



2-2018

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Troost, Kris (2018) "Duke University's East Asian Collection," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2018 : No. 166 , Article 10.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2018/iss166/10>

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Duke University's East Asian Collection

Kristina K. Troost¹

Duke is an example of an East Asian Collection within an International and Area Studies Department. It manages its own stacks and reading room, but technical service work is done in a separate and physically remote department. Access and Delivery Services handles circulation and interlibrary loan with assistance from the area studies librarians as needed.

In Duke's case, this organization has been true from the beginning, and reflects the circumstances of the founding of the East Asian Collection. The International and Area Studies Department was founded by Deborah Jakubs in 1990. The East Asian Collection was created by Kristina Troost in her first year at Duke, largely during the summer of 1991.² Prior to that time, the books were dispersed in the stacks of the main library, and faculty did the collection development. Since technical services were already separate, the model continued even after a separate East Asian Collection was created.

Leadership of the International and Area Studies department is not linked to one area. The department was initially founded by Deborah Jakubs, a Latin Americanist, and Kristina Troost, a Japan specialist, has been head since 1998. When she steps down, it is unlikely that the next head will focus on East Asia. While only three people reported to Deborah Jakubs when IAS was founded,³ there are now nine direct reports covering all parts of the world outside the United States. The head of IAS reports directly to the Associate University Librarian for Collections and User Services.⁴ The most important changes in organization have been the addition of new staff to IAS: Chinese Studies in 1999, Middle East and Islamic Studies in 2005, Jewish Studies in 2006, Korean Studies in 2007, and African and African American Studies in 2012.⁵ The job title and responsibilities of the AUL to whom IAS has reported have changed since the founding of the International and Area Studies Department, but they have always included responsibility for collection development as well as IAS.

¹ Kristina Troost has been Japanese Studies Librarian and Head of the East Asian Collection since 1990. Since 1998, she has been Head of International and Area Studies in Duke University Libraries.

² For a history of Duke's East Asia Collection and the program it supports, see Kristina Kade Troost, "East Asian Collections at Duke: The Dynamics of Change," pp. 306-319 in Peter X. Zhou ed., *Collecting Asia: East Asian Libraries in North America, 1868-2008*, Association for Asian Studies, 2010.

³ Western European and African Studies, Slavic and Eastern European Studies, and South Asian Studies; East Asian Studies was added in the first year.

⁴ As of May 1, 2018, IAS will report to the Associate University Librarian for Research, Collections and Scholarly Communication.

⁵ For a brief period (2008-2012), British, Irish and Canadian studies were also included in IAS, but after retirement of the librarian, the responsibilities shifted to a different department.

IAS collects a variety of statistics; EAC collects more than most of IAS. We all collect reference transactions and number of instructional sessions; EAC and Latin America collect budgetary statistics, as well as information on the size of the collection. The Middle East has had to collect this information every Title VI cycle. The most useful statistics for planning have proven to be those that track reference questions, especially language; knowing how many reference questions require knowledge of the language and subject expertise is important when deciding how to replace someone on leave or who retires. Statistics for fiscal support and holdings – both print and electronic – are useful for grant applications, and to a lesser extent for external reviews, as they demonstrate the commitment of the library and university to an area and its ability to support research and teaching.

While there are many advantages to having technical services integrated in the East Asian Collection, it has never been considered at Duke; this article will focus on the advantages of Duke's model, and what are the best ways to make it work.

The East Asian Librarians, like other area studies librarians, are embedded in their programs. They are full and valued members; they sit on committees, attend talks, meet with prospective job candidates, offer library instruction at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, provide in-depth reference, partner with faculty on digital projects, and build collections to meet the needs of the faculty and students. The most important aspect of each person's job which drives everything they do is that of liaison. The issue of free-standing or integrated is not particularly relevant to the ability to support the program, though having separate stacks adjacent to our offices provides greater visibility for East Asian materials. It also makes answering some reference questions easier, as it facilitates browsing, improves quality control and contributes to chance encounters, especially with students. The separate stacks also enhance our ability to curate our collection, to ensure the presence of books that need to be on-site for browsing and to increase our familiarity with what we have purchased. On the flip side, separate stacks do represent more work for the three East Asian librarians as we must manage them and the students that do the work.⁶

The advantages of being part of an International and Area Studies Department rather than being a free-standing library stem from our close physical proximity and function as a unit with regular department meetings, which facilitates communication between us. Many faculty and graduate students have overlapping research interests that extend beyond East

⁶ An example of how this is a two-edged sword is barcoding. The East Asian Collection was the first collection to itemize its bound periodicals and barcode them; it has also reviewed its stacks for non-barcode materials, barcoded all books and cleaned up order records that should have been overlaid. The plus has been quality control, but at the same time it has involved East Asian librarian time in managing both projects.

Asia – the Chinese in Africa and China's One Belt One Road projects are good examples, though graphic novels, film, nuclear disasters, tsunami and earthquakes are also notable. Increasingly faculty are teaching about global topics or are looking at topics that go beyond their area of training and have students who want to compare Japan and Germany in WWII or the development of photography in Japan and India, for example. Faculty in Japanese or Korean Studies teach together with faculty in Latin American Studies. Having the librarians in one unit facilitates support.

Another advantage is that we can learn from each other, whether it is how we support language classes or teach students how to select databases or take on a digital project. We confront similar issues since we cover a broad spectrum of disciplines; when the library redid subject guides to databases and recommended that they be limited to a top five, IAS, because we are so interdisciplinary, found limiting our guides to be difficult, unlike Education or Literature. Making a case that our LibGuides address multiple audiences rather than a single discipline was easier as a group than as individual librarians. Similarly, we are mostly able to make vendor decisions; since everyone in the department wishes to choose their vendors, this strengthens the ability of any individual to advocate for a particular vendor.

Collection Development, too, benefits from the sharing of ideas. While there were many country or region specific cooperative collection development agreements within TRLN (Triangle Research Libraries Network) and nationally for print collections, the digital arena has posed new challenges. The Korean Collections Consortium of North America is one model that has worked to promote access to a comprehensive collection of Korean materials, both print and digital, nationwide; South Asian Studies librarians have several different initiatives to diversify the national collection and to provide digital access to materials not in copyright. CRL has supported Latin American Studies and German Studies initiatives. Locally, too, with enhanced document delivery and increased reliance on approval profiles, IAS librarians have worked closely with their colleagues at the University of North Carolina to reduce duplication and have shared successful models within the department. Having one librarian participate in an Endangered Archives project raises the possibility for others.

Many IAS librarians have chaired national committees, planned exhibits and receptions or organized conferences. While each of these has been different, we learn from each other. As one person organizes a successful reception or a conference, it provides ideas for another. We share our successful grant applications to colleagues planning to write one.

So, while there have not been other librarians within the library to mentor us in our specific areas of expertise, we have benefited greatly from our colleagues in IAS. Each of us was hired for our language and subject expertise; while many in IAS have library degrees, not all of us do, but we do know how to learn on the job. In addition, we have attended workshops offered by our librarian associations on topics ranging from collection development to digital humanities; as we have become more senior, we have also taught them. The library has a system of regular performance reviews and rankings; goals are set together with one's supervisor, and training is funded as needed.

Joint activities are particularly good for team building; most of the time IAS librarians work relatively independently, but we have had several opportunities to do joint projects. Among the most notable were presentations before the Library Advisory Board and a celebration of the 25th anniversary of IAS. While the most frequent ways the East Asian librarians have worked together has been on instruction or stacks management, recently they hosted a conference of 40 other East Asian librarians. Planning the conference, from hotel space and food to the content of the program, gave the three East Asian librarians a chance to work together on a project that benefited from everyone's input, including conversations with peers in and outside the department.

As a department that relies on central services, IAS has had the opportunity to be involved in decisions that are centrally made, whether it be the choice of an ILS or a discovery service like Summon. IAS has been positioned to advocate for the display of vernacular scripts or multi-institutional access to e-books. Mainstreaming handling of acquisitions and cataloging of East Asian materials and retrospective conversion were addressed at the same time as for materials in Western languages. The East Asian Collection was the second collection after the Reference Collection to be converted from Dewey to LC. More than most subject librarians, we are involved with all departments in the library from technical services and IT to digitization and special collections, as our specialized knowledge of language and culture are not found in other departments.⁷ While the East Asian librarians manage their own stacks, selecting materials for offsite and sending materials to conservation, tasks handled by central services for other languages, we are not charged fees to store materials offsite or for conservation work, as is sometimes true for other standalone libraries.

Some IAS practices have spread to other departments; we have long met with prospective hires to provide them an overview of the library and its collections and services and to assess

⁷ Even when there is expertise, as there is in Technical Services, we are sometimes involved; for instance Zhaohui Xue, as Chinese Studies Librarian, reviewed all the records converted from Wade-Giles to pinyin.

how our collections might meet their needs. This is increasingly the case for non-area studies hires as well. As we are thoroughly embedded in our programs, faculty often reach out to us for advice on digital projects; we also have sought their participation in projects we are involved in.

While there are disadvantages to not controlling the staff in technical services, as we do not always agree on priorities, this is an era of stable or shrinking budgets while the library wishes to take on many new initiatives. It was probably easier to add two East Asian Studies librarians (Chinese Studies and Korean Studies) as well as Middle East and Jewish Studies than if we had been a separate unit; it has been challenging to advocate for sufficient support in technical services, however. More than anything, the physical distance between our offices and technical services is problematic as it makes communication more difficult. Email is easy, and while picking up the phone works better, nothing substitutes for face-to-face encounters. The area studies acquisitions and cataloging staff are expected to comply with the same standards that roman language staff follow; the departments usually use a train the trainer model which does not focus on East Asian issues, but acquaints staff with the standards. On the other hand, cataloging staff have attended and participated in CEAL's numerous workshops. IAS has often supported the travel as technical services funding for professional development has been insufficient. At Duke, new leadership in Technical Services is leading to some rethinking of jobs – over the years, staff have been asked to do more with less and technical services has borne the brunt of this -- but with new leadership, there may be opportunities for staff to take on more responsibility for the metadata for special collections, which currently falls on the subject librarians, and to provide national leadership for electronic serials cataloging and licensing, for example.

IAS and the East Asian Collection have been fortunate to have grown at a time of stable budgets and increased support for international studies. We have benefited from three endowments that are general in nature, especially the Mary Few Endowment for International Collections which has supported staffing, outsourcing, travel, students and the acquisitions of expensive materials. The library has recognized our needs for software, for stacks management, especially major shifts, as well as for overseas travel and has supported us well. The uniqueness of our collections, and our close relationship with our programs, both students and faculty, are increasingly valued at the administrative level. This has meant strong support for acquisitions and staffing. At Duke, where East Asian Studies and library collections were late developing, being part of a larger unit has brought prestige and resources.