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# Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**图书馆英语: 图书馆日常用语***Tu shu guan ying yu: Tu shu guan ri chang yong yu* [Library English : Commonly Used Expressions in the Library] Pan Huadong 潘華棟 and Chen Zhaoneng 陳兆能, chief editors. 澳門: 澳門大學圖書館; 上海: 上海交通大學圖書館, 2006 版.

I admire the courage and determination of the team of editors who wrote this helpful textbook for library staff in Chinese regions. To write a conversational textbook from Chinese to English is certainly a great challenge. Sometimes, there is no word in English to express the right meaning because of different verbal expressions from different cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, the editors have written simple and correct sentences for library staff readers. In addition, with both chief editors' long and rich library experience, they have done an excellent job of organizing the content by library function. As a result, library staff can easily find the precise English sentence they need. In the field of writing English textbooks from Chinese, this book stands out as a practical English conversational handbook for library staff in Chinese regions.

The book also provides many details of library functions in a coherent conversational style, instead of a long text style. For example, the conversation in "Circulation and Reading Services" in part 3, covers from entering the library, rules and regulations of a library, using library materials and facilities, checking-out items, and more. Sometimes the same contents are repeated in another part of book where it is appropriate.

In addition, the book also introduces the Western library system to library staff in Chinese regions. For example, "Classification and Cataloging" and "Library Catalogue" in parts 5 and 6 are well presented. Although including the library card catalog may seem out of date, it is still a foundation of Western library cataloging. In addition, most Western libraries use the Library of Congress Classification or Dewey Decimal Classification and Library of Congress Subject Headings that most library staff in Chinese regions are not familiar with. Understanding how the card catalogue is filed and other sorts of classification helps library staff have a concept of Western library organization. Also, the pictures of U.S. libraries give library staff readers a visual idea of U.S. libraries. As a result, the library staff in Chinese regions will be able to better understand the English speakers' library backgrounds and their questions.

Furthermore, the editors empathize with the intimidating situation, for a non-English speaker, of speaking English on the phone. In part 11, "English on the phone," the editors have written many good examples for the reader to follow. In addition, part 16, "Self Evaluation," is very helpful to the readers who want to re-examine how well they have learned.

Despite its strengths, there are some minor flaws of this book. For one, some sentences need to be in a more relaxed and flowing style. For example, most English speakers would say "What are the library hours?" instead of "Do you know the library hours?"; "Where is the copier?" instead of "Which way is the photocopy room?"; "Do you have any English newspapers and magazines?" instead of "Are there many English newspapers and magazines in your library?"; "Excuse me. How do you get to the library?" instead of "Excuse me. I wonder if you can tell me how to get to the library?"; "Can I use the materials in the reading room?" instead of "May I come in and use the materials in the reading room?" I feel that most native Chinese get caught in the game of Chinese politeness in speaking English. We tend to use too many polite words in a sentence; as a result, the sentence becomes too wordy and it defeats the purpose of clarity in conversation.

In the same vein, the included CD is helpful to readers for pronouncing English, but the voice of the speaker is uninteresting. Again, a relaxed and natural flowing tone would be more effective.

Finally, we all know that a conversational textbook grows quickly out of date because of the changes in daily life. For example, people say "please email me." "Email" is not only a noun, but it also has become a verb. The conversational words and phrases that library users speak will reflect changes to language in

general. Thus, a newer and revised version of this textbook will be necessary if the editors want to continue using it for library staff.

Overall, this easy to read textbook or handbook is useful and convenient to have, especially for library staff in Chinese regions who are learning English and need to serve English speakers for their daily jobs.

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