Ms. Hiroko Tomida (University of Sheffield), and
"Yanaihara Tadao Zenshu: a Resource for Historians of Showa Japan" by Ms. Susan Townsend (University of Sheffield).

On the last day there were two presentations concerning developments in library and information sciences in Japan. Prof. Hiromichi Hashizume (NACSIS, Tokyo) presented "NACSIS Electronic Library Service" and Mr. Yutaka Morihata (Nichibunken, Kyoto) talked about "Nichibunken's Collections and Computer System".

Aside from the programs mentioned above, the participants received a warm reception on the first day hosted by the Japanologisches Seminar der Universitat Bonn and on the evening of the third day a traditional German dinner was served at the renowned restaurant, Im Stiefel, next door to the Beethovenhaus (Beethoven's birthplace). Another cultural event was an excursion to Linz am Rhein. It was a boat trip to an old "Wein-Keller", where we tasted various kinds of German wine; it took place after the annual business meeting on the last day of the conference.

For communicating with other Japanese resource specialists, the EAJRS annual conference was as successful as the AAS/CEAL annual meeting. Moreover, because of the way the conference was organized, we could easily meet and talk with each other during lunch, coffee breaks, dinner, as well as on other nonsessional occasions. But, unfortunately, some scholars (especially the Okinawan specialists) were not interested in the general purpose of this meeting and came only to participate in the special workshop. Other EAJRS conference participants regretted that we did not have more opportunities to communicate with them. However, the special workshop was a remarkable event and I hope such programs will be planned again for future conferences.

I am very glad that EAJRS has been carrying out its mission so well. The annual conference this year gave us an opportunity to exchange information with our colleagues at other institutions and become stimulated by hearing about their work. The place and time of the next conference has not yet been decided, but the possibility of Vienna (probably in September 1995) was offered by the standing committee.

(Yasushi Yamaji)