6-1-2006

McGill-Harvard-Yenching Library Joint Digitization Project: Ming-Qing Women's Writings

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BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Zheng, Meiqing Macy (2006) "McGill-Harvard-Yenching Library Joint Digitization Project: Ming-Qing Women's Writings," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2006 : No. 139 , Article 8.
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2006/iss139/8

MCGILL-HARVARD-YENCHING LIBRARY JOINT DIGITIZATION PROJECT:
MING-QING WOMEN'S WRITINGS

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Background of the Project

This project was initiated by Professor Grace Fong and Professor Robin Yates at McGill University, assisted by a technical team led by David McKnight, Digital Collections Director. Women's writing (especially in the Ming and Qing periods) is one of Professor Fong's several specialized research areas. Because most writings by women in pre-modern China have suffered from neglect, the lack of accessibility to many significant texts by women has made it difficult to carry out extensive and efficient research on women's history and culture. Therefore, Professors Fong and Yates decided to launch a digitization project to collect and preserve women's writings in electronic format, which could be accessed and used by all scholars in this field.

Professor Fong and Professor Yates contacted the Harvard-Yenching Library for co-operation on this project. Fortunately, they received great support from James Cheng, Director of the Harvard-Yenching Library, and it was agreed that a joint project be carried out for this purpose. Financially, they received generous support from the Drs. Richard Charles and Esther Yewpick Lee Charitable Foundation (Hong Kong), McGill University Library, Harvard-Yenching Institute, and private individuals. A digitization team for the project was established at McGill Library's Digital Collections Program in 2003. The materials for digitizing were selected from the Hart Collection and the Chinese Collection of the Harvard-Yenching Library, augmented by the online scholarly apparatus designed and implemented by the McGill University team.

Launch of the Website (http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing)

In the summer of 2005, the project was completed and the website became available for use. The McGill-Harvard-Yenching Library Ming-Qing Women's Writings Digitization Project aims to make accessible for scholarly research the valuable collection of writings by women of the Ming-Qing period in the holdings of the Harvard-Yenching Library.

Each of the titles in the database was also catalogued as an e-book, and the bibliographical records provide links to access these digitized items. Users can search or browse these titles the same way as they search other bibliographical records in McGill University Library's online catalogue.

Contents of the Database of Ming-Qing Women's Writings

This database contains digitally scanned images of ninety-four titles of writings by women that are in the holdings of the Harvard-Yenching Library. These digitized titles provide a significant chronological range of printings, mainly published during the Ming and Qing dynasties of China (a few were published in the early Republican period), from 1368 to 1923.

The database contains information on about 5,000 women poets and other writers. It includes more than 10,000 poems written by women, approximately 20,000 scanned images of original works, and other useful reference information.

Features of the database

The database provides several additional research tools. For example, there is a table for Chinese chronology covering 16 dynasties with a total of 580 reign titles for 3045 years (up to 1911). There is also a

table of the sexagenary cycle which covers 2681 years (up to 1911).   All the data used in the database was carefully checked and verified.

The database also provides contextual information such as information on more than 8000 related family members and friends, links between poets based on exchange of poems, primary sources related to the poets in bibliographical catalogues, and persons contributing comments, biographies, prefaces, and colophons for or about the women poets.

How to search the database

Ming-Qing Women's Writings database is an e-resource free of charge, and users do not need to register. There are two ways to search the database:

1) Log into the database at **http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/** and you will see this page:
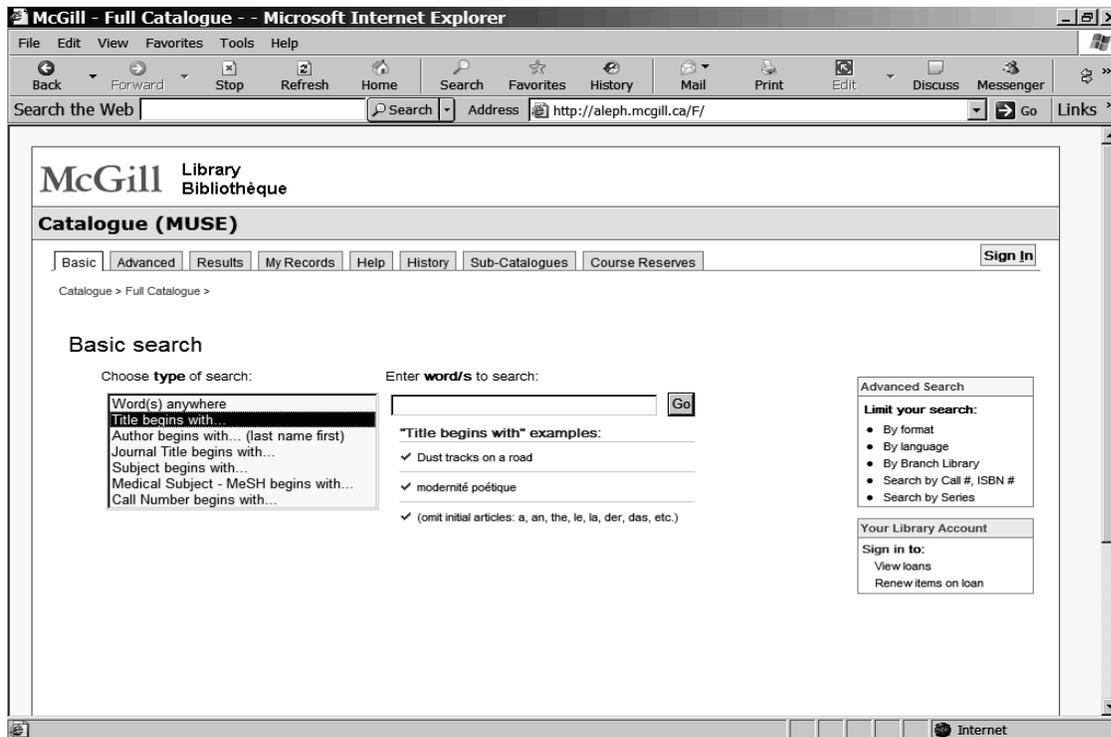

By clicking at "歡迎" or "Welcome" you will be able to access the database and start your search. This database can be searched in many methods such as:

- Browse or search by the title of a collection (e.g. Gu ji nü shi)
- Browse or search by the title of a work (e.g. Qin qing ge ci)
- Browse or search by the title of a poem (e.g. Ji wai)
- Browse or search by the author's name (e.g. Chai, Jingyi)
- Search poets/authors by year (e.g. 1644)
- Search poets/authors by time period (e.g. 1600-1700)
- Search poets/authors by reign title (e.g. Qianlong)

- Search poets/authors by geographical location (e.g. Hangzhou)
- Browse the index of personal names
- Browse the index of poem titles
- Browse the index of remarks on poetry
- Browse the index of biographies
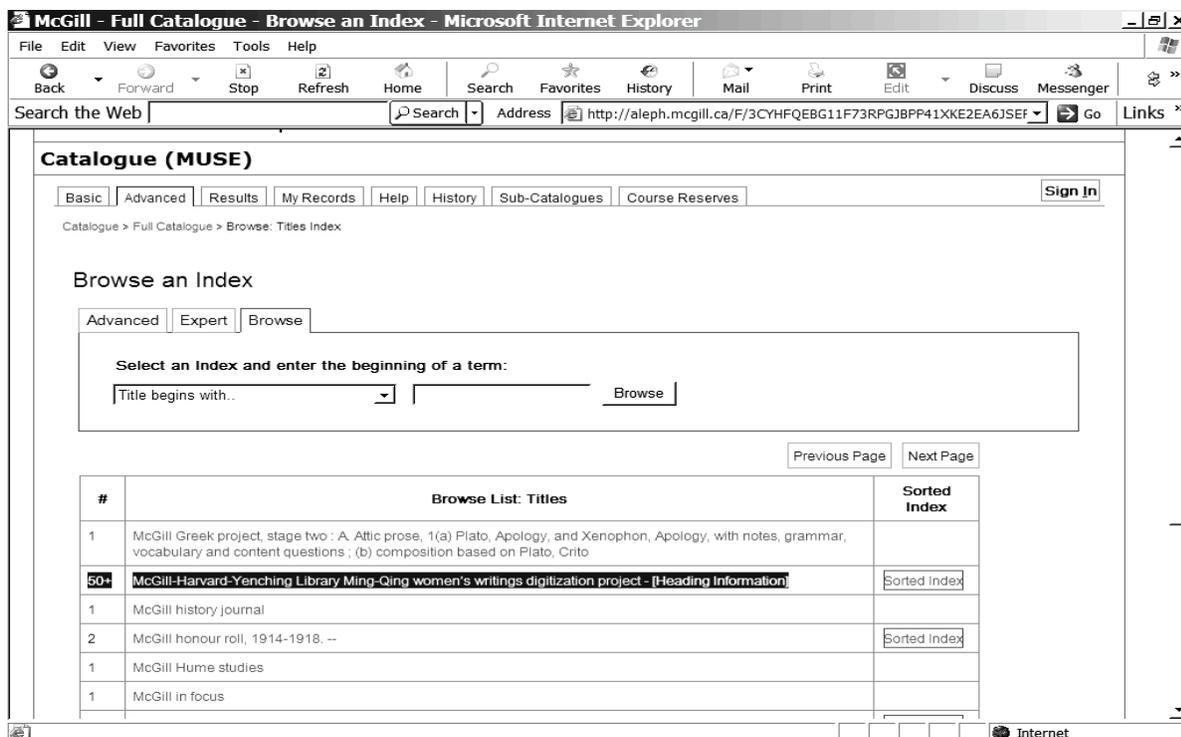- Browse the index of poetic forms or tune patterns

In addition to the above access points, a user can also perform a keyword search or compound search, and search by entering Chinese characters or Pinyin.

2) Log into the McGill University Library's online catalogue at **http://aleph.mcgill.ca/F/** .
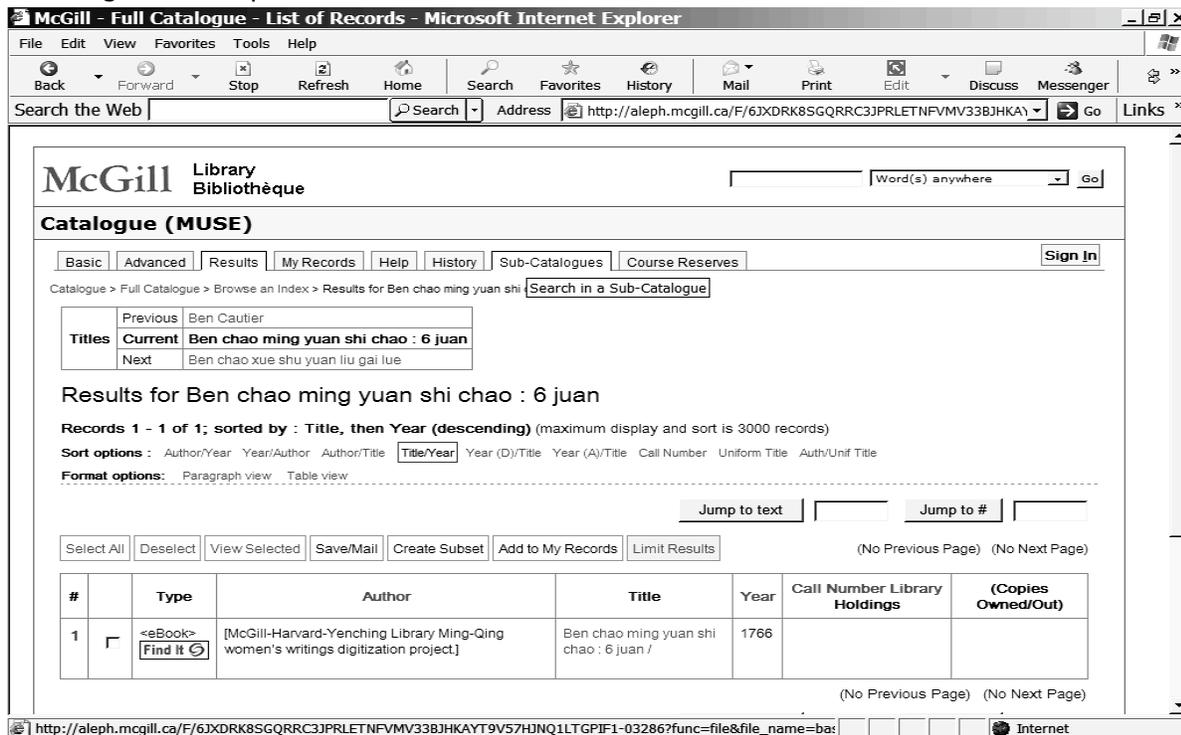

You can search either by title or by author. You can also search by entering the series title: ***McGill-Harvard-Yenching Library Ming-Qing women's writings digitization project***. If you search by the series title, the catalogue will display a list of all the 94 titles in the database and therefore you will be able to browse to see what titles are included in this database.

The illustration below shows the series title of the Ming-Qing database:

Following is an example of the record for "本朝名媛詩鈔：六卷":

By clicking at the button "Find it" , you will find the webpage for 本朝名媛詩鈔:

By clicking at "View digitized version", you will see the digitized text.

Your feedback is welcome

There is a link to Comments on the website. The McGill digitization team needs your feedback in order to help them improve this website. Filling out the brief questionnaire and providing any specific comments will be very valuable for further enhancement of the database.

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