



10-31-2020

A Report on Preparing the Council on East Asian Libraries's (CEAL) Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: in Collaboration with the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians (SCSL)

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Rocha, Fabiano Takashi (2020) "A Report on Preparing the Council on East Asian Libraries's (CEAL) Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: in Collaboration with the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians (SCSL)," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2020 : No. 171 , Article 5. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2020/iss171/5>

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A Report on Preparing the Council on East Asian Libraries's (CEAL) Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: in Collaboration with the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians (SCSL)

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Introduction and background

The formulation of the Council on East Asian Libraries's (CEAL) Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: in Collaboration with the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians (SCSL) resulted from growing concerns within East Asian area studies in North American library communities. This report outlines the sequence of steps that resulted in the formation of a task force, a survey, and a final statement.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has put the world temporarily on hold. By mid-March 2020, as the numbers of transmission cases dramatically increased, companies and organizations all over the globe were forced to restructure their entire operations to increase the capacity for their employees to adapt to working remotely. Libraries were forced to temporarily close their doors resulting in a complete lack of access to the libraries' physical collections. The inability to access print materials forced librarians to devote much energy in identifying and compiling lists of resources that could be accessed electronically. Much needed access to digitized versions of library holdings was made possible by the use of [HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service \(ETAS\)](#)—a measure used to allow for lawful access to digital versions of the corresponding physical books held by libraries. It is worth noting that in the case of area studies and in specific disciplines (i.e., religious studies, fine arts), the availability of materials in Hathi ETAS proved to be insufficient to meet research needs. Publishers and vendors also realized the increasing demand for access to electronic contents and responded to the situation by offering temporary free access to their resources, offering free trials of e-book platforms and databases, as well as increasing the number of concurrent users on a temporary basis, despite of their own COVID-19 hardship with suspensions of shipments, ordering, delayed payments and anxiety about the vague prospects of when business will return to normal.

Gradually, we started to witness a number of libraries reformulating or implementing collection development policies to favor the acquisition of materials in electronic format over print. As of now, many libraries are yet to confirm their annual acquisition budgets, forcing many to limit their acquisitions to electronic books to respond to users' immediate needs. While understandable that such measures are unavoidable during these unusual times, many concerns were raised regarding equity, representation, and access in collection

development, particularly in area studies. The uneven and inadequate ways that these developments aided the area studies communities prompted further action.

The Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials' (SALALM) [Resolution](#) was the precursor in articulating the challenges that e-preferred policies impose on the collection development ecosystem for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Similar statements were soon released by the Middle East Librarians Association's (MELA) [Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19](#), and the Committee on South Asian Libraries and Documentation's (CONSALD) [Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19](#) in support of the SALALM's Resolution, as well as addressing issues specific to those individual area studies.

Earlier in June 2020, the Chair of the ASEES CLIR (Association of Slavic, Eastern European & Eurasian Studies, Committee on Libraries and Information Resources) Executive Council, Joe Lenkart, sent out a message proposing the development of a joint statement by different area studies-related associations to acknowledge the challenges as well as shifts in collection development policies brought on by the pandemic. The CEAL President, Hana Kim, brought the proposal up for discussion among the Executive Board members. The members agreed that it was not only important for CEAL to be part of the joint effort but also to create a task force to work on issues specific to the East Asian area studies.

Creation of a task force

Following the recommendations of the members of the Executive Board, the CEAL President prepared a [charge](#) document for the Task Force for the Creation of the CEAL's Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. She appointed the Member-at-Large (General), Fabiano Rocha and the Vice-President/President Elect, Hong Cheng as co-chairs of the Task Force. The co-chairship ensured that the statement to be balanced by representing the perspectives of both American and Canadian institutions. The proposed membership included the chairs of the standing committees Chengzhi Wang (CCM Representative), Chiaki Sakai (CJM Representative), and Jude Yang (CKM Representative). The non-CEAL groups' representatives were Xiuying Zou (Society of Chinese Studies Librarians (SCSL)) and Haruko Nakamura (North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC)). Efforts were also made to recruit a Tibetan studies representative, but due to the time sensitivity and challenging nature of recruiting one, the committee ensured that feedback related to Tibetan area studies was gathered through the membership survey. The Executive Board approved the membership (please see Appendix A) on July 10, 2020, and the Task Force began its work immediately.

Task Force's Action Plan

As per the charge document, the co-chairs of the Task Force were required to submit an action plan to the CEAL President by July 17, 2020. The proposed action plan included a timeline that guided the work of the Task Force over the period of 4 weeks (July 17 to August 17, 2020). The action items included conducting a survey to seek input from the CEAL community on any additional issues or concerns that were not identified by the Task Force;

preparing a draft of the statement for submission to the Executive Board for review; incorporating the recommendations from the Executive Board in the final draft of the statement; subsequently securing the Executive Board's approval; and releasing the official statement by August 17, 2020.

The survey

During the Task Force's first meeting held on July 13, 2020, the members did a brainstorming session to identify issues and concerns regarding the reformulation and implementation of e-preferred collection development policies, for both temporary and long term. The purpose was to identify broader categories of concern that would be representative of the challenges for Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Tibetan area studies. The CJKT concerns regarding collection development and acquisition identified for the survey to be undertaken were: 1) budgetary concerns, 2) copyright, legal, licensing concerns (and implications to access), 3) quality and diversity of content, and 4) technological limitations. While the Task Force was confident that the above mentioned were representative, it felt that it was important to collect feedback from the general membership to ensure that there was no potential oversight. The survey was conducted between July 20 to 26, 2020 in an effort to provide an opportunity for members to voice their own concerns.

The survey included a total of 6 questions. A decision was made by the Task Force to leave all fields optional, recognizing there were individuals who may have been conscious about openly disclosing information about their own institutions. The questions were presented in the survey as follows:

- [1] Affiliation
- [2] My areas of responsibility are (check all that apply)
 - Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan, Other
 - Collection Development, Technical Services, Public Services, Administration, Other
- [3] Is your library experiencing budget cuts
 - Yes, No, Maybe
- [4] Is Your library implementing or reformulating a collection development policy shift towards electronic resources
 - Yes, No, Maybe
- [5] Can you think of additional concerns regarding e-preferred collection development policies (short and long term)? Please refer to the spreadsheet for already identified examples
<<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DqlCMPEy63YVFhHGcbSxfy72OaBEJhB4NYtLvWKPw3I/edit?usp=sharing>>
- [6] Other comments

The quantitative and qualitative data extracted from the survey are presented and discussed in the sections below.

Areas of responsibility

There was a total of 45 respondents from institutions of varying sizes from Canada, United States and United Kingdom: Columbia University, Harvard University, Oberlin College, Ohio State University, Penn State University, Princeton University, SOAS, University of London, Stanford University, University of British Columbia, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Victoria, University of Chicago, University of Hawaii at Manoa, University of Iowa, University of Maryland, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Notre Dame, University of Texas, University of Toronto, University of Virginia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Vanderbilt University, Washington University in Saint Louis, and Yale University. Respondents were asked to indicate what language(s), as well as what areas of professional practice (i.e., collection development, technical services, public services, administration, other) they are responsible for. Some of the variables that must be considered are that 7 institutions had more than one respondent; 8 respondents did not indicate their affiliation; 22 respondents indicated they are responsible for more than one language. “Other” in the language category may be referring to CJKT area studies resources published in English or other languages; “Other” in the professional practice may include non-library individuals (i.e., vendors).

	Collection Development	Technical Services	Public Services	Administration	Other
Chinese	22	9	18	5	3
Japanese	21	7	23	7	7
Korean	20	7	19	6	4
Tibetan	3	2	2	2	2
Other	6	1	5	2	3

Table 1. Question [2]: Areas of responsibility (responses from the survey).

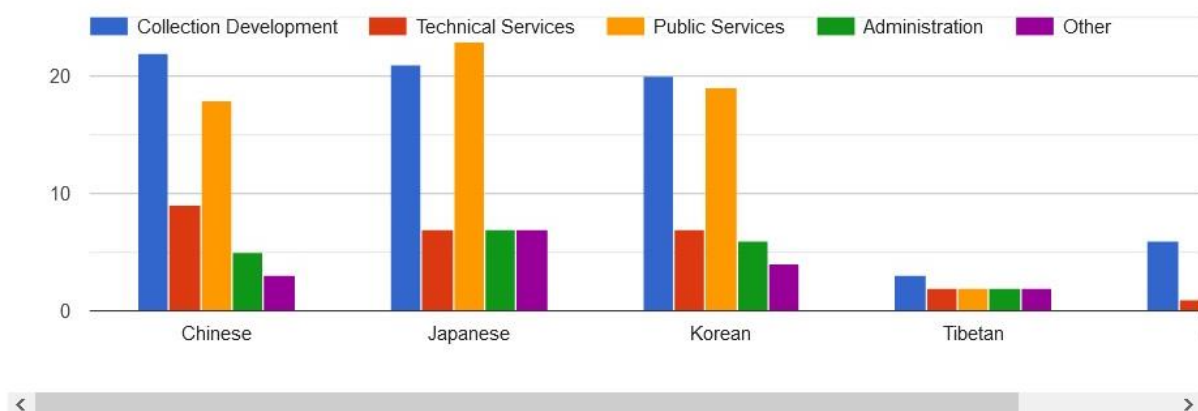


Figure 1. Question [2]: Areas of responsibility (responses from the survey).

Budgetary concerns

In response to whether their libraries are experiencing budget cuts, out of 43 respondents, 32 (74.4%) indicated yes, 8 (18.6%) indicated maybe, and 3 (7%) indicated no.

43 responses

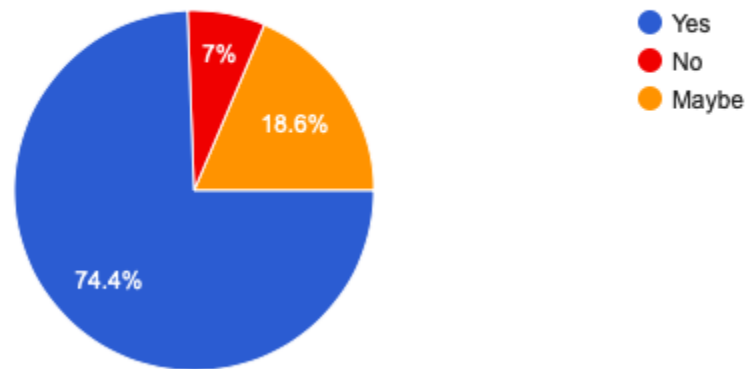


Figure 2. Question [3]: Is your library experiencing budget cuts? (43 responses from the survey)

42 responses

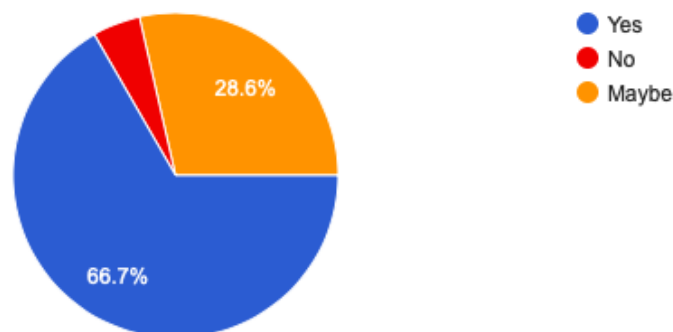


Figure 3. Question [4]: Is your library implementing or reformulating a collection development policy shift towards electronic resources? (survey responses)

As for whether their libraries are implementing or reformulating a collection development policy shift towards electronic resources, out of 42 responses, 28 (66.7%) indicated yes, 12 (28.6%) indicated maybe, and 2 (4.8%) indicated no.

The numbers above give us a sense of the budgetary constraints that libraries are or will be facing because of the pandemic. Between the confirmed and the ones that will potentially experience budget cuts, there were 93% of respondents. Similarly, 95.3% of the respondents have indicated that their institutions are likely to favor the acquisition of electronic formats over print. As expected, when asked about what concerns they would have regarding the implementation of e-preferred collection development policies, respondents reiterated that the pricing of e-books and electronic resources is a major concern. According to one

respondent, “E-books are often more expensive than the print alternative further limiting the scope of what we can collect.” The ability to collect comprehensively would be significantly compromised as a result. Subscription-based electronic resources are unaffordable for small-size institutions in normal circumstances, and with the additional budget cuts, the more difficult it will be to secure funding for resources with ongoing costs.

Copyright, legal and licensing (implications to access)

Access and use of e-book and electronic resources can be largely affected by the copyright restrictions, publishing cultures, and varying vendors’ business models of East Asian countries. For instance, Japanese copyright law makes it harder to use e-books for interlibrary loan (ILL) and document delivery (DD), as well as the publishers’ and author’s established practices or preferences to not waive their rights to enable the sharing of e-resources. Institutions of all sizes rely on interlibrary loan, but a decrease in access to resources would be dramatically felt by smaller institutions that have no choice but heavily rely on other institutions. Vendors are primarily aggregators of content and do not have the rights to the contents offered in their e-book platforms. Consequently, they are not able to guarantee perpetual access to materials, representing a high risk for libraries that invest heavily in electronic formats. One respondent explained the extent she goes to provide access to e-books to her faculty and students by sharing that “[East] Asian publishers are more reluctant to give the rights for e-books. I have to buy some personal-use e-copies for my users but these are not the content the library can preserve nor what a faculty can use for teaching.” The unstable nature of availability of contents was also expressed in how materials can be inadvertently withdrawn from the platforms of resource providers and how “the only mitigation to the danger of censorship and or purging of existing content is to have print copies.”

Quality and diversity of content

Quality and diversity of content is perhaps the biggest concern when it comes to a shift the preference for acquiring materials in electronic formats. In addition to the discrepancy of availability of electronic content among the individual countries, regions and disciplines, serious concerns were voiced in regard to the availability and quality of those resources. The insufficiency of scholarly content in Korean e-book platforms was repeatedly brought up as examples, and in the case of Tibetan language materials, the fact that there are hardly any electronic options available in the market. One respondent reminds us that “in Asian countries, a substantial proportion of relevant content is produced only in print,” and we are at the risk of permanently losing those contents if we do not purchase when they are published. The respondent also added that “[l]osing those international voices is contradictory to our values and would impoverish our global studies at a time when such knowledge is of crucial importance”—a compelling argument for protecting the acquisition of print in order to maintain the breath, diversity and integrity of our collections.

Technological limitations

While there have been improvements in the way contents are presented in electronic resource platforms from East Asian countries, there are still many limitations that prevent users from having a seamless experience. The East Asian products have not matured to the level of those in North America. For instance, Japanese e-books are primarily available in

PDF format. This can be problematic, especially with the uneven availability and quality of OCR. Similarly, statistical data that is only available in PDF format presents a barrier to manipulating data for mining purposes. One respondent noted that “Many [Chinese] publishers/vendors require third party software or use additional access restrictions” resulting in problems related to data protection and privacy of data for researchers and students. Another respondent pointed out that “technological limitations may lead to inequality among our users who access the e-resources from other countries that may have a firewall.” Technological limitations can directly affect the quality and accessibility of materials. To one respondent’s point, even when digital versions of materials are available, the print copy remains irreplaceable for her institutions’ users who insist that their research demands the examination of the actual copies instead of their digital surrogates.

Additional considerations

In addition to the above-mentioned categories, individual responses addressed a number of other challenges. Among them, the lack of quality metadata compliant with North American standards always poses challenges to the discovery of individual e-book titles in the online catalogues, as well as users’ unfamiliarity and reluctance to use them. Streaming platforms remain largely unavailable for institutional licensing outside East Asia - even for individual subscribers. Collecting e-books may be unfamiliar territory for many, but the pandemic may have forced librarians to reconsider licensing of e-book platforms to be able to respond to requests from faculty and students. “My library is not set to acquire e-books title-by-title on a regular basis” reveals an important observation by one of the respondents about the unpreparedness and lack of infrastructure (i.e., licensing agreements in place, funding allocated for electronic book acquisition) to acquire e-books that would not have otherwise been considered as part of the regular collection development practice.

Drafting of the statement

Overall, the responses collected from the survey reaffirmed that the broader areas of concern identified by the Task Force were in line with those expressed by individual CEAL members. The Task Force had agreed that the structure of the statement would resemble the statements released by the CEAL’s peer library associations. The purpose of the statement was to add a voice in support of SALALM, MELA, CONSALD and other organizations that were expressing many of the CEAL’s shared concerns; to address issues that are more specific to East Asian area studies (including Tibet); to urge libraries to exercise flexibility in the reformulation or implementation of e-preferred collection development policies; and to ensure that the measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic are meant to be temporary and not prescriptive for the long term.

With those in mind, a preliminary draft of the statement was shared with the members of the Task Force on July 26, 2020. The comments made by the Task Force members were incorporated into the final version of the draft that was submitted to the CEAL President on August 3, 2020 for the Executive Board’s review. As there were no additional comments provided by the members of the Executive Board between August 3 and 9, 2020, the CEAL President called for a vote on the “Council on East Asian Libraries’ (CEAL) Statement on

Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: In Collaboration with the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians (SCSL)” that was approved on August 13, 2020. Please see Appendix B for a copy of the officially released statement.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted many institutions to implement collection development policies that favored the acquisition of electronic formats. With 66.7% that indicated yes, combined with 28.6% that indicated maybe, we see a total of 95.3% of policy shifts towards electronic resources. This raises serious equity and diversity concerns in collection development, particularly in area studies, for the short and long terms. As the CEAL Statement articulates, “in East Asia, a large percentage of the overall publication output remains as print-only”. With 74.4% that indicated yes and 18.6% that indicated maybe, 93% will or are likely to experience budget cuts, should the acquisition of electronic formats be favored, the ability to collect comprehensively and equitably would be severely compromised.

There remains much work to be done in regard to advocating for better terms of use and ownership rights of contents from East Asian countries, largely resulting from individual countries’ copyright restrictions, varying vendors’ business models and publishing cultures. The CEAL Statement refers particularly to how “ownership of contents and perpetual access rights cannot be guaranteed due to the restrictions imposed by the publishing cultures and copyright restrictions of East Asian countries,” and to the uneven provision of “interlibrary loan (ILL) and document delivery (DD), effectively decreasing the access to knowledge.”

The favoring of acquisition of electronic formats would create an enormous imbalance in the ability of researchers of East Asian area studies in accessing scholarly content. As noted in the CEAL Statement, “regional and niche (specialized) collections in platforms that libraries are able to license” remain largely unrepresented in commercial platforms. Print collections are “indispensable to the East Asian Studies scholarly community,” as the volume of scholarly works in digital formats remains insufficient, as well as engaging with electronic resources remains challenging due to the technological limitations of existing platforms. The indispensability of print collections is directly connected to another important concern raised in the CEAL Statement about the necessity to “Continue to support the work of vendors and small publishers who are vital to the building of diverse, specialized library collections and whose survival is critical to the academic enterprise.”

Oftentimes, decisions to pursue the route of favoring the acquisition of electronic formats are based on the false assumption that access to the resources will be seamless, as there is no need for handling physical materials. Ironically, as identified as a concern in the CEAL Statement, the lack of quality metadata for electronic resources “not only becomes the largest impediment to the discovery of resources but also demands more attention from library staff of all levels to properly acquire, describe and make resources discoverable.” The acquisition of electronic books requires an elaborate infrastructure (licensing, budget

allocation, technical processing) that, as a respondent noted, some libraries still do not have in place.

In response, this report aimed at describing the necessity for the CEAL to add its voice in support of its peer organizations and the consultative process used by the Task Force that was charged with articulating the CJKT-specific concerns on behalf of its community.

The Task Force would like to express its sincerest gratitude for the CEAL community's trust in its efforts, and it hopes that the statement can be used as a tool by librarians who find themselves in a situation where they are required to provide context and rationale regarding the challenges imposed by the implementation of e-preferred collection development policies in the areas and disciplines they are responsible to develop and support.

Appendix A: Task Force Membership

Fabiano Rocha, University of Toronto (Co-Chair)
Hong Cheng, University of California, Los Angeles (Co-Chair)
Chengzhi Wang, Columbia University (CEAL/CCM Representative)
Chiaki Sakai, Columbia University (CEAL/CJM Representative)
Jude Yang, Yale University (CKM Representative)
Xiuying Zou, Claremont Colleges (SCSL Representative)
Haruko Nakamura, Yale University (NCC Representative)
Hana Kim, University of Toronto (ex-officio)

Appendix B: [Council on East Asian Libraries's \(CEAL\) Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: in Collaboration with the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources \(NCC\) and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians \(SCSL\)](#)

Approved by the CEAL Executive Board on August 13, 2020

Endorsed by the Association of Asian Studies on August 31, 2020

The COVID-19 crisis has unleashed a new operational and budgetary ecosystem in which the sudden and complete lack of access to print and non-digitized materials, albeit temporary, has resulted in an increase in the need for provision of resources in electronic formats. Budget cuts are anticipated, and while many institutions have not yet released their budgets for the current, and or, upcoming fiscal year, the acquisition of resources in electronic formats has been prioritized, and libraries are increasingly implementing or reformulating policies that focus on the acquisition of digital content for the time being.

Based on the knowledge that the publication output in area studies is largely – and in some places exclusively—in print, concerns regarding equity, representation and access in collection development have been raised by peer library associations in the form of statements such as those of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials' (SALALM) [Resolution](#), the Middle East Librarians Association's (MELA) [Statement](#)

[on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19](#), and the Committee on South Asian Libraries and Documentation's (CONSALD) [Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19](#)

While we have observed the growth of electronic content over the years in East Asia, a large percentage of the overall publication output remains as print-only. It is also worth noting that there are enormous discrepancies in the availability of electronic contents among the individual countries and regions within East Asia (including Tibet), as well as within individual disciplines. In addition to the insufficient volume of scholarly content in digital format, technological limitations of the platforms present challenges to scholars' engagement with many of the resources, making print collections indispensable to the East Asian studies scholarly community.

The members of the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL), the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians (SCSL) are committed to maintaining the breath, diversity and integrity of collections by advocating for the implementation of collection development policies that are congruent with those principles. In addition to the shared concerns raised by SALALM, MELA, and CONSALD on the implementation of e-preferred collection development policies, we would like to express the following concerns:

- Whereas the focus on the acquisition of electronic resources has a strenuous impact on the overall acquisition budget of libraries of all sizes but putting particularly medium-size and small-size print collections at risk of survival and contributing to a greater knowledge divide
- Whereas East Asian countries' copyright restrictions, or varying vendors' business models, prevent the access of resources via interlibrary loan (ILL) and document delivery (DD), effectively decreasing the access to knowledge, particularly of those smaller collections that have to heavily rely on ILL/DD from larger collections
- Whereas the standard expectation for terms of use of e-books, as well as ownership of contents and perpetual access rights cannot be guaranteed due to the restrictions imposed by the publishing cultures and copyright provisions of East Asian countries
- Whereas the acquisition of materials in print is the only way to salvage knowledge and information that would be otherwise doctored, lost or unavailable as a result of censorship
- Whereas the integrity of collections and quality of scholarship will be negatively impacted due to the insufficiency of scholarly content available in commercial e-book platforms, as well as the lack of representation of regional and niche (specialized) collections in platforms that libraries are able to license
- Whereas the technological limitations in East Asian platforms curtail researchers' ability to engage with and manipulate data
- Whereas the lack of quality metadata that oftentimes not only becomes the largest impediment to the discovery of resources but also demands more attention from library staff of all levels to properly acquire, describe and make resources discoverable

With the above in mind, the CEAL, the NCC, and the SCSL urge libraries to:

- Reassure that e-preferred collection development policies implemented temporarily during the pandemic are not meant to be prescriptive for long-term collection development practices
- Exercise flexibility in the implementation of collection development policies to allow for balanced collection development practices that adequately address the needs for print and electronic formats
- Rely on the expertise and advice of professional librarians who are better informed of the conditions of the publishing environments of the areas and disciplines they develop and support
- Commit to protect the acquisition of print materials, as well as the personnel responsible for making them discoverable and accessible, as an effort to ensure the inclusion of non-traditional publications that are often regarded to offer the most poised critique of mainstream voices and perspectives
- Continue to support the work of vendors and smaller publishers who are vital to the building of diverse, specialized library collections and whose survival is critical to the academic enterprise
- Support and advocate for Open Access (OA) initiatives via the collaboration of North American and East Asian partners to bring to light our unique and specialized collections while minimizing the reliance on commercial entities to make them available
- Encourage a collaborative, cross-institutional approach in developing best practices for license negotiations of East Asian resources that systematically address the issues outlined in this document