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E-book Collection Development in East Asian Libraries Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (CJK) Cases

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Yoon Jee Cho completed fieldwork study under the guidance of Hyokyung Yi during the last year of her MLIS program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She received her MLIS degree in May 2012 and is currently working as an intern at the University of Washington East Asia Library.

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1. Introduction

Electronic books (e-books) have become an increasingly common way to read. E-books have become a vital part of our everyday lives and have changed the landscape of publishing markets, research, education, and other fields. E-books are also gradually influencing collection development in academic libraries. Several studies of various topics related e-books, such as collection development, user studies, marketing, and effect of e-books in academic libraries, have been carried out. *Library Journal's* second annual e-book survey reported that 95 percent of academic libraries are currently offering e-books, and their e-book collections had increased by 93 percent. In addition, they expect to spend approximately 20 percent of their total budgets on e-books in five years (Miller, 2011). Moreover, Soules argued that demand for e-books and e-textbooks in academic institutions will increase along with the growth of distance learning. (Soules, 2009)

Although several studies have been carried out to investigate how academic libraries develop e-books collections and offer e-book services that are responsive to user needs, only a few studies on e-book collection development in East Asian Libraries have been conducted. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how East Asian Librarians have developed e-book collections and also aims to better understand their experiences as early adopters so as to provide other librarians current information to facilitate the use of e-books in the future.

2. Survey results

Seventy-two librarians in Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies, and Korean Studies were contacted via e-mail with an invitation to fill in the survey. Twenty responses were received giving us roughly a 28 per cent response rate. The survey was done between

February and March 2012, and the analysis of the results was carried out between March and April 2012.

Three respondents identified themselves as Chinese Studies Librarians, six respondents as Japanese Studies Librarians, eleven respondents as Korean Studies Librarians.

The schools contacted were selected based primarily on e-book holdings of East Asian materials of North American Institutions referring to the CEAL Statistics Database (Doll, Hsu, & Liu, 2012). The following schools participated in the survey: Monash University, Australia; University of Toronto, Canada; and in the United States, Columbia University, Cornell University, Duke University, Harvard University, Princeton University, Stanford University, University of Chicago, University of Hawaii, University of Michigan, University of Southern California, University of Washington.

For this study, the findings are divided into three cases: Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

Chinese case

Three Chinese Studies Librarians from University of Michigan, University of Hawaii, and University of Washington participated in the survey. We found that these Chinese librarians were actively purchasing e-books and were also willing to purchase more e-books in the near future. Although the survey is limited to only a few cases, the key findings are as follows:

- Chinese e-books account for the majority of e-books in East Asian Libraries in North America. Each library possesses a collection of between 1000 and 8000 Chinese e-book titles. Currently, e-book purchasing makes up approximately 5-10 % of total budgets.
- Most Chinese e-books are purchased from Apabi and Superstar. Apabi offers more current titles than Superstar but Superstar is cheaper than Apabi.
- The purchasing of Chinese e-books is done in the same way as the purchase of books in print. They prefer individual titles to subscriptions but they sometimes purchase large sets with many individual titles because some Chinese vendors sell e-books by volume. One librarian described the pricing model for e-books on Superstar. He said that in addition to a one-time payment (\$4 per volume), a vendor charges an annual maintenance fee, which ranges from \$500 to \$750 per year depending upon the total number of volumes. (i.e. \$500/yr for 1-5000 volumes and \$750/yr for 5001-10000 volumes)
- The main reasons to purchase e-books are ease of access, multiple accesses for high-use titles for some classes, full-text search capability, as replacements for out of print or fragile books and books that are too expensive, and/or per user request.

- E-book Contents for Chinese Studies are more widely available in all subject areas including current and old titles.
- Issues are mostly related to the poor quality of e-book services, including unstable URLs, bad service, lack of full-text searchable function, speed of downloading, etc.
- Ways to catalog e-books: Vendors usually supply MARC record.

Japanese case

Six Japanese Studies Librarians from Princeton University, University of Hawaii, University of Southern California, Harvard University, University of Michigan, and University of Washington participated in the survey. Some key findings are as follows:

- The survey found that five of six survey participants said they are not buying any e-books except ones included in the Japan Knowledge database. The libraries own only a few to several hundreds of titles. Japan is still developing in the field compared to the U.S., China and Korea. They commented that they would purchase e-books from NetLibrary by Kinokuniya via EBSCO if they purchase e-books at all.
- They have no plan for future purchases and/or they see no immediate e-book increase in e-book budget for the future either.
- The survey found that they are budget-conscious regarding e-book purchases.
- As for the pricing model, NetLibrary charges "title by title." Japan Knowledge by NetAdvance charges by groups of content for annual subscription.
- Classic texts and reference books are more available in e-books.
- The main reasons to purchase e-books are price, user/curriculum need, filling the gap in print format, 24/7 access, and reliable accessibility.
- Top challenges they are facing with e-books are price, budget, uneven pricing model or lack of business model, and content variety.
- They hope to purchase more e-books in Social Sciences, pop culture, and primary sources.
- Ways to catalog e-books: They catalog e-books as print books.

Korean case

Eleven Korean Studies Librarians from Stanford University, Harvard University, University of Chicago, Cornell University, University of Toronto, Princeton University, Duke University, University of Hawaii, University of Michigan, Monash University, and Columbia University participated in the survey. Key findings include:

- Korean Studies Librarians have purchased none to several hundreds of titles, and Stanford University has the largest volume of e-books, holding over 700 titles. (E-books from subscription-based aggregated databases such as KSI are excluded in this data.)
- There has been 0-3% increase conservatively in e-book purchasing.
- KSI, Nurimedia, Kyobo are the main vendors for Korean e-books. Among them, KSI is the most popular vendor for two reasons: One reason is that KSI offers free e-book copy upon the purchase of a print copy from their own publications. The other reason is that KSI e-books are sold together as a package with other Korean electronic database.
- Due to the lack of variety in academic contents in current e-books, librarians prefer selecting individual titles to purchase with one-time payment and perpetual access, and do not plan to subscribe to any e-book databases unless the titles are carefully selected for Korean studies.
- The main reasons to purchase e-books are easy and multiple access, increase in user demand, shelf spacing, and preservation issues.
- The top challenges they are facing with e-books are lack of appropriate titles, particularly academic/scholarly titles in all subject areas, contents, price, special viewer requirements, unavailability of MARC records from vendors, and technical issues of download/print/copy.
- Ways to catalog e-books: add links to print book catalogs or a separate catalog for e-books.

3. Discussion

Perceptions and attitudes of librarians toward e-book adoption vary greatly depending on the individual librarian and each library's individual situation. Nevertheless, our findings show that some of the results overlap.

Selection

The survey clearly indicates that all CJK librarians prefer to select titles individually for e-books. Perhaps this is universal for all librarians across subjects and language backgrounds. Traditionally librarians have selected materials for their unique group of users and library environment. Users have relied heavily on librarians to choose which books are to be purchased for their library. That has been our time-honored role, although users' recommendations are highly respected in the purchasing decision. It has been a backbone of librarianship and the heart of user services. Without the role of carefully building a collection, there seems to be no justification for a librarian to exist in some sense. Besides, CJK e-book contents have yet to be developed further for research and scholarly materials. Many CJK e-book providers offer books that are not normally considered for purchase at academic institutions. That is another reason for CJK librarians to favor hand-picking titles one by one.

Nonetheless, we would like to stress that we may need to reconsider this traditional value of the librarian as primary selector as we face the advent of critical changes in libraries as well as users information behaviors with e-books.

First, libraries especially in U.S. have experienced dramatic budget cuts in recent years. Academic libraries are no exception. Resources are dwindling every year and material budgets are tighter than ever. Because of this recent phenomenon, research libraries are trying to build consortia with peer institutions so as to build collections collaboratively. This has quickly become a trend at many university libraries. One of the easiest areas to collaborate is to build e-book collections together, simply due to conveniently shared online accessibility. With print collections, sharing resources mostly means interlibrary loan, not necessarily building collections together. True resource sharing now becomes possible with e-books from the beginning of resource acquisition because resources are free from physical locations. In this shared collection development model, selecting individual titles for a specific library simply won't work for libraries in a consortium. Therefore, many libraries are trying out a demand-driven (or user-driven) acquisition program with e-books collections. This system is basically first letting users pick the books they want and then adding those titles permanently to a library collection.

Secondly, e-book usage data is easier to track, and the data can then be evaluated for collection development. Many e-book providers offer an option for demand-driven acquisition for consortia libraries making their selection to be based on usage statistics. For example, librarians can profile selection criteria only to purchase titles when they actually get used or clicked on online for a certain number of times. When resources are scarce, libraries rely more on usage data for final decision-making related to collection and acquisition. On the other hand, users have the advantage of being exposed to a broad variety of e-book titles at their fingertips. So their choices are wider than ever, although eventually selection will be done based on accumulated usage data by users.

Thirdly, information behavior is changing and our users are highly involved with social networking when they are looking for information. Users are no longer passive recipients of information. They not only actively seek information but also review information that they get. For example, users share their reviews on products and services. When that information is accumulated by massive numbers of users, it itself creates reliable information. With more users clicking on certain titles and selecting those highly used titles for libraries, our users are building their essential collection by their own input and needs. We understand that the librarian's role is shrinking somehow in this picture, but we have to realize that we have already adopted this model with numerous electronic databases.

Lastly, we think librarians should not feel threatened about sharing the work of selection with users. Letting go of our core area of job responsibilities may not be easy at first, but this is a good opportunity to learn about our users need by tuning our ears to them more closely. We can consider this as a time to evaluate the selection gap between users and librarians. We are not arguing that we should do this for all areas of library materials. But due to the nature of e-book platforms and environment, e-book collections seem the most sensible area to work more closely with our users in partnership to build collections cooperatively. We also need to remind ourselves that our profession as librarians is much bigger than selecting resources. There are many other, newer areas such as instruction, reference services, social networking and outreach where librarians are much in demand in the 21st century. Our job is to continue to evolve our service areas to benefit our users in this changing information environment.

E-book Policy

E-book service is currently in the early development stages, and thus there is no existing e-book policy in all CJK Studies Libraries. Because of the particular characteristics of e-books, all libraries are encouraged to develop e-book policies that are different from a printed book policy regarding user security and privacy.

Benefits

All CJK librarians commented that they like e-books for ease of access by multiple users.

“I purchase e-books over printed books mainly because e-books provide multiple accesses for high-use titles.” (Chinese Studies Librarian)

“E-books Provide online access to critical and essential works of scholarship 24/7.” (Japanese Studies Librarian)

“E-book is easier to access and allows multiple users to access at the same time.” (Korean Studies Librarian)

Challenges

CJK librarians pointed out that poor quality of e-book service and limited variety of contents are major problems in servicing e-books to library users.

“I think the poor service quality of e-books, especially such as a lack of full-text searchable function, is one of the big challenges.” (Chinese Studies Librarian)

“One of the challenges for e-book services is the limited variety of contents.” (Japanese Studies Librarian)

In addition, the survey found that cataloging e-books is a big challenge for all CJK librarians. Ways to catalog vary depending on the vendors, and manpower is insufficient to catalog all e-books. Book vendors should consider providing MARC records for the Libraries.

“We don’t have enough time and staff to catalog e-books.” (Korean Studies Librarian)

4. Conclusion

Although e-books are in the early stages of development and CJK librarians are currently very cautious about e-book purchases, we found that they are all willing to increase their budget to buy more e-books in the future. E-books offer ease of accessibility by multiple users eliminating physical barriers. If e-book publishers and vendors offer more scholarly and current titles in e-books, enhanced technological services, and MARC records, the use of e-books will considerably increase in East Asian Libraries.

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Appendix A

E-book Survey: CJK cases

Questionnaire

Q1. Name of your institution and your job title

Q2. How many e-book titles have you purchased so far?

Q3. What percent does e-book purchasing make up of total budgets? How much are you willing to increase e-book budget in the near future?

Q4. Please list some e-book content providers in your subject areas you know. Among them, what e-book content providers do you use and why?

Q5. What are the pricing models for e-book content providers? (Subscription, Selecting individual title, or Both?) Which pricing model do you prefer?

Q6. Does your library have an e-book policy? What are the main differences between e-book policy and printed book policy?

Q7. What are the main reasons for you to purchase e-books over printed books?

Q8. What subject areas/materials types are more available in e-books, and what subject areas/material types do you purchase?

Q9. What subject areas/material types do you hope to purchase more in the near future?

Q10. How do you catalog e-books in your library?

Q11. Please list top three challenges you are facing with e-books.

Q12. Any suggestions for future improvement or any other comments on this topic are appreciated.