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From the President

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

As this issue of JEAL is going to press, CEAL's Task Force on Pinyin Conversion has just begun its planning process. As the preeminent organization and representative of East Asian librarians and libraries, CEAL will take an active role in this far-reaching matter. It is also our wish to revitalize CEAL's long cooperative relationship with the Library of Congress (LC).

The last time LC consulted the East Asian library community about using the Pinyin system for Chinese romanization instead of Wade-Giles, there was much opposition from the field. Many people did not see the need for change. LC withdrew the proposal, stating that the decision would make future change difficult if not impossible. In hindsight, we may have missed the best opportunity to change to Pinyin. During the last decade or so, gradually Pinyin has become the predominant Chinese romanization system in North America, as well as in the world. Most laymen now know only the Pinyin version of the names of Chinese personalities, while more and more academics abandon Wade-Giles.

LC is now revisiting this issue, which was the hottest topic at this year's CEAL annual meeting. This time there was practically no one against Pinyin per se. However, there was much concern and many reservations. Most people would agree to the Pinyin switch if we could have a global change converting all current Wade-Giles MARC records to Pinyin at little cost. But we were told by the two main utilities that this is not possible. People voiced their concerns about the cost of changing to Pinyin, the inconvenience of split files, and priorities of expenditures. Is now the best time to make the change? "The future is longer than the past," but we are not sure of the shape of future--perhaps it will be a system or program that can deal with Pinyin and Wade-Giles seamlessly.

CEAL's Task Force will investigate this issue thoroughly and present its findings to the East Asian library community and LC. The most important thing is for the East Asian library community and LC to maintain a cordial, consultative relationship. Whatever LC does will have a major impact on the library community, and we can but hope that it will make its decisions wisely and deliberately, and take into consideration the opinions of their colleagues.

From 1954 to 1958 ALA's Committee on Far Eastern Materials, one of CEAL's predecessors, worked closely with LC to amend the *ALA Cataloging Rules for Author and Title Entries* and the *Rules for Descriptive Cataloging in the Library of Congress* to make them more applicable to East Asian publications. They also issued the *Manual of Romanization, Capitalization, Punctuation, and Word Division for Chinese, Japanese and Korean*. National standards were set after thorough deliberation between the two bodies, and to this day all benefit from those efforts. We look forward to a new chapter of fruitful cooperation with LC.

Tai-loi Ma
President, CEAL