In Memoriam: K.T. Wu

Chi Wang
IN MEMORIAM

K.T. WU

Kwang-Tsing Wu, head of the Chinese and Korean Section, Orientalia Division (now the Asian Division) of the Library of Congress from 1966-1975, died November 10, 2000 at the age of ninety-five. Born in Jiangxi Province, China, K.T. Wu graduated from the University of Nanking in 1927 and then came to the United States to pursue graduate studies as a Carnegie Fellow. He received a bachelor’s in library science from Columbia University in 1931 and a master’s in library science from the University of Michigan in 1932. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Library Science from the University of Chicago in 1944. After receiving his master’s degree, Wu returned to China from 1933 to 1938 to serve first as the Director of the Library of the Nanking Women’s College and then as the Head of the Editorial and Cataloging Department at the National Library of Peiping, now the National Library of China.

In 1938 K.T. Wu came to the U.S. to work at the Library of Congress, one of a group of Chinese scholars brought to the United States with the assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation by Dr. Arthur W. Hummel, chief of the Division of Chinese Literature of the Library of Congress. Wu joined the Library’s staff as a reference librarian and cataloger of Chinese books in the Orientalia Division. During his tenure at LC he also served as chief cataloger and as assistant head of the Chinese Section, and from 1966 until his retirement, as Head of the Chinese and Korean Section. He devised the Classification Scheme for Chinese Books (1945), the cataloging system used by the Library of Congress for Chinese books until 1957. Dr. Wu was instrumental in the development of the Library’s Chinese collection, which has become one of the largest and richest in the Western world. His trips to China while Head of the Chinese and Korean Section helped to improve relationships with book dealers and libraries and resulted in many fruitful additions of retrospective and current publications to the Library. K.T. Wu retired on June 30, 1975, after having served in the Library of Congress for over thirty-seven years. Following his retirement he was appointed Honorary Consultant on Chinese Bibliography to the Library of Congress for a three-year term.

A well-known Sinologist, with a special interest in the bibliographical history of China and the development of printing, K.T. Wu was also an authority on Chinese rare books and local histories. His doctoral dissertation, titled "Scholarship, Book Production, and Libraries in China (618-1644)" is still consulted, as are the important scholarly articles on early books, printing and libraries in China that he wrote throughout his career. For six decades K.T. Wu worked to promote the development of Chinese libraries in the U.S. He will be especially remembered for his dedication and for his kind, generous help to younger librarians.

K.T. Wu is survived by his widow, Amy Wu of Silver Spring, Maryland. A memorial service honoring him is being planned to coincide with the 2002 annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Washington, D.C.

(Chi Wang, Library of Congress)