In Memoriam: Jane Han-Jun Cheng

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In Memoriam

Jane Han-Jun Cheng

Jane Han-Jun Cheng 承憲成 passed away on November 5, 2021. In addition to being a caring wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and friend, she was a distinguished and well-respected colleague of the East Asian libraries' community.

Born on February 20, 1932, in Liyang 溧阳, Jiangsu province 江苏省, China, Jane lived through World War II, the Chinese Civil War, adapting to life in Taiwan, and facing challenges as a foreign student in the United States beginning in 1959. She received her B.A. from the History Department, National Taiwan University, Taipei, and earned her Master of Library Science from the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. She married Dr. Hsien-Chen Cheng 承憲成 in 1960 in Utah and moved to Columbus, Ohio, and then, Kansas City with their children.

She started her library career as a librarian at the Upper Arlington Public Library in Columbus, Ohio, before starting her long tenure at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri. In 1980, she joined the Nelson-Atkins as Senior East Asian Catalog Librarian at the Spencer Art Reference Library until her retirement in 2010.

Jane was known for being a conscientious cataloger of East Asian art materials and an active member of the Research Libraries Group (1974-2006). Among many fond memories of her, one clear image stands out: Sitting in the front row during meeting reports, Jane would ask insightful questions that displayed her shared concerns related to cataloging rules. She asked cataloging questions in the CEAL annual conferences, and in particular, the meetings of the Committee of Technical Processing and OCLC CJK Users Group during the Wade Giles to Pinyin conversion in the early 2000s.

Enthusiastic and knowledgeable about art, Jane frequently shared anecdotes of contemporary Chinese artists in the evenings after the meetings were finished. At the 1991 CEAL conference in Washington, D.C., she led a group of us to see the special exhibit Challenging the Past: The Paintings of Chang Dai-chien 張大千 (1899-1983), held in Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Thanks to Jane, we had the opportunity to be mesmerized by Chang’s exquisite replica paintings of the Dunhuang murals done during his travels to the Dunhuang Caves in the 1940s.

Jane was warm, had a delightful sense of humor, was supportive to new colleagues, was helpful to those in need, and was committed to cataloging quality. She often volunteered to serve as a mentor to younger librarians and introduce them to experienced catalogers and CEAL members. Jane was also active in the Kansas Chapter of the Chinese American Librarians Association, giving tours and holding local meetings. She was president of the Chinese Club of Greater Kansas City and taught Mandarin Chinese as an Adjunct Chinese Instructor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City for more than 10 years until 2011.
As Sharon Domier rightly pointed out (Eastlib, November 17, 2021), Jane made many contributions to our profession and we are all the better for it.¹

Submitted by Wen-ling Liu