



2-1-2009

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Suzuki, Tadanobu; Liu, Ying; Garside, Chelsea; Bedi, Shailoo; and Hill, Lisa (2009) "To Separate or Not Separate?: Two Surveys on Asian Collections," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2009 : No. 147 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2009/iss147/4>

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TO SEPARATE OR NOT SEPARATE?: TWO SURVEYS ON ASIAN COLLECTIONS

1. The University of Victoria User Survey 2. North American Asian Studies Librarian Survey

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1. General Introduction

Should Asian language materials at academic libraries in North America be separated from Western language materials as a matter of course? Is the establishment of an Asian library always the better option for a growing collection of Asian materials, or should they stay interfiled as part of general collections?

The numbers of Asian language materials (Chinese/Japanese/Korean [CJK], as well as other languages) held in academic libraries increase as new universities with Asian-studies focuses are established, or as older institutions begin to adopt Asian studies programs. Researchers and instructors in these younger institutions, who might have earned graduate degrees from large, well-established research universities, often expect to see an “Asian library” in their new academic environment. The practice of establishing an Asian library, either completely independent from the main library, or a specialized section within the main library, was indeed common among older and larger universities in North America (cf. Chiu 2001). However, such practice is not necessarily an automatic, universal option. While some universities and colleges continue to create new Asian libraries, in recent years others have made conscious decisions not to separate Asian materials from their general collections, and some have even decided to dismantle their once-established Asian libraries and re-integrate the Asian materials into the general collections (Kamada 2002).

The University of Victoria (UVic) is one of those relatively new universities holding a rapidly growing number of Asian language library materials. We are currently facing the question of whether or not to separate Asian materials from the general collection to form a separate Asian collection area.

East Asian librarians were the target group for Chiu’s 2001 survey. In order to make a strategic and evidence-based decision on this matter, UVic Libraries decided to survey not only the East Asian librarians in North America, but also the campus user community to identify the perceived need for a separate Asian collection. Following are the results and analysis of these two surveys, which were conducted in the spring of 2007. Part I focuses on the results and learning that emerged from the UVic User Survey. Part II, the results from the North American Asian Studies Librarian Survey, is expected to appear in a future issue of the *Journal of East Asian Librarians* (JEAL).

* Tadanobu (Tad) Suzuki was Information Services Librarian, responsible for Pacific & Asian Studies collections at the McPherson (Main) Library at the University of Victoria until May 2007. He is currently on long-term disability leave from the position. He was the chief investigator of this survey project. Ying Liu is the Information Services Librarian currently responsible for Pacific and Asian Studies.

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2. The University and the Library: the Background of the Surveys

UVic is a publicly funded university with approximately 18,000 FTE students, located in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Since its establishment in 1963, UVic's main library, the McPherson Library, has collected materials in Chinese and Japanese languages. The pace of Asian material collection, however, was relatively slow until the 1990's (Gonnami 1990: 26); this is partly due to the fact that the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies was not fully established until 1987, and the university's relative proximity to and dependence on large, well-established Asian collections, such as those at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver and at the University of Washington in Seattle, which eased faculty demand for committed resources for Asian collection development at home. It was only in the mid-1990's that UVic Libraries started to acquire a number of large donations of Asian materials, and more active collection practices were implemented to purchase original materials in Asian languages. The McPherson Library currently holds approximately 8,700 CJK titles, which are interfiled with other language materials in the general collections using the LC Classification System. The size of the general print collection currently stands at approximately 1.9 million volumes. Today, the Department of Pacific & Asian Studies offers masters' degrees in Chinese, Japanese, Southeast Asian (Indonesian-emphasis), and Pacific studies. Recent doctoral degrees in Chinese and Japanese studies were awarded in the departments of linguistics, history, art history, and fine arts. In addition to the use of the collection by students, faculty and staff, the McPherson Library is open to the community at large for browsing (with an annual fee for borrowing).

Casual demands for separating CJK materials from the general "Western" language collection were raised from time to time by individual faculty and student users over the years, and public users occasionally ask at the Reference Desk for directions to the "Asian book section." It was in a Pacific and Asian Studies departmental meeting in 2006, with Tad Suzuki attending, that some Japanese and Chinese studies faculty members formally raised the question as to "when" they were going to have an Asian library. The obvious assumption was that, with our rapidly growing CJK collections, it was timely for the library to have the CJK materials separated from the general collection. However, in the same meeting, a cautious opinion was also voiced among some faculty, which raised the concern that separating materials on the same subjects based on language may seriously limit research activities for multi-lingual users. Additionally, there were also concerns regarding "Pacific" and Southeast Asian (Indonesian) materials. Since those materials, in our collection at least, are mostly written in the Roman alphabet, it is not entirely clear where they should be filed.

There are certain advantages and disadvantages to establishing language-based collections in younger institutions such as ours. In many older, well-established universities, Asian libraries often appear to have originated as departmental libraries administered by the academic department, rather than by the university's library system. This practice probably worked well, since the Asian library staff needed language expertise that may not have been readily available in the conventional library labour pool. Language training can be time-intensive and in some cases it is very difficult to develop proficiency.

However, in recent years, even in well-established institutions, the merits of separating Asian language materials from the Western materials have been questioned, especially with respect to space-saving and to providing ease of access to all materials on the same subject (Gonnami 1994: 1). Asian language skills for library staff are still an issue, but this is mostly an administrative issue on staffing and collection strategies, and it does not immediately influence any decision, one way or the other, about separating the collection along language lines (cf. Kamada 2002).

3. The Two Surveys and Methods

The need for a research study to address the questions discussed above led to the creation of two surveys: (1) a survey of UVic students, faculty, and staff about their preference for the location of Asian materials and the reasons for their preference, and (2) a survey of Asian studies librarians across Canada and the United States regarding the merits and demerits of physical separation of Asian collections from the general collection.

Principal investigator Suzuki, in consultation with Hill and Bedi of the Assessment Resource Office, designed 17 questions for the UVic survey and 28 questions for the Asian Studies Librarian survey (See Appendix for the UVic User Survey). The two surveys were hosted in an online format using the SurveyMonkey platform in February and March 2007. The UVic faculty and student survey was advertised campus-wide by mass e-mail through academic departments and campus posters, as well as on the main page of the library website, and was conducted for three weeks. The survey for Asian studies librarians was widely advertised via the CEAL listserv and was open for three weeks. The response data were inspected for irregularities, cleaned, and analyzed in SPSS. Analyses included frequencies run on each question, as well as variables cross-tabulated against one another. Cross-tabs were supplemented in some cases with Chi-square tests (Pearson's) to assess if there were any differences between expected and observed results (indicating potential relationships).

Acceptable overall numbers of responses were received (n=70 for the librarian survey and n=168 for the UVic user survey), considering the population sizes for each sample; Asian studies librarians in North America likely do not number more than 500, and the overall population at UVic is approximately 20,000, including faculty, staff, and FTE students, although the percentage of the population interested in the Asian studies library collection is likely small (e.g. <10%). These figures indicate that the response rates were likely higher for the librarian sample than for the UVic sample. However, precise response rates are impossible to calculate given the open-invitation nature of these two surveys.

4. The UVic User Survey - Results and Discussion

With the large number of questions asked in the survey, it is best to break down the results by question. Each section addresses either a particular issue or question within the survey, and some questions are grouped into sections where applicable.

4.1 Respondents' Status at UVic

The majority of respondents (69%) were students at the university. Within the student group, the largest sub-group of respondents was the third or fourth year students (36%). Another 17% of respondents were faculty members, while 10% were staff.

Question: "What is your status at UVic?"

Status		Status	
1st or 2nd year undergraduate	31 (18%)	Faculty	28 (17%)
3rd or 4th year undergraduate	61 (36%)	Staff	16 (10%)
Master's student	13 (8%)	No response*	8 (5%)
Doctoral student	11 (7%)		
Total	168 (100%)		

Table 1. Respondents' status at UVic.

*Note: "No response" category includes respondents who chose "other" as their status at UVic.

4.2 Respondents' Faculty Affiliation at UVic

UVic is organized into nine academic “faculties” and two “divisions” (Continuing Studies and Medical Sciences). Not surprisingly, the largest group of respondents identified with the Faculty of Humanities (38%), which includes the Pacific and Asian Studies, History, and Linguistics Departments. These departments offer the majority of Asia-related courses at UVic. However, there were still surprisingly large numbers of responses from students in the Faculty of Social Sciences (16%) and the Faculty of Science (16%). The number representing Continuing Studies, which includes ESL programs, was very low (4%), indicating that the Asian collection is not as important for ESL students, likely because they are primarily at UVic to study English, not to read books in their native languages. This confirmed for us that ESL students are not the primary users of our Asian collection. Overall, the faculty breakdown shows that most university faculties were represented in the survey, although in varying numbers.

Question: “Which faculty are you associated with?”

Faculty	Selected	Faculty	Selected
Humanities	64 (38%)	Business	5 (3%)
Education	4 (2%)	Engineering	7 (4%)
Social Sciences	27 (16%)	Law	2 (1%)
Human & Social Development	4 (2%)	Continuing Studies / ESL	7 (4%)
Science	27 (16%)	No response*	8 (5%)
Fine Arts	13 (8%)		
Total			168 (100%)

Table 2. Respondents' Faculty affiliation.

*Note: No response category includes respondents who chose “other” as their status at UVic.

4.3 Respondents' Status in the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

Only 19% of the respondents identified themselves as Pacific and Asian Studies students (undergraduate major or minor, or master’s degree candidates). It should be noted that nearly a quarter of respondents (22%) did not answer this question. This may due to the fact that undergraduate students are not required to declare their major until they enter their third year of study at UVic. Note also that students from any department or faculty may take Asian language training as part of their electives, regardless of their degree program.

Question: “What is your status in Pacific and Asian Studies?”

Status	Selected
Major	22 (13%)
Minor	6 (4%)
M.A.	4 (2%)
Not in Pacific and Asian Studies	99 (59%)
No response	37 (22%)
Total	168 (100%)

Table 3. Respondents' status in Pacific and Asian Studies.

Approximately half (51%) of the respondents had taken at least one course on Asia, regardless of their affiliation with the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies. It should be noted that courses related to Asia are offered in a wide range of departments and faculties, including the History, History in Art, Linguistics, Political Science, Economics, and Business Departments.

Question: "Have you ever taken a course on Asia?"

Yes	No	No response	Total
79 (65%)	42 (34%)	1 (1%)	168 (100%)

Table 4. Whether or not respondent has taken a course on Asia.

* Note: This question includes only student respondents

4.4 Respondents' Asian Language Reading Skills

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents read or are learning to read an Asian language, showing a large representation of Asian-language readers among these respondents.

Question: "Do you read or are you learning to read an Asian language?"

Yes	No	No response	Total
122 (73%)	38 (23%)	8 (5%)	168 (100%)

Table 5. Asian language reading skills.

4.5 Uses of Asian Language Library Materials

To assess the relative importance of potential uses of the Asian collection, respondents were asked to choose all the reasons that they used Asian materials. Some reasons appeared to be more important to respondents than others: 51% used Asian materials for research needs, 49% used Asian materials for recreation/personal reading, 33% used Asian materials for course assignments, 26% used Asian materials to practice reading skills, and 21% indicated that never used Asian materials. Thus, the most important uses appeared to be research needs followed by reading for recreational/personal purposes.

Question: "Why do you use Asian collection materials?"

Use	Selected	Not Selected	Total
Course assignments	56 (33%)	112 (67%)	168 (100%)
Research needs	86 (51%)	82 (49%)	168 (100%)
Recreational / personal reading	82 (49%)	86 (51%)	168 (100%)
Practicing reading skills	43 (26%)	125 (74%)	168 (100%)
Never use Asian materials	35 (21%)	133 (79%)	168 (100%)

Table 6. Respondents' uses of Asian collection materials.

4.6 Methods of Finding Asian Materials

Respondents were asked how they find Asian materials in the library, in order to assess the use of methods by which Asian materials might be located. The results were interesting: 48% used the online catalogue system, 46% browsed the stacks/shelves, 27% used the recommendations of instructors/friends and 17% used course reading assignments to guide the process of finding Asian materials. A total of 23% said they do not read Asian language materials, which is consistent with the percentage of respondents who said that they do not read an Asian language in Table 5, and roughly matches with the percentage of those who indicated "never use Asian materials" (21%) in Table 6.

Question: "Currently, how do you find Asian collection materials?"

Method	Selected	Not Selected	Total
Browsing the stacks	78 (46%)	90 (54%)	168 (100%)
Online catalogue search	81 (48%)	87 (52%)	168 (100%)
Recommendations from instructors / friends	46 (27%)	122 (73%)	168 (100%)
Course reading assignments	28 (17%)	140 (83%)	168 (100%)
Doesn't read Asian language materials	38 (23%)	130 (77%)	168 (100%)

Table 7. Methods of finding Asian materials in the library.

4.7 “The Big Question”: Preferences for Physical Separation of the Asian Collection from the General Collection

The majority of respondents (58%) prefer that the Asian collection be physically separated from the general collection, while only 18% said that they prefer that Asian materials remain inter-shelved with the general collection. Another 18% indicated that they had no preference as to whether the collection was separated or not. Further analyses relating respondents’ preferences regarding the separation of the Asian collections to other variables are presented and discussed in section 4.11 below.

Question: “Would you prefer to have the Asian collection physically separated from the general collection?”

Yes	No	No preference	No response	Total
98 (58%)	31 (18%)	31 (18%)	8 (5%)	168 (100%)

Table 8. Preferences for physical separation of the Asian collection from the general collection.

4.8 Reasons for Separating Asian Materials from the General Collection

After responding “yes” or “no” to the question of separating the Asian collection, those who answered “yes” (98 respondents) were asked why they would prefer the Asian collection separated. A clear majority (86%) responded that it would be easier to browse CJK materials if they were all located in one place. Fewer respondents (39%) chose the statement that it would be easier to find *English materials* on Asian topics if they were not buried among Asian language books. This may be related to the fact that the majority of respondents said that they read an Asian language, suggesting that they are not as concerned with finding English materials on Asian topics.

A smaller percentage (35%) of respondents also indicated that they found it difficult to locate CJK materials through the online catalogue. This indicates that the majority of respondents are generally able to locate Asian materials with the online catalogue, although some still find this difficult. In the 1990s, access to Asian materials was identified as an important barrier: “the patrons ... may not be able to find Romanized entries or to interpret them correctly” due to “the library catalog’s inability to provide useful access to these materials” (Dunkle 1993: 216). In recent years, the development of technology and the application of Unicode in library cataloguing have greatly improved this situation.

A small percentage (18%) of respondents indicated that they thought the Asian collection should be separated on the rationale that other universities have separate Asian collections, indicating that it is less of an image issue than a true “difficulty of locating materials” issue.

Question: “If you would prefer the Asian collection separated from the general collection, please explain why.”

Reasoning	Selected	Not Selected	Total
Easy to browse Asian materials	84 (86%)	14 (14%)	98 (100%)
Easy to browse English materials	38 (39%)	60 (61%)	98 (100%)
Difficult to use Online catalogue	34 (35%)	64 (65%)	98 (100%)
Other universities have separate Asian libraries / collections	18 (18%)	80 (82%)	98 (100%)

Table 9. Reasons supporting the separation of Asian materials from the general collection.

*Note: This table includes only those who indicated that they would prefer to see the Asian Collection separated from the general collection.

4.9 Reasons for Keeping Asian Materials Inter-shelved with the General Collection

In contrast to the ‘yes to separation’ group, the ‘no to separation’ group responded strongly to all the reasons which were offered to rationalize why they did not want the collection separated. The strongest response was to the statement “Because separating English and CJK does not help my research”; 61% of “no” respondents chose this statement. This indicates those respondents are worried that they will not be able to find items as quickly and effectively if the collections are separated. Over half the respondents (55%) also felt that because language criteria can be set in the

online catalogue it is unnecessary to separate the collection, thus indicating that they are content with the online catalogue's current ability to search for Asian language materials. A large percentage of respondents (58%) also felt that library users were accustomed to the current collection configuration, and that changing this would have a negative impact on the users.

Interestingly, four of the seven open-ended comments in this section were submitted by university staff, while no comments from staff were left in the open-ended question of the 'yes to separation' section. This suggests that some staff may feel strongly (negatively) about the separation of the collection. Further investigation showed that of the 16 staff who responded to the survey, 3 (18%) said yes to separating, 7 (44%) said no to separating, 4 (25%) had no preference and 2 (13%) did not respond. This shows that a larger number of staff would prefer the collection not be separated, and the comments show that within that group, there are some strong feelings regarding the separation of the collection. In comparison, a total of 28 faculty participated in the survey; 15 (54%) said they would prefer the collection be separated, 7 (25%) said no to separating the collection and 6 (21%) had no preference. This is basically the reverse of the staff figures, with a majority of faculty (54%) being in favour of the separation. However, it is important to note that the definition of staff is fairly broad and as such, it is difficult to define a "staff" population, and in this case, to determine the number of staff responses from which to base these analyses on.

Question: "If you would prefer that the Asian collection remain integrated with the general collection, please explain why."

Reasoning	Selected	Not Selected	Total
Separating English and CJK materials does not help my research	19 (61%)	12 (39%)	31 (100%)
Online catalogue allows language criteria for the search	17 (55%)	14 (45%)	31 (100%)
Accustomed to current collection configuration	18 (58%)	13 (42%)	31 (100%)

Table 10. Reasons for keeping Asian materials intershelved.

*Note: This table includes only respondents who indicated that they would not prefer to see the Asian Collection separated from the general collection.

4.10 Opinions Regarding the Ease of Finding Asian Materials

Results were fairly evenly split among the respondents in their opinions regarding the ease of locating Asian materials in the stacks: 35% said that they found locating materials easy, while 33% said they did not find locating the materials easy. Another 27% answered that they did not know or did not use Asian materials. Similar results were returned for the question "How easy it is to locate Asian materials by searching the online catalogue?" Of the respondents, 36% said it was easy, while 33% said it was not easy. As we have observed that the "ease of browsing" was the overwhelming reason for separating Asian materials from the general materials among the "pro-separation" respondents (See Tables 8 and 9), over one half of those who use Asian materials answered that it is currently "easy" to find materials in the stacks.

Question: "In general, do you find it easy to locate the materials you need on Asian studies topics in the library stacks/shelves or in the online catalogue?"

Response	Yes	No	Don't know / Don't use	No response	Total
Easy to find Asian materials in the stacks	58 (35%)	55 (33%)	46 (27%)	9 (5%)	168 (100%)
Easy to find Asian materials through the online catalogue	61 (36%)	55 (33%)	42 (25%)	10 (6%)	168 (100%)

Table 11. Opinions regarding the ease of finding Asian materials.

When the data denoting the ease of locating Asian materials were divided by respondents' ability to read an Asian language, the data indicated that approximately one of every two Asian-language readers could not easily locate Asian materials either through the online catalogue or in the stacks. These data are a flag for a large group of users who are not being sufficiently well-served by the current catalogue and collection configuration. They also indicate that the online catalogue is not providing adequate searching power, which is another important point to note.

Do you read or are you learning to read an Asian language?	Do you find it easy to locate the Asian material you need in the stacks?				Reading Category Total
	Yes	No	Don't know / Don't use	No response	
Yes	47 (39%)	52 (43%)	18 (15%)	5 (4%)	122 (100%)
No	7 (18%)	3 (8%)	24 (63%)	4 (11%)	38 (100%)
No response	4 (50%)	0 (0%)	4 (50%)	0 (0%)	8 (100%)
Total	58 (35%)	55 (33%)	46 (27%)	9 (5%)	168 (100%)

Table 12. Analysis of respondents' ability to read an Asian language related to their feelings regarding the ease of locating Asian materials in the stacks.

Do you read or are you learning to read an Asian language?	Do you find it easy to locate the Asian material you need by searching the online catalogue?				Total
	Yes	No	Don't know / Don't use	No response	
Yes	49 (40%)	53 (43%)	15 (12%)	5 (4%)	122 (100%)
No	8 (21%)	2 (5%)	24 (63%)	4 (11%)	38 (100%)
No response	4 (50%)	0 (0%)	3 (38%)	1 (13%)	8 (100%)
Total	61 (36%)	55 (33%)	42 (25%)	10 (6%)	168 (100%)

Table 13. Analysis of respondents' ability to read an Asian language related to their feelings regarding the ease of locating Asian materials by searching the online catalogue.

4.11 Analysis of the Preference of Separating the Asian Collection in Relation to Other Variables

Table 12 presents respondents' preference for separating Asian materials in relation to their UVic status. For example, of all the respondents (n=168), there were 31 first and second year undergraduate" students (n=31, 18%, cf. Table 1), and 20 out of those 31 students indicated they would prefer that Asian materials be separate from the general collection; that is, 65% of the first and second year student respondents.

The results were nearly identical between the two undergraduate groups: 65% of the first and second year undergraduates and 67% of the third and fourth year undergraduate group preferred the Asian collection to be separated from the general collection, while 13% of first and second year undergraduates and 13% of third and fourth year undergraduates preferred that the Asian collection not be separated. The clear majority of undergraduate students preferred that the Asian collection be separated from the general collection.¹

In Table 12, the "yes to separation" responses were somewhat fewer among PhD students and faculty members, each registering 55% and 54% respectively, and the "no to separation" responses in these groups are higher in percentage, 18% and 25%, compared to 13% in the undergraduate groups.

¹ This conclusion was supported by a Chi-square test run on the cross-tabbed variables, which indicated that it can be said with 97% confidence that there is a relationship between the respondents' status at UVic and their preference for the separation of the Asian collection (Chi-square: 9.444, df=3, p=0.024).

Respondents' Status at UVic	"Prefer to have Asian collection separated?"				Status Category Total
	Yes	No	No preference	No response	
1 st & 2 nd Year Undergrads	20 (65%)	4 (13%)	4 (13%)	3 (1%)	31 (100%)
3 rd & 4 th Year Undergrads	40 (67%)	8 (13%)	11 (18%)	2 (3%)	61 (100%)
Masters students	9 (69%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)
PhD students	6 (55%)	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)	11 (100%)
Faculty members	15 (54%)	7 (25%)	6 (21%)	0 (0%)	28 (100%)
Staff	3 (19%)	7 (44%)	4 (25%)	2 (13%)	16 (100%)
No response	5 (63%)	1 (13%)	1 (13%)	1 (13%)	8 (100%)
Total	98 (58%)	31 (18%)	31 (18%)	8 (5%)	168 (100%)

Table 12. Analysis of the preference of separating Asian materials in relation to the respondents' status at UVic.

Table 13 presents respondents' preference for separating the Asian collection categorized by their reasons for using Asian library materials. For example, among those individuals who indicated their purpose for using Asian materials was for "course assignments" (56 individuals), 37 respondents, or 66%, prefer a separate Asian collection.

Although the majority of respondents in every category prefer the Asian collection be separated, the support for the separation is higher among the "recreational/personal use" respondents (78%) and the "practicing reading skills" respondents (74%). Although the "no to separation" responses are significantly lower across the board, the "no to separation" among the "research needs" group was relatively higher (17%). Those whose purpose was "research needs" also scored moderately highly (64%) in supporting the separation. Thus, this result appears to be moderately supporting Chiu's assertions that "the 'browsability' of a collection is very important for researchers" (Chiu 2001:4). Interestingly, the highest levels of support for separating the collection came from respondents who indicated that they were using the Asian collection for recreations/personal reading (78% favoured the separation of Asian materials from the general collection) and for practicing reading skills (74% favoured the separation of the collection).

Purposes of the Use	"Prefer to have Asian collection separated?"				Purpose Category Total
	Yes	No	No preference	No response	
Course assignments	37 (66%)	10 (18%)	9 (16%)	0 (0%)	56 (100%)
Use for research needs	55 (64%)	16 (17%)	15 (17%)	0 (0%)	86 (100%)
Recreational / personal	64 (78%)	9 (11%)	9 (11%)	0 (0%)	82 (100%)
Practicing reading skills	32 (74%)	6 (14%)	5 (12%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)

Table 13. Analysis of the preference for separating Asian materials from the general collection in relation to the reasons for using Asian language materials.

4.12 Opinions Regarding the Separation of Materials in Other Languages

The statement that "there should also be separate language sections for other languages, just to be fair," was supported by 43% of the respondents, while 31% said that they neither agreed nor disagreed, while 16% said they disagreed with the statement, indicating that they believed that a separate Asian collection does not necessarily call for other separate language collections.

Question: “Agree or disagree?: ‘There should also be other separate sections for other languages, just to be fair’”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither or Disagree	Agree Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response	Total
24 (14%)	49 (29%)	52 (31%)	20 (12%)	7 (4%)	16 (10%)	168 (100%)

Table 14. Opinions regarding the separation of materials in other languages.

4.13 Opinions Regarding the Prestige of Universities with Separate Asian Collections

Of all the respondents, 42% agreed that universities with separate Asian collections are more prestigious than those without, while a much smaller proportion (12%) disagreed with the statement. However, a large proportion neither agreed nor disagreed (36%), indicating that this is not a very important consideration for most respondents, particularly since only 19% of respondents felt strongly (positively or negatively) about the relative prestige of institutions with separate Asian collections.

Question: “Agree or disagree?: ‘Universities with separate Asian collections are more prestigious than those without.’”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither or Disagree	Agree Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response	Total
26 (15%)	46 (27%)	60 (36%)	13 (8%)	6 (4%)	17 (10%)	168 (100%)

Table 15. Opinions regarding the prestige of universities with separate Asian collections.

4.14 Opinions Regarding the Visibility of a Separate Asian Collection

A majority of respondents (69%) felt that a separate Asian collection would increase the visibility of the Asian collection, with 13% indicating they neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 10% responded that they did not believe that a separate Asian collection would increase the visibility of the collection. There was also a much larger proportion of strong agreement (28%) than of strong disagreement (1%). Thus, the data show that most respondents would consider a separate Asian collection more visible (and possibly more accessible) than an integrated Asian collection.

Question: “Agree or disagree?: A separate Asian collection will increase the visibility of the collection”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither or Disagree	Agree Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response	Total
47 (28%)	69 (41%)	21 (13%)	15 (9%)	1 (1%)	15 (9%)	168 (100%)

Table 16. Opinions regarding the visibility of a separate Asian collection.

4.15 Opinions Regarding a Potential Increase of Interest in Asian Studies

Respondents mostly agreed that a separate Asian collection would increase general interest in Asian studies (61%), while 25% neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 5% disagreed. Although the responses were not as strong as the previous question, this still remains another reason that many respondents would cite as a justification for separating the Asian collection.

Question: “Agree or disagree?: ‘A separate Asian collection will increase interest in Asian studies.’”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither or Disagree	Agree Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response	Total
39 (23%)	63 (38%)	42 (25%)	7 (4%)	2 (1%)	15 (9%)	168 (100%)

Table 17. Opinions regarding a potential increase of interest in Asian Studies.

4.16 Opinions Regarding a Potential Increase of Circulation in Asian Materials

On the topic of whether a separate Asian collection would increase the circulation of Asian materials, 67% of the respondents felt that this was true, while 18% said they neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 7% of respondents disagreed. These strong results supporting the belief that circulation would be increased are important, as a large percentage of respondents (46%) said they find Asian materials by browsing the stacks and shelves. This percentage could possibly be increased with a separate Asian collection, if users are more easily able to browse this collection.

Question: “Agree or disagree?: ‘A separate Asian collection will help library users find more books by browsing the stacks, and thus they will borrow more materials.’”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response	Total
48 (29%)	64 (38%)	30 (18%)	10 (6%)	1 (1%)	15 (9%)	168 (100%)

Table 18. Opinions regarding a potential increase in the circulation of Asian materials.

4.17 Opinions Regarding a Separate Asian Collection Being an Obstacle for Research

When respondents were asked if they felt that a separate Asian collection would be an obstacle to research, the results were mixed. A relatively large proportion (30%) thought that it would be an obstacle to research, while 17% had no opinion, and 44% thought it would not be an obstacle to research. This is an important question, given that the collection is intended primarily for academic users who are expected to conduct research using Asian materials.

Question: “Agree or disagree?: A separate Asian collection is an obstacle to research, because all books on Asian topics should be in the same place.”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response	Total
16 (10%)	34 (20%)	29 (17%)	53 (32%)	20 (12%)	16 (10%)	168 (100%)

Table 19. Opinions Regarding a Separate Asian Collection as an Obstacle for Research.

When the previous responses were categorized by the respondents’ status at UVic, the following percentage (Table 20) in each status category indicated that a separate Asian collection would be an obstacle to research.

Respondents who regard a separate Asian collection as a barrier to research			
1 st and 2 nd year undergraduates	36%	PhD students	18%
3 rd and 4 th year undergraduates	26%	Faculty members	32%
Masters students	23%	Staff	31%

Table 20. Percentage of respondents by UVic status who regard a separate Asian collection as an obstacle to research.

Interestingly, the students with the least academic experience (first and second year undergraduates) indicated highest in their concerns for a separate Asian collection as an obstacle to academic research (36%), while the same concerns were expressed at the lowest level in the PhD student category (18%). Given the advanced language skills and multi-lingual nature of the research in this field, one might expect that the more advanced students would prefer the inter-shelved collection arrangement, but clearly, that is not the case. While some faculty members (32%) felt that a separate Asian collection would be a barrier to research, the number is still not as high as that of the 1st and 2nd year undergraduates (36%).

4.18 Opinions Regarding a Separate Asian Collection as the Library’s “Special” Focus

A majority of respondents (57%) agreed that a separate Asian collection would give the impression that the library was giving special focus to Asian research needs, while 16% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 17% believed that a separate Asian collection did not give the impression that the library was giving special focus to Asian research needs.

Question: “Agree or disagree?: A separate Asian collection gives the impression that the Library is giving special focus to Asian research needs.”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response	Total
31 (18%)	66 (39%)	27 (16%)	24 (14%)	5 (3%)	15 (9%)	168 (100%)

Table 21. Opinions regarding a separate Asian collection as the library’s special focus.

4.19 Conclusions for the UVic User Survey

This survey achieved the purpose that it was intended for: user opinions were gathered and data about these opinions were compiled into a cohesive argument for and against the separation of Asian materials from the general collection.

There were 168 respondents to the survey, and most respondents (70%) were affiliated with the faculties of humanities, social science or science. Although a large number of responses originated from users affiliated with the Faculty of Humanities, the general interest in the future direction of our Asian library collection was widely shared throughout the campus. Users of Asian language materials are not all affiliated with the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies; only 19% of our respondents are affiliated with the Department. Furthermore, 73% of the respondents are either able to read or are learning how to read at least one Asian language. Surprisingly few of the respondents were affiliated with ESL programs (<4%), perhaps because their primary focus at UVic is learning English. Among the respondents’ reasons for using Asian language materials, research needs (51%) and recreational/personal reading (49%) scored the highest.

Survey highlights:

- Overall, 58% of the respondents favoured separating Asian materials from the general collection, while were 31% opposed to the idea. Support for separating the Asian collection was high among undergraduate students (65-67%) and master’s students (69%), lower among doctoral students (55%) and faculty members (54%), and the lowest among staff (19%). The opposition to separating was highest among staff (44%), and not remarkably high among faculty (25%).
- The facilitation of browsing was the single most important reason respondents identified to rationalize the separation of Asian materials from the general collection, with 86% of pro-separation respondents selecting this statement. A much smaller percentage (35%) of these respondents indicated that difficulty using the online catalogue was the reason they favoured the separation of Asian materials from the general collection. These numbers were consistent with responses to other survey questions, where 35% and 36% of respondents answered that they found it easy to locate Asian materials in the stacks and using the online catalogue, respectively. The importance of browsing in research libraries is also confirmed in the results of Chiu’s survey (2001).
- Another important result related to finding materials is that approximately 50% of respondents who read an Asian language indicated that they were unable to easily locate Asian materials through the online catalogue or in the stacks. This shows that half our Asian-language readers are not being adequately served by the current configuration of materials and by the online catalogue.
- For respondents who preferred that Asian materials remain interfiled in the general collection, the three statements they were asked to rate were scored almost equally highly. The statements were: “Separating English and CJK books doesn’t help my research”, selected by 61%; “The online catalogue allows the setting of language criteria,” therefore, there is no need for separating,

selected by 55%; and “users are accustomed to the way the collection is currently set up”, selected by 58%.

- We also asked a number of agree/disagree questions to investigate what users thought the *effects* of a separate Asian collection might be. A majority of respondents believed that the visibility of the Asian collection would be increased (69%), that there would be an increased interest in Asian studies (61%), increased circulation of Asian materials (67%). 42% of the respondents agreed with the comment “having a separate Asian collection will increase the university’s prestige”. Another statement that scored strongly with respondents was that the establishment of a separate Asian collection would create an impression that the library was placing a “special” focus on Asian studies (57%). For the purposes of fund-raising, this “special focus” may be important for some potential donors.
- There were moderate levels of support for the statements that “a separate Asian collection will call for separations of other language collections” (43%). However, the Asian collection has historically been treated in a different manner from the materials in other languages due to its specific features, such as non-Roman characters, non-phonetic script, intonation, multisyllabic words, and Romanization difficulties (Dunkle 1993).
- A total of 30% of respondents felt that a separate Asian collection would be an obstacle to research; this statement was chosen the most often to protest the separation of Asian materials among those who opposed the idea of separation.
- The survey results show obvious differences between faculty and staff in their attitudes towards a separate Asian collection. As with some of the reasons discussed in Kamada’s article (2002), the implementation of specialized Asian collection services may face unique challenges for the staff in a team-based environment on campus, such as the library.

A summary of our survey of East Asian librarians, as well as a general discussion about the two surveys and our conclusions, are expected to appear in a subsequent issue of JEAL.

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Appendix 1 - The UVic User Survey

UVic Libraries – Asian Collection Survey

Please tell us about yourself...

*** 1. What is your status at UVic? (select one)**

- 1st or 2nd year Undergraduate
- 3rd or 4th year Undergraduate
- Masters student
- Doctoral student
- Faculty
- Staff
- Other (please specify)

*** 2. Please indicate your UVic faculty affiliation. (select one)**

- Business
- Continuing Studies/ESL
- Education
- Engineering
- Fine Arts
- Human and Social Development
- Humanities
- Law
- Medical Sciences/Island Medical Program
- Science
- Social Sciences
- Other (please specify)

3a. If you are a student in Pacific and Asian Studies, please indicate your status. (select one)

- Major
- Minor
- MA
- Not in Pacific and Asian Studies

UVic Libraries – Asian Collection Survey

3b. Have you taken, or are you currently taking any course related to Asia?

Yes

No

3c. Do you read or are you leaning to read any Asian language(s)?

Yes

No

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UVic Libraries – Asian Collection Survey

Survey Questions – part I

In the following questions, "CJK" collection refers to the Chinese, Japanese and Korean materials.

*** 4. Why do you use Asian collection materials? (select all that apply)**

- Course assignments
- Research needs
- Recreation/personal reading
- To practice reading skills
- Never use them
- Other (please specify)

5. Currently, how do you find Asian collection materials? (select all that apply)

- Browsing the stacks/shelves
- Online catalogue search (Libraries Gateway)
- Recommendation(s) from instructors/friends
- Course reading assignments tell me what to read
- Do not read Asian language materials
- Other (please specify)

*** 6. Would you prefer to have the Asian language (CJK) collection physically separated from the regular collection in a distinct location within the McPherson Library? (select one)**

- Yes No No Preference

7a. If you answered "Yes" to question #6, please explain why. (select all that apply)

- Because it's easy to browse CJK materials if they are all in one place, regardless of the subject.
- Because it's easy to find English materials on Asian topics if they are not buried among Asian materials in some areas of the Library.
- Because it's difficult to locate CJK materials using the online catalogue (Libraries Gateway).
- Because other universities have separate Asian libraries.
- Other (please specify)

UVic Libraries – Asian Collection Survey

7b. If you answered "No" to question #6, please explain why. (select all that apply)

- Because separating English and CJK materials on the same topics does not help my research.
- Because it's possible to set language criteria when searching the online catalogue, so there is no need to physically separate the collection.
- Because library users are accustomed to the way the collection is currently configured, there is no need for change.
- Other (please specify)

8a. In general, do you find it easy to locate the materials you need on Asian studies topics in the library stacks/shelving? (select one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know/I don't use Asian materials

8b. In general, do you find it easy to locate the materials you need on Asian studies topics by searching the libraries catalogue online? (select one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know/I don't use Asian materials

9. Would you prefer to have other Asian language materials (e.g. Indonesian, etc.) physically separated from the rest of the collection? (select one)

- Yes
- No
- No Preference

UVic Libraries – Asian Collection Survey

Survey Questions - part II

For the following section, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please select the "Neither agree or disagree" option if you either don't have an opinion or don't know the answer to the question.

Select one answer for each question.

10. If there is a separate Asian collection in the Library, there should also be separate sections for other foreign languages, such as German, Russian and Spanish, just to be fair.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. Generally speaking, universities with an Asian library or separate Asian collection are more prestigious than those without.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. A separate Asian section will increase the visibility of the collection, therefore increases accessibility for all library users.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. A separate Asian collection will help to increase interest in Asian studies in general.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. A separate Asian collection will help library users find more books by browsing, therefore they will borrow more materials from the library.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. A separate Asian collection is an obstacle to research because Library users would like to see all books on the same topic in one place regardless of the language they are in.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

16. A separate Asian collection gives the impression that the Library is giving special focus to Asian research needs.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

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17. Please let us know if you have any additional comments or information you'd like to share about the Asian collection at this time.

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