6-1-1997

Books and Beyond: Acquisitions Trip 1996, Experiences and Observations

Yeen-mei Wu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol1997/iss112/5
BOOKS AND BEYOND:
ACQUISITIONS TRIP 1996, EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS*

Yeen-mei Wu
University of Washington

I combined attendance at the 1996 IFLA meeting with my acquisitions work last fall. After the IFLA conference ended, I traveled for five weeks to eight cities in China and to Kyoto, Japan.

During the IFLA meeting I took advantage of the book exhibitions for my acquisitions work. The database demonstrations were especially helpful for me in judging the usefulness and limitations of individual databases. As a result, I acquired on site the full-text retrieval database of the Fu nü yen chiu 婦女研究 produced by Fu yin pao kan she, People’s University 人民大學 復印報刊社. I also acquired many books on site, including a reprint of Liang yu hua pao 良友畫報, at bargain prices.

While I was in Beijing, I visited several local bookstores, including three which specialized in environment, population, and nationalities studies. My visits to those bookstores were prearranged with those publishers, and I was allowed to make free selections from all of their publications. Although I was not able to visit the Chinese Atlas Bookstore because of my time schedule, I had with me a list of my library’s map and atlas collection, and a UW student studying in Beijing at that time was able to pick up for me the items which I needed for the library. It was especially rewarding to visit and select books from these specialty bookstores.

The strong minority studies and minority language studies programs at the UW made it necessary for me to visit two cities in the autonomous regions: Hohhot of Inner Mongolia and Urumqi of Xinjiang. I was told that the best way to acquire books in Mongolian, Uighur, Sibo, and Kazakh is to visit the sites where those books are published, for they are very hard to get and also very expensive if found elsewhere. One Sibo language publisher in Urumqi told me that he only supplies his publications regularly to a small Sibo community in Xinjiang and to Japan where the Sibo language is still being studies. The scholars in Xinjiang University and the University of Inner Mongolia were especially helpful, accompanying me to their University presses and to the local bookstores for book selections. I was very dependent on their help in subject and language skills. What struck me the most was the development of advanced computer technology in the University of Inner Mongolia. The Department of Mongolian Studies has a computer room with eight work stations. They are in the process of developing software which can handle several minority languages. They are also working on a database of Meng-ku mi shih 蒙古秘史

The collating and editing of ancient texts 古籍整理 have been a top task since 1983, designated for a few universities for their work in the field. During this trip, I made a point of

*This paper was originally presented in Chicago on March 12, 1997, at the meeting of the Council of East Asian Libraries Chinese Materials Committee.
visiting the Chung-kuo ku chi yen chiu so 中國古籍研究所 (Ancient Chinese Text Research Institute) in every university I visited. The Institute at Sichuan University has been using a computer from the beginning of its project to compile the monumental work Ch' ian Sung wen 全宋文. I was told that they anticipate its eventual conversion to a database format for website linkage. The Institute at Beijing University is also considering conversion of the Ch' ian Sung shih 全宋詩 edition they produced to a database format in the near future. The institutes in other universities I visited–Xinjiang, Wuhan, Shandong, and Fudan Universities–were beginning to study the possibility of computer compilation. Professor Tsung Fu-cheng of Wuhan University has just finished the compilation of Hsun ku hui pien 訓詁彙編, manually. The task took him ten years, and the cards he prepared for the compilation filled an entire room. However, he and his staff are prepared to take advantage of computer technology for their next project. During my visit to his university, Professor Tung Chih-an of the Ancient Text Research Institute of Shandong University kindly donated to my library many books published by his Institute.

The School of Library and Information Science at Wuhan University is known as one of the leaders in the teaching of new technology. In September 1996, the School sponsored an international meeting entitled 1996 Hsing hsi tzu yun yu she hui fa chan kuo chi hsueh shu lun wen yen tao hui 信息資源社會 發展 國際學術論文研討會 (1996 International symposium on information resources and social development). I acquired three databases from Professor Chen Kuang-tso at Wuhan, one of the pioneers in teaching database concepts in his library school courses. I also acquired several databases produced by the Electronic Publishing Research Section of the Wuhan University Press 武漢大學 出版社, which may be the only university press in China which produces and publishes full-text retrieval databases.

I also made special efforts to collect books on the study of Chinese dialects, because of the strong demand for them at the University of Washington. I found it was very difficult to acquire them, for vendors are reluctant to display these publications due to low demand. Professor Chien Tseng-I of Shandong University, after learning my efforts and problems, generously donated to my library the entire series of studies of Shandong dialects 山東方言志叢書 of which she is the general editor.

Professor Wang Li of Shandong University has succeeded in producing a database of the beginning portion of the Ssu ku ch' ian shu 四庫全書. He is also working on databases of Chin ping mei 金瓶梅, Shih-san ching 十三經, and other texts. I had a chance to see a demonstration of the Chin ping mei database at his home in Jinan. Using this database, it is possible to search the text by selecting titles of the sections and chapters, but it is not a full-text retrieval database.

Kyoto University was the last stop of my trip. Its Research Institute of Humanities is famous for its classical Chinese studies. Professor Tetsuya Katsumura of the classical Chinese studies section of the Institute has produced many full-text retrieval databases of Chinese classical literature. We have been trying to establish some cooperation on database exchange services between our two universities. On this trip I was granted permission from Professor Katsumura to
use the website of the database of the *Bibliography of Oriental Studies* 東洋學文獻 類目, an annual publication compiled by the Institute. It is now online for Kyoto University campus use only.

In conclusion, I believe that on site acquisitions trips are an indispensable part of every Chinese studies librarian’s job. The benefits are numerous. On site visits not only enable the librarian to acquire materials which are otherwise unavailable on the open market, but they also provide opportunities to develop contacts with librarians and scholars in Chinese studies, to initiate possible cooperative arrangements with libraries and institutions in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong and to renew acquaintances with dealers and publishers. A librarian who regularly takes on site acquisition trips will gain valuable insights which invariably benefit her/his users.