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From the President

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From the President

With my usual gratitude, I reviewed the Table of Contents of the coming JEAL issue. I saw the tribute to one of our pioneering librarians at Harvard-Yenching Library written by our legendary former CEAL president Eugene Wu (1976-1979), providing an invaluable biographical record of a retired colleague; a group of peer-reviewed articles, which showcase the results of the high quality research done by our colleagues in a variety of subjects, including an overview of “Predatory Publishing in Asia,” LGBTQ Collection in Japanese, Data Visualization for translated Korean Literature, questions on the obsolete usage of McCune-Reischauer as the Korean Romanization Scheme by LC; and the project reports that outlined the web-archiving projects supported by the CEAL/Mellon Innovation Grant Program, which represent the newest trend of our profession; and, finally, a book review of the work by a CEAL member on a part of history that has been intentionally blurred in its original homeland.

All of these remind me of the current hot topic: freedom of speech and press. When I saw the attack on the media by our president, who called the media “the enemy of American people,” I had an ominous feeling about the fundamental values of our democratic system and our profession. Are the freedoms of speech and press protected by the First Amendment of our Constitution in peril? As a librarian, I always believe in “letting a hundred flowers blossom” and keeping culture, civilization, and thoughts alive without bias. There is an old Chinese saying that “a thousand-mile journey starts under your feet.” JEAL is our forum for freedom of speech and press; let’s all try our best to water and nurture this flower and keep it blossoming.

Last week, I attended a memorial service for Prof. Wm. Theodore de Bary (1919-2017), former Provost, noted educator, Sinologist, and alumnus of Columbia University, during which I saw the tribute written by his student Prof. Carol Gluck, who cited his 1970 AAS Presidential Speech titled “Nonpolitical but not Unconcerned.” This, after almost 48 years, I found amazingly fits our profession, specifically in today’s climate.

Jim Cheng
CEAL President