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Remarks on Receiving the CEAL Distinguished Service Award

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Remarks on Receiving the CEAL Distinguished Service Award Delivered March 18, 2021

I would like to thank everyone for the tremendous and unexpected honor of being selected as the first recipient of the CEAL Distinguished Service Award. There are many members of CEAL who have contributed a lot over the years, so I was very surprised.

I could not have accomplished what I have without the support and assistance of many, many people. I will not be able to mention them all, but I will try to get at least broad categories. It seems appropriate to start by thanking Luo Zhou for nominating me and the nominators for writing letters. It is indeed an honor when someone you hired and supervised feels so positively that they decide to nominate you.

I entered the library profession at an opportune time. It was ready for changes, and there were people who supported change. Many individuals encouraged and assisted me when I proposed changes to the Japan Foundation's American Advisory Committee on the criteria for library support grants and to the CEAL executive group on the structure of the Plenary. In the latter case, in particular, I felt as though I was listening to people around me and implementing their ideas.

I also received support and mentoring from many people, including, amongst others, Vickie Fu Doll, Dorothy Gregor, Amy Heinrich, Izumi Koide, Yasuko Makino, Yasuko Matsudo, Hideyuki Morimoto, Sachie Noguchi, Shizuko Radbill, Don Shively, Warren Tsuneishi. Over the years, I have worked with countless people who have generously shared their expertise: Tokiko Bazzell, Victoria Lyon Bestor, Rob Britt, Sharon Domier, Maureen Donovan, Ellen Hammond, Philip Melzer, Haruko Nakamura, Kazuko Sakaguchi, Brian Vivier, Peter Zhou, and many others. Finally, I learned from each of the various library school students I mentored including Katherine Matsuura, Miree Ku, Yoriko Dixon, and many others.

At Duke, too, I had good mentors and bosses. Deborah Jakubs hired me and modeled area studies librarianship. Robert Byrd was a fantastic boss who listened to the problems I brought him and supported me through tough times. I should also thank everyone who reported to me over the twenty years I was Head of International and Area Studies, as I went from a novice boss of four experienced librarians to building and managing a department of ten people. Thanks to all of them for teaching me how to mentor and manage a diverse group of talented individuals, each of whom needed something different.

Finally, I am indebted to the library and the faculty for taking a risk and hiring me despite my lack of training in librarianship and my specialization in medieval Japan even though the program focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. My Ph.D. had taught me how to learn, and the faculty—in particular, to name only a few, Andrew Gordon, Stephen Dodd, Edward Fowler, Richard Jaffe, Nayoung Aimee Kwon, Margaret McKean, Gennifer Weisenfeld, Kären Wigen—shared their expertise.

I learned librarianship by listening and by doing. Opportunity provided the impetus; when I arrived, there were only the bare bones of a collection, 20,000 volumes in Chinese and Japanese. It had been built by the faculty to support their research, so it was strong in some specific areas but lacked the scope to support a graduate program as well as many key reference works. I learned from teaching graduate students and from building collections to support both faculty and graduate students. Lately, the new emphasis on teaching with original materials has driven collection development and led to discovering new materials and learning about new formats. Now the collection stands at over 200,000 volumes plus electronic materials.

Similarly, not long after I arrived, the Asian/Pacific Studies Institute decided to develop an MA program in East Asian Studies. Since I had attended an interdisciplinary MA program and thought it was a successful model, I volunteered for the committee that drafted the proposal. Circumstances resulted in my writing the final version and eventually serving as Director of Graduate Studies for eleven years. Once again, a need became an opportunity that shaped my career.

In sum, I learned by doing. My greatest achievements reflect the advice I received from many people. I strongly advocate listening to people, especially those who disagree with you; you may or may not change your proposal; regardless, both you and your proposal will become stronger.

I am deeply honored by the award. Much of the credit for the award, however, must go to the people who believed in me, supported me, and gave me the room to grow. I thank them and you.

Kristina K. Troost
March 2021