Life Long Passion for Librarianship: A Tribute to Dr. Chi Wang on His Retirement

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It is a great honor for me to present a tribute to Dr. Chi Wang at this annual gathering of CEAL members. Dr. Wang, former head of the Chinese Section at Library of Congress (LC), worked in the field of librarianship for forty-eight years before retiring from LC in October 2004. He is a well respected colleague in the field of East Asian librarianship and has served generations of users who came to the Library of Congress to use its outstanding Chinese collection. It is impossible for me to spell out Dr. Wang's distinguished career in a few minutes. Thus, I will draw a quick sketch of his long career with a few highlights from his many accomplishments.

Dr. Wang began his career at LC in 1956 working on a microfilm project. In 1958, he became a cataloger in the newly established Far Eastern Languages Section where he was asked to head up an innovative project to use a photocomposing machine that the Library just purchased from Japan to produce catalog cards with CJK scripts, which put the practice of hand-copying CJK characters to cards to an end: quite a technological breakthrough at the time. Shortly after his appointment in the Far Eastern Languages Section, LC received funding from the National Science Foundation to strengthen its Asian collections in science and technology. Chi Wang, who had a college degree in agriculture from the University of Maryland, was recruited by the Science and Technology Division to supervise its Asian Science Unit. In that position, he helped the Library to develop a core collection of science and technology in CJK languages, which later became one of the most comprehensive such collections outside of Asia. He also compiled three important bibliographies in the 1960s: 1) *Chinese Scientific and Technical Serial Publications in the Collections of the Library of Congress*, 2) *Mainland China Organizations of Higher Learning in Science and Technology and their Publications: a Selected Guide*, and 3) *Nuclear Science in Mainland China*.

In 1967, Chi Wang moved to the Orientalia Division (later changed to the Asian Division) and served as Assistant Head of the Chinese and Korean Section. While purchasing publications directly from China was not possible at the time, he worked closely with the section Head Dr. K.T. Wu, a distinguished Chinese studies scholar/librarian, to strengthen contacts with vendors and exchange partners in Hong Kong and Taiwan to further develop the library's collection on modern China. In 1969, after seven years of studies by attending evening classes with a full time job in LC, he earned his doctoral degree in East Asian History from Georgetown University with minors in American Diplomacy and Soviet Foreign Policy. After receiving his Ph.D., Dr. Wang began his part-time teaching career at Georgetown University and has since taught courses and advised graduate students in International Relations and Chinese History and Diplomacy. In 1971, Dr. Wang was invited by the Vice-Chancellor of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to serve as the University Librarian. Granted two years' leave from LC, he led the CUHK Library in building a new library system and a physical building at the new campus in Shatin. He also introduced the use of Library of Congress classification schemes and AACR2 in Hong Kong and worked with Hong Kong Library Association in organizing many activities there. In 1975 when Dr. Wu retired, Chi Wang became the Head of the Chinese and Korean Section at the Library of Congress. During his tenure as the Assistant Head and Head of the Chinese and Korean Section, the Library of Congress's Chinese collection greatly expanded. In the late 1960s, it possessed about 350,000 volumes of Chinese materials. By 2004, this number had grown to nearly one million volumes. For many years, it has enjoyed the reputation of being one of the best Chinese collections outside of Asia.

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1 This essay is based on a short speech in honor of Chi Wang's retirement that the author gave during the Plenary Session of the 2005 CEAL Meetings on March 30 in Chicago. The author wishes to thank Laura Wong at the Library of Congress for providing invaluable information about Chi Wang's career and accomplishments.
Dr. Wang has a distinguished service record in our profession and made great contributions to promoting international exchange and cooperation. He chaired Chinese Materials Committee of CEAL from 1989 to 1995, and has been a supporter of CALA since its early days. He has also served on the ALA International Relations Roundtable. Shortly after President Nixon’s visit to Beijing in 1972, he was invited by the Chinese government to travel to Beijing to re-establish the exchange of publications between the Library of Congress and the National Library of Peking, followed by signing of a formal exchange agreement in 1979. He also facilitated the establishment of exchange agreements between LC and major academic libraries in China. Personnel exchanges were another important area where Dr. Wang made contributions. In 1979 he helped in arranging the first American librarians’ delegation to visit China, headed by William J. Welsh, Deputy Librarian of Congress. From the 1980s through 2001, Dr. Wang led six American delegations of East Asian librarians from the U.S. and Canada to visit China. He also helped to establish a librarian exchange program between the Library of Congress and Chinese libraries in 1982 with support from the Council on Library Resources. A number of current leaders in the field of librarianship in China were among the beneficiaries of this program. For many years, Chi Wang maintained close contacts with the China Society for Library Science. He helped in planning for the 1996 IFLA meeting that was held in Beijing. In 1992, the National Library of Peking (now National Library of China), presented him an award for his contributions in promoting international exchanges. Recently, he was named an advisor of the National Library of China, a very high honor.

Since his retirement from the Library of Congress Dr. Wang has remained active in the scholarly community. He serves as President of the U.S.-China Policy Foundation, a non-profit educational organization in Washington, D.C. The Foundation plans to support various activities through its Committee for U.S. Libraries and Museum Exchange. He will continue to teach at Georgetown University, and he has been invited to serve as an advisor to George Washington University’s East Asian Collection. Please join me in thanking Dr. Wang for his long and distinguished services to our profession and to the field of East Asian studies. We wish him well in pursuing his new interests in the future.