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From the President

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From the President

With the exponential development of technology, the academy is going through unprecedented changes and academic libraries are evolving rapidly to meet the new demands of their users. East Asian libraries in North America are specialized information nexuses within academic libraries supporting forefront teaching, learning, and research about East Asia, a fast growing economic, political, and cultural influence in the world and on American life. The Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL), as the professional organization of East Asian libraries in North America, must further strengthen its organization to provide strong leadership. Among the most dynamic group of professionals in today's academic libraries, East Asian librarians are actively involved on the cutting-edge of academic librarianship both in public and technical services and well-versed in information and technical skills for digital scholarship and digital preservation and access among many other areas. Equally important is to further develop leadership skills of East Asian librarians and to empower CEAL members. Toward these strategic directions, CEAL Executive Board has approved my proposal for the focus of its work in the coming two years: Strengthening the Organization and Empowering Our Members to Meet the Challenges of the Digital Age. We have launched the following initiatives to achieve this goal.

First, we have identified the general theme for the 2019 CEAL annual meeting as: The Roles of East Asian Libraries and librarians in the Age of Digital Scholarship. As digital scholarship is reshaping the landscape of higher education, academic libraries must respond to and anticipate these changes accordingly. How to change? and what will be the new roles of academic libraries in general and East Asian libraries in particular? These questions have posed a tough challenge to us all.

In this issue of JEAL, we have two articles both of which are results of digital projects created and carried out by East Asian librarians. They showcase some of the significant roles that East Asian librarians can play in the world of digital scholarship. These projects are different from the traditional library work that we are familiar with. Are these what librarians will do in the future? What will be the roles of East Asian libraries and librarians in digital scholarship?

To tackle these questions, we will bring the discussion to the plenary session of CEAL annual meeting to facilitate a conversation among key players (a faculty/scholar, a dean of libraries, and an East Asian library director) whose visions about libraries in digital scholarship will contribute to the definition of the roles and future of East Asian libraries and librarians. As a library user, the scholar will share the users' perspectives and expectations of libraries and librarians. The dean of libraries, who makes decisions on the allocation of budget and resources, will talk about his/her vision in support of libraries and librarians' new roles in digital scholarship. His/her vision will inform what we can and will be able to do. The EAL director will discuss his/her vision of the issues and challenges facing East Asian libraries. The plenary session will address the immediate concerns of CEAL members and concrete steps that we can take to brave the new path in the rising world of digital scholarship.

There also will be an afternoon session for librarians who handle day-to-day work to discuss what they see to be their roles in digital scholarship and what CEAL can do to help facilitate digital scholarship initiatives and projects. This session will focus on the rank-and-file librarians who work on the frontlines of both library public and technical services. I have appointed a taskforce led by the CEAL Treasurer to plan and organize this panel. The morning plenary session will also inform the afternoon session.

The second initiative is to develop the CEAL Organizational Handbook. CEAL elects new Executive Board members every year and conducts important and exciting programs during its annual meetings, pre-conferences, and throughout the year. To ensure continuity and smooth transition of CEAL leadership, and to train new Executive Board members, it's important we optimize documentation of our organization, and properly archive CEAL activities and history. In the past years, thanks to the leadership of past CEAL presidents and hard work of Executive Board members, CEAL has started an online archiving system in Google Drive. The organization calendar has proven to be instrumental in guiding new EB officers as they take their positions. Building on such foundational work, CEAL Organizational Handbook will systematically document CEAL best practices and each official position to ensure continuity, facilitate change, and enable training. I have appointed the CEAL Handbook Taskforce led by CEAL Secretary. The task force is also asked to look into the feasibility of creating a standing Committee on CEAL Handbook and Bylaws.

The third initiative is to organize and implement a CEAL Leadership Institute in 2020, offering leadership training for CEAL officers and members. In today's changing world, especially as many veteran librarians retire, our field must continue to have strong leaders who are at the same time excellent East Asian librarians. The American Library Association, the Association of Research Libraries, and many other professional organizations offer leadership training; however, there is still a need for leadership training targeting East Asian librarians, who work closely with CJK materials, their users, and East Asian cultures, a very diverse part of library services.

I have appointed a taskforce led by chair of CEAL Membership Committee to plan and implement this initiative. To support this initiative, we will work with CEAL Past Presidents and other senior leaders on grant writing, building on CEAL's successful experience with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to fund the Innovation Grant Program. This will not only raise grant funds for CEAL Leadership Institute and other projects but also provide hands-on leadership experience for taskforce members.

The fourth initiative is to create the CEAL Distinguished Service Award. Established in 1958, CEAL has played a leading role in support of the fast-growing academic fields in the studies about East Asia. Over these years there have been many dedicated librarians who have made important contributions to East Asian librarianship, in developing resources and services for East Asian studies, having a significant impact on the profession. To acknowledge professional excellence, dedication and contributions to East Asian librarianship and to promote the work of East Asian libraries, the Executive Board has approved the establishment of the CEAL Distinguished Service Award as the highest and permanent recognition of the organization for an individual CEAL member who meets the criteria of the award.

I have appointed the CEAL Distinguished Service Award Taskforce chaired by CEAL Vice President/President Elect to develop documentation and guidelines to establish the award. The taskforce will also propose an amendment to CEAL Bylaws to include the award to be voted by CEAL members during the 2019 election.

CEAL committee, taskforce, and EB members have been hard at work since CEAL annual meeting in March, and have made significant strides in these new initiatives. As we put our ideas and plans into action, I enthusiastically invite all CEAL members to join these efforts and get involved.

Together we will work to strengthen our organization and empower our members to meet the challenges of the digital age.

Zhijia Shen
CEAL President