



6-1-2006

Collection Evaluation of Chinese History Resources on the Ming and Qing Dynasties at the East Asian Collection, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Victoria Chu

Kefeng Qiu

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

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Chu, Victoria and Qiu, Kefeng (2006) "Collection Evaluation of Chinese History Resources on the Ming and Qing Dynasties at the East Asian Collection, University of Wisconsin, Madison," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2006 : No. 139 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2006/iss139/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of East Asian Libraries by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

**COLLECTION EVALUATION OF CHINESE HISTORY RESOURCES
ON THE MING AND QING DYNASTIES
AT THE EAST ASIAN COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, MADISON**

Victoria Chu
Kefeng Qiu

University of California, San Diego
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Introduction

This collection evaluation project¹ was a collaborative effort between an East Asian studies librarian, Victoria Chu, and a first year MLS student, Kefeng Qiu. Working together, they applied one of the many useful principles presented at the Luce Summer Institute that took place in the summer of 2004 at the University of Pittsburgh.

The three-week Institute titled “East Asian Library Management Program: China Focus” was well attended by early- as well as mid-career East Asian and Chinese studies librarians from North America. The intensive curriculum covered both current and traditional topics related to East Asian librarianship. Participants brought up challenges unique to East Asian librarianship, while instructors offered practical advice and pointers through lectures and active discussions with participants. Since the program had a China focus, there was a near-exclusive concentration on Chinese resources and collections.

Library school education in North America rarely considers area studies in general, and little attention, if any, is paid to East Asian librarianship. This intensive program was excellent especially for East Asian librarians specializing in Chinese studies. Chu (hereafter I) attended this program and benefited much from it. Of the many things taught, learned, and discussed, this article reports what I did with one in particular: a project evaluating parts of a library collection using a main reference bibliographic tool to crosscheck collection holdings. The work used was the 2000 edition of Endymion Wilkinson’s *Chinese History: A Manual*.

The East Asian Collection, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The East Asian Collection at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (hereafter UW-Madison) supports the mission of the University to create, integrate, transfer, and apply knowledge. It has the primary purpose to support instructional and research needs associated with the study of East Asia at UW-Madison. The East Asian Collection is closely linked to the Center for East Asian Studies, the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, and other departments and programs offering courses on or related to East Asia. Major users of the East Asian Collection include undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members. The collection serves as an important resource for the University of Wisconsin system and it is widely used by visiting students, researchers, and the local community.

The core of the East Asian Collection is housed in Memorial Library, with complementary collections in the agriculture, art, business, geography, law and music libraries. Memorial Library is the main library for resources in the social sciences and the humanities, including history. Materials in East Asian languages are housed on the fourth floor of Memorial Library, while Western language materials are shelved with the general collection in Memorial Library and in other specialized libraries.

¹ This project was completed during the Spring and Summer of 2005 when Victoria Chu held the position of East Asian studies librarian at Memorial Library, the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and when Kefeng Qiu was completing the first year of graduate studies at the same university’s School of Library and Information Studies.

Chinese History Resources at UW-Madison

The selection policy for Chinese history materials is based on the learning, teaching, and research needs of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members in the Department of History, the Center for East Asian Studies, the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, and related disciplines. As the East Asian studies librarian, I was responsible for the building and management of the Chinese history collection. In general, materials acquired included publications in Chinese, English, Japanese, and a few European languages. A majority of the history resources originated in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, the United States, and Europe. All types and formats were included, while the temporal coverage started with the beginning of recorded history of China to the present.

The Collection Evaluation Project

The main goal of the collection evaluation project was to obtain a clearer and more complete profile of the local Chinese history collection, especially resources on the Ming (1368-1644) and the Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, two of the most significant dynasties in Chinese history. Chinese historians have long considered historical studies about these two dynasties essential. While resources on Chinese history at UW-Madison's East Asian Collection had been considered relatively strong for a medium-sized library collection, only a systematic evaluation would reveal its real strength.

Many libraries carry out evaluation projects periodically to assess collection strengths and weaknesses. For example, Vickie Fu Doll, Chinese studies librarian at the University of Kansas' East Asian Library, stated in her 1999 article that evaluation projects are conducted every three to five years there (Doll 1999, 21). Their collection holdings are checked against major bibliographies in specialized areas. A number of bibliographies on Chinese studies have been used for checking collection holdings. The few commonly used sources include the third edition of *An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Chinese Reference Works* compiled by Ssu-yü Teng and Knight Biggerstaff in 1971, Harriet Zurndorfer's 1995 work *China Bibliography: A Research Guide to Reference Works About China Past and Present*, and Endymion Wilkinson's *Chinese History: A Manual*. The last, and the most recent, has become a popular tool for checking holdings of East Asian collections in North America since the publication of its first edition in 1998. At the Luce Summer Institute, it was suggested that this would be a good tool with which to begin. The edition used for this project at Memorial Library was the second, or 2000, edition.

Methodology

There are very few specialized studies on the evaluation and assessment of Chinese collections in North American academic libraries. Kefeng Qiu and I aimed to conduct a brief analysis of Memorial Library's collection on Chinese history of the Ming and Qing periods, including both Chinese and Western language resources.²

We chose to use the list-checking method where lists of titles are compared against the library's holdings. Together we surveyed Chinese historical resources in Memorial Library on the Ming and Qing by crosschecking with primary sources and research tools listed in Wilkinson's work (hereafter, *Manual*). This work is very reputable, relatively new, and it is one of the few frequently used for list-checking. The Chinese history collection was studied by finding the percentage of the titles listed in the *Manual* that are owned by Memorial Library. Both the local OPAC, or MadCat, and the cataloging module of the Voyager Integrated Library Management System were used in searching for titles. In certain cases, the shelf-list had to be consulted to confirm whether items corresponding to the entries actually were held by Memorial Library.

² Due to time and human resources constraints, only resources in print format were covered in this assessment. Other formats such as electronic resources and microforms are not within the scope of this project.

Findings

Findings are presented in three tables. (See Tables 1-3, Appendix). The left numerical column of each table provides the numbers of titles listed in the *Manual* under various sections listed, followed by the middle numerical column providing numbers of holdings in Memorial Library. The right numerical column of each table presents percentages of holdings at Memorial Library compared to the *Manual*. For a medium-sized East Asian collection, we chose a figure of 75% for identifying areas of strength. Memorial Library's holdings of 75% or more include:

Resources on the Ming

- Textual sources in areas of geography, local gazetteers, travel, edicts and memorials, agriculture, technology and science
- Archaeology and inscriptions, including resources on imperial tombs and illustrations
- Guides to resources, and chronology research tools

Resources on the Qing

- Official compendia in the form of encyclopedias and collectanea
- Philological writings of individuals
- Newspaper references
- Guides and research tools including documents and readers

We chose another figure of 40% for the purpose of identifying weak areas.³ Memorial Library's holdings of 40% or less include the following areas:

General Guides

- Chinese and Japanese guides

Resources on the Ming

- Textual sources in the area of foreign works
- Central archives
- Biographies of secondary sources

Resources on the Qing

- Central archives
- Some published archival documents, including Yishiguan microfilms, economic documents, biographical materials, and documents related to Taiwan
- Official historical works
- Official compendia in the form of geographical works, laws and regulations
- Writings of individuals on agriculture
- Documents of merchants and landlords, including Huizhou and Shanxi merchants, land deeds and tenancy contracts, and stone inscriptions of socioeconomic interest
- Newspapers in the form of guanbao

From Findings

Our findings pointed towards the strengths and weaknesses of the local Chinese history collection. By crosschecking with titles listed in the *Manual*, we conducted preliminary quantitative and qualitative analyses of available Chinese history resources in Memorial Library. This list-checking method provided a starting point for further investigation. As Peggy Johnson, associate university librarian at the University of

³ Some of the titles covered in the *Manual* are not very appropriate for small- or medium-sized East Asian collections in North America to collect. Many titles are too voluminous, expensive, and available only during a brief period of time or not available for acquisitions at all. So although some percentage figures of Memorial Library's holdings are very low, they do not necessarily indicate that those areas are weak or lacking.

Minnesota, noted in her 2004 work, these findings should allow the selector to gain more knowledge of the collection and of the discipline's literature (Johnson 2004, 280).

The East Asian Collection at Memorial Library did not have many titles indicated in the *Manual*, especially Qing resources. We were a little surprised by these findings since UW-Madison had relatively strong history and political science programs with faculty members specializing in the modern and period including the late Qing and the Republican Era of China. We conjectured that as the East Asian Collection at Memorial Library was started in the latter half of the twentieth century, it had a later start compared to some other already established East Asian Collections in North America. Also, as mentioned in a previous footnote, some titles were plainly not suitable or were nearly impossible to acquire. We also found titles in both Chinese and Western languages pertinent to the various areas but not listed in the *Manual*. These were mostly monographic, secondary or tertiary sources.

The areas of weaknesses need to be examined carefully and remedied if appropriate and possible. The collection budget might need to be re-directed to cover some retrospective collection development to fill significant gaps. Additional funding would be helpful. Johnson also suggested that lists could be used as purchase guides to identify missing titles that should be acquired (Johnson 2004, 280).

Conclusion

In implementing one of the many practical suggestions from the Luce Summer Institute, this collection evaluation project provided a snapshot of the existing Chinese history collection at UW-Madison's Memorial Library. This should set a good reference baseline for future collection development of Chinese history resources there.

For both librarian and library school student, this project enhanced our professional skills in collection development in general and increased our familiarization with Chinese historical resources in particular. This project proved to be especially beneficial for Qiu, who was working towards a Master of Library Science degree. In utilizing different collection development tools, and working closely with the East Asian studies librarian, she gained practical experience on and insight into collection development, especially of Chinese studies resources.

Project findings indicate quantitatively and qualitatively the strengths and weaknesses of the local Chinese history collection. Upon initial analysis, the Ming and Qing resources may seem quite weak according to the percentages calculated. In this regard, it must be noted that lists in the *Manual* reflect the opinions and/or biases of Wilkinson, the compiler. In introducing main primary sources and research tools for all periods of Chinese history, Wilkinson has included all resources deemed worthy and which he believes academic libraries should have in order to satisfy most if not all teaching and research needs. In reality, certain limitations exist. Based on library size and mission, as well as the nature of affiliated academic programs, not all libraries need or are able to collect or can afford all these resources.

Resources should meet the needs of the user community. It would be interesting to find out whether there is a consistent correlation between usage statistics and various areas of strengths and/or weaknesses of the Chinese history resources. Perhaps some East Asian or Chinese studies librarian would be interested in investigating further with reference to his/her local collection.

References

Doll, Vickie Fu. "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: The East Asian Library Collection at the University of Kansas." *Journal of East Asian Libraries* 119 (October 1999): 11-26.

Johnson, Peggy. *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management*. Chicago : American Library Association, 2004.

Teng, Ssu-yü and Knight Biggerstaff, comps. *An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Chinese Reference Works*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1971.

Wilkinson, Endymion. *Chinese History : A Manual*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2000.

Zurndorfer, Harriet T. *China Bibliography : A Research Guide to Reference Works about China Past and Present*. Leiden, Neth.: E.J. Brill, 1995.

Appendix

Table 1: General Guides to Primary Resources or Individual Historical Periods

Resources	# of Titles in Manual	# of Holdings in Memorial
Western Guides	31	21
Chinese and Japanese Guides	14	4

Table 2: Resources on the Ming

Resources	# of Titles in Manual	# of Holdings in Memorial
Main Historical Works	16	11
Other Textual Sources	83	46
Geography	3	3
Local Gazetteers	4	3
Travel	6	5
Laws and Institutions	8	5
Edicts and Memorials	2	2
Bieji 别集	2	1
Biji 笔记	19	12
Agriculture	1	1
Merchants	15	7
Technology and Science	3	3
Foreign Works	20	4
Central Archives	3	0
Archaeology and Inscriptions	2	2
The Imperial Tombs	1	1
Illustrations	2	2
Guides and Research Tools	33	18
Guides to Resources	5	4
Research Tools	28	14
Biographies	6	4
Official Titles and Officeholders	1	0
Geography	2	1
Chronology	1	1
Bibliographies and Catalogs of Primary Sources	8	4
Bibliographies of Secondary Sources	3	1
Societies and Journals	7	3

Table 3: Resources on the Qing

Resources	# of Titles in Manual	# of Holdings in Memorial
Central Archives	81	3
Catalogs and Guides to Ming-Qing Archives	4	2
Qing Documents in the Yishiguan 一史馆	72	1
Archives of the central organs of the imperial government 辅弼皇帝的中枢机构的档案	8	1
Archives of the departments of the central government and of their dependent yamen 分掌国政各部院衙门及其所属机构的档案	45	0
Archives of departments dealing with the imperial lineage and palace administration 掌管皇族及宫廷事务机构的档案	5	0
Archives of local government organs, of individuals and of princely establishments 地方机关及个人和王府档案	13	0
Maps and Plans 舆图汇集	1	0
Qing Central Archives Held in Taipei	2	0
Qing Central Archives Held in Japan	1	0
Shenjing 盛京(Shenyang) Archives	2	0
Published Archival Documents	127	47
Yishiguan (Microfilms)	23	1
General Publications	18	10
Economic Documents	22	6
Biographical Materials	2	0
Documents Relating to Taiwan	6	2
Documents in Manchu	13	6
Documents on Foreign Relations and Foreigners	43	22
Provincial and County Archives	6	3
Official Historical Works	27	6
Official Compendia	94	39
Geographical Works	10	4
Laws and Regulations	25	5
Army and Uprisings	49	24
Edicts and Memorials	8	4
Encyclopedias and Collectanea	2	2
Writings of Individuals	50	28
Agriculture	5	1
Bieji 别集	3	2
Biji 笔记	17	9
Philology	2	2
Qing Fiction	22	13
Documents of Merchants and Landlords	61	19
Introduction	5	3
Huizhou 徽州 Merchants	13	3
Shanxi 山西 Merchants	2	0
Ming-Qing Route Books 路程书 and Manuals	15	7
Land Deeds and Tenancy Contracts	15	3
Stone Inscriptions of Socioeconomic Interest	11	3

Table 3: Resources on the Qing (continued)

Resources		# of Titles in Manual	# of Holdings in Memorial
Newspapers		78	54
	Guanbao 官报	3	1
	Chinese Periodicals, 1815-94	12	5
	Chinese Periodicals, 1895-1911	21	10
	References	7	6
	Foreign-Language China-Coast Periodicals	10	5
Archaeology		5	3
Guides and Research Tools		39	27
	Guides to Primary Sources	7	4
	Documents	4	4
	Readers	2	2
	Research Tools	26	17

% Holdings
67.7
28.6

% Holdings
68.8
55.4
100.0
75.0
83.3
62.5
100.0
50.0
63.2
100.0
46.7
100.0
20.0
0.0
100.0
100.0
100.0
54.5
80.0
50.0
66.7
0.0
50.0
100.0
50.0
33.3
42.9

--

% Holdings
3.7
50.0
1.4
12.5
0.0
0.0
0.0
0.0
0.0
0.0
0.0
37.0
4.3
55.6
27.3
0.0
33.3
46.2
51.2
50.0
22.2
41.5
40.0
20.0
49.0
50.0
100.0
56.0
20.0
66.7
52.9
100.0
59.1
31.1
60.0
23.1
0.0
46.7
20.0
27.3

--

% Holdings
69.2
33.3
41.7
47.6
85.7
50.0
60.0
69.2
57.1
100.0
100.0
65.4