A Reflection on the Challenges and Collaborative Potential in Working with Buddhist Studies Materials in East Asian Librarianship

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Cover Page Footnote
Acknowledgment: I would to extend my sincere gratitude to the two anonymous JEAL reviewers for their thoughtful and meticulous feedback on an earlier version of this article.
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Introduction

Buddhism began as an oral tradition, but it slowly evolved into an intensely bibliographic one. As Buddhism spread outward from Northern India more than 2,500 years ago, scriptural and commentarial literature proliferated along with new and varied schools, lineages, and discourses that now comprise the tradition in its modern form. Today, this textual evolution continues with new and surprising adaptations to emerging media and digital technologies. In the case of East Asian Buddhism, which typically refers to Mahāyāna schools across China, Japan, and Korea, its textual culture has been historically iterative; scholar-monks and scholar-nuns have built upon authoritative writings from previous centuries, and these writings continue to live on in current discourse as new sites of interpretation, refutation, and expansion.¹

The evolution of the Buddhist studies field has followed a similar trajectory. Like the Buddhist tradition’s intellectual and textual evolution, Buddhist studies is comprised of “lineages” of academic training, each with varying methodological emphases. Academic writing in this field, like academic writing generally, is also largely iterative; scholars build upon and refute one another, but there have also emerged well-regarded, anchoring studies that are privileged for advancing (or challenging) the fieldwide consensus. These parallel trajectories of intellectual and bibliographic production—one from within the Buddhist tradition and one within its scholarly field of study (and some that cut across this boundary altogether)—connect massive corpora of texts with histories that leap and bound across East Asia.

Buddhism tends to find its way into nearly every East Asian cultural expression. This can make very specific demands even of scholars who are not trained Buddhologists: literary scholars may seek to identify passing mentions of the names of buddhas in poetic works, while others may be confounded by a variant gloss of a Buddhist term in a classical text; Japanese art historians may be curious about Buddhism’s connections to ukiyo-e aesthetics and imagery, while anthropologists may investigate the use of temple seal stamps collected in pilgrimage books; linguists focused on Chinese might inquire about early, state-sponsored translation bureaus engaging Buddhist texts from India; contemporary Korean historians might focus on Buddhist writings produced during the colonial period as a way to better understand the relationship between religion and rule. Buddhist ideas and practices have moved throughout East Asia across time and have given rise to interconnected networks of cultural modes of production, identification, and expression (Heirman, et al. 2018). While

¹ Mahāyāna (“Great Vehicle”) is a Sanskrit term that refers to a movement of Buddhism that formally emerged roughly four centuries following the death of the Buddha and centers around textual corpora attributed to the Buddha during his lifetime. This form of Buddhism philosophically, textually, and practically distinguishes itself from earlier forms of Buddhism and categorically includes the major schools and lineages that are dominant in East Asia.
these few scholarly scenarios reflect Buddhism’s cultural and social reach across the region, they also implicate Buddhism as an unavoidable part of reference work, research consultation, and collections building expected of East Asian librarians.

These bibliographic, historical, and disciplinary tangles introduce a range of challenges that face librarians engaging Buddhist studies materials. Some challenges may be linguistic, as East Asian Buddhist textual traditions very often share (or purport to share) in a continuity across the region whereby critical editions and their preceding texts are translated across Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. This movement across languages can make discerning textual lineages difficult. This difficulty extends to logistical challenges that emerge in effective collections building because this subject area demands at least some familiarity with not only critical editions, but also the textual lineages from which they culminate. Additionally, the nature of Buddhist linguistic conventions, which differ from colloquial conventions across Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, add a layer of unpredictability when searching for materials by keyword or title. Other challenges may be practical, such as advising graduate students on how to conduct research in Buddhist temple archives, the processes of which differ markedly from using university or municipal libraries or archives abroad.

These interrelated challenges derive as much from the bibliographic and historical qualities of the Buddhist tradition as they do from the Buddhist studies field. That is, centuries of networked translations, publications, and reproductions across three East Asian languages can make single Buddhist works difficult to trace. This is compounded by the work of scholars who seek to situate these individual works within their transregional and linguistically diverse contexts. Likewise, the historically peripheral position of contemporary Buddhist temples vis-à-vis secular society creates unique demands of researchers, who must abide by unwritten or indiscernible social and administrative expectations. For East Asian librarians engaging with Buddhist materials, therefore, taking an expansive view of the bibliographic, linguistic, and historical aspects of both the tradition and the field surrounding it may be an effective way of providing research support.

There exists a disparity between, on the one hand, the pervasiveness of Buddhist themes and motifs in the study of East Asia and, on the other, the lack of a unified toolset for handling these themes and motifs in several aspects of East Asian librarianship. With the hope of

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2 By “critical edition” 校勘 (Chn: jiaokan, Jpn: kōkan; Kor: gyogam) I refer mainly to the product of philological comparisons of several versions of a text in order to distill a single, authoritative version. With regard to scripture, these texts derive from Indic originals and were later translated into one of the various East Asian languages. Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), whose work is mentioned in greater detail below, deploys this term as part of standard practices for taxonomizing doctrine within the Tiantai 天台 (Jpn: Tendai) tradition, and which persisted as standard practice in East Asian Buddhism, generally. See Morohashi (1966, 6011c). Critical editions that emerge within a Buddhist sect can undergo similar processes whereby several versions of a given text written by a major sectarian figure are compared, distilled, and copied, sometimes by the immediate disciples of the author.

3 While this may be the practical reality, I note here a few historical examples of the relationship between Buddhist studies and East Asian librarianship. Kenneth Tanaka (1935-2021), who was an ordained Buddhist minister and who had earned degrees in Buddhist studies, served as cataloger for the Library of Congress in the 1970s, during which time he conceived of the LC classification system for Buddhist studies. He went on to work as a cataloger in East Asian studies at the University of Chicago and the University of Maryland. Philip Yampolsky (1920-1996), perhaps best known for his
offering some foundational guidance for those who endure the challenges inherent to engaging such materials, this article is meant to provide an initial dialogue for future collaborations across the fields of Buddhist studies and East Asian academic librarianship.\(^4\) Future collaborations might include: workshops bringing both faculty and librarians together to discuss the relationship between Buddhist textual histories and the current state of institutional holdings; the collaborative development and continual maintenance of a field-wide reference guide focused on East Asian Buddhist resources; the public invitation of scholars or scholar-monks to deliver virtual overviews of temple archives, their holdings, and ways to access them; new partnerships with museum curators that highlight the role of bibliographic support for exhibitions and stewardships over Buddhist studies ephemera; new events or initiatives to encourage long-term relationships with vendors specializing in Buddhist textual materials; or perhaps university collection spotlights co-authored by faculty and librarians with an emphasis on research potentials in Buddhist studies.

Toward this end, this article is not intended as a comprehensive guide or as a mere list of resources, nor does it propose monolithic solutions to the challenges outlined here. I take seriously the breadth and diversity of strategies for meeting these challenges in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean languages, as well as the impossibility of covering them all effectively here. Instead, my hope is that a broader, more reflective approach will lay bare how these challenges affect the field at large, and that a preliminary dialogue will widen the scope of conversation among our colleagues moving forward. Likewise, I hope this article prompts subject librarians to think about Buddhism and Buddhist studies as a chance to work between and across the countries that comprise East Asia, and to collaborate with one another with the aim of a richer, fieldwide understanding of how this tradition is so integral to East Asian studies.

Below, I explore challenges in reference work, collections building, and research advising—all of which are interrelated—that tend to emerge for East Asian librarians. At the end of each section, I offer a few suggestions and resources for navigating these challenges and for fostering a broad sense of how to work effectively with these materials. In concluding, I then gesture to a few emerging trends in the field of Buddhist studies and suggest ways that East Asian librarians can support this evolving field in the future.

\[^{4}\text{As Li and Li (2021) have recently shown, collaboration within and across fields has become one among several new cornerstone qualifications for East Asian studies librarianship within the last decade. Their data shows that, in addition to new responsibilities surrounding reference, liaison, and instruction work, open, collaborative relationships are now also key aspects of work in this field and are the byproduct of new expectations for librarians to maintain networks of stakeholders related to major projects, and to engage more publicly in those efforts. In this spirit, this article highlights the imperative to collaborate in meeting challenges that may extend beyond one's immediate area of specialization and to assume an entrepreneurial role in finding solutions that benefit the entire field.}\]
Buddhist studies in East Asian collections

With some variation, Buddhist studies curricula typically occupy one of three roles with regard to East Asian studies at universities within the United States. In one model, Buddhist studies subsumes other aspects of East Asian cultural studies and foregrounds pastoral or chaplaincy training in an otherwise culturally oriented curriculum. One typically finds this model at Buddhist universities or seminaries such as Naropa University, University of the West, Soka University, the Institute of Buddhist Studies, and others. In a second model, Buddhist studies occupies a subdivision of religious studies and it is typically explored, at the graduate level, alongside other traditions though with a focus on a single regional tradition of Buddhism. In these departments, one tends to find Buddhist studies faculty supported by specialists in other, non-Buddhist Asian religions. In a third model, Buddhist studies occupies a subdivision of an East Asian studies department. In this model, students and faculty study Buddhism through a cultural lens, with a regional focus on either China, Japan, or Korea.

The variety of these models means that librarians at these institutions must also approach collections development with a range of foci to meet scholarly and curricular needs. At Buddhist universities and seminaries, collections tend to be pitched heavily in the way of Buddhist studies with a focus on Buddhist training. These libraries can include curricular subjects that are integral to chaplaincy work, such as social justice, environmental studies, leadership studies, or community outreach. In both the religious studies and East Asian studies departmental models, Buddhist studies can, depending on the institution, occupy a considerable portion of the library’s East Asian collection. At universities with robust and well-resourced Buddhist studies programs or with a healthy constituency of faculty working on a particular region, for example, one tends to find comprehensive collections geared to that faculty specialty. In some cases, portions of these collections might be named after a modern, promotional association from within the Buddhist tradition or a notable scholar from within Buddhist studies. Given the variation with which these factors above influence the shape of collections, librarians must also assume a range of approaches in collections development and research consultations that make use of these collections, and all of this depends on the institution, departmental model, and faculty presence. This amounts to the reality that Buddhist studies collections drastically vary in volume, content, and curricular and scholarly purpose, as does their use by East Asian librarians.

The reality of this variation is sharpened further when we consider the relationship between collections and the presence of Buddhist studies faculty through a snapshot of Buddhist studies holdings in the Ivy Plus consortium. In Table 1 we can see rough data on holdings in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean vernacular records related to Buddhism across Ivy Plus.

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5 Two examples of these named collections outside of the Ivy Plus consortium include: UC Berkeley’s Numata Collection, named for the Numata Family, who were involved in the early establishment of the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism (Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai 佛教伝導教会, or “BDK”) and the Stanley Weinstein Collection, named for the late scholar of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, at the University of Virginia.
Table 1. Snapshot of CJK Buddhist studies Holdings and Faculty in Ivy Plus Institutions⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Buddhist Studies Records (Chinese)</th>
<th>Buddhist Studies Records (Japanese)</th>
<th>Buddhist Studies Records (Korean)</th>
<th>Total Records</th>
<th># of East Asian Buddhist Studies Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>4,533</td>
<td>4,326</td>
<td>2,332</td>
<td>11,191</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>2,951</td>
<td>3,481</td>
<td>2,737</td>
<td>9,169</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>3,514</td>
<td>4,072</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7,770</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>2,952</td>
<td>3,269</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>6,641</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford</td>
<td>3,021</td>
<td>2,788</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>6,288</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UChicago</td>
<td>2,606</td>
<td>2,192</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>5,401</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>2,222</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>5,102</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPenn</td>
<td>2,534</td>
<td>2,352</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>5,002</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmouth</td>
<td>1,342</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>3,295</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>2,591</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notable among this data is the relationship between Buddhist studies holdings and the presence of faculty directly affiliated with the discipline. There appears to be little correlation between them. On the one hand, we see very little variation with regard to the presence of faculty directly affiliated with the study of East Asian Buddhism. Most institutions host either two or three faculty, which is near or at full coverage for the region. With this in mind, it is also safe to assume that faculty that identify with broader categories of study such as “East Asian religions,” as well as those outside of the study of religion altogether, may also engage these collections from time to time; as I describe at the start of this article, Buddhism has found its way into such a wide range of cultural productions that encounters with it are practically unavoidable for faculty researchers in sub-disciplines of East Asian studies. On the other hand, holdings of Buddhist studies materials at these same institutions range drastically between roughly 800 and 11,000 records. This means that, for example, two institutions could host the same number of faculty and yet hold wildly different volumes of materials; according to the data, there is a roughly eightfold difference between the highest and lowest holdings among institutions with two faculty members. There are

⁶ Bibliographic data was drawn from WorldCat FirstSearch in May 2022. In order to achieve a narrow but controlled set of results, I used the following parameters: OCLC worldwide search, using the query “Buddhism,” filtered by LC Subject Heading to books only and by language (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean). Each search by language was run separately. Library codes were used to query each institution. Data for faculty constituencies was drawn from current departmental websites and only include faculty who focus narrowly on the study of some aspect of Buddhism within East Asia. An asterisk (*) in the faculty column indicates either the presence of temporary faculty (e.g., one- or two-year postdoctoral appointments) or no presence of faculty directly affiliated with the study of East Asian Buddhism. I note here that departmental websites do not always accurately represent regional and disciplinary focus, though I remained strict about the criteria above so as to maintain control over the data snapshot.
likely several factors that contribute to this disparity among these institutions, which could comprise a study in and of themselves: varying degrees of access to financial resources; the presence of legacy collections that have grown over more time than others; the continuous presence of an East Asian librarian to develop and expand those collections over time, and so forth. Nevertheless, we can surmise from this data that while faculty needs—signaled here by faculty presence with direct links to the study of East Asian Buddhism—remains generally similar across these institutions, the volume and diversity of institutional holdings varies greatly.

Buddhist studies collections are as more or less voluminous, varied, and diverse as the curricular, departmental, and scholarly demands that give them shape, and yet they serve a similarly sized pool of scholars at Ivy Plus institutions. If this data is any indication of trends beyond this consortium, I expect similarly varied holdings at other institutions across the United States. Crucially, the acute demands made of the East Asian librarian in stewarding over and leveraging these materials in day-to-day tasks must be equally varied and diverse. For this reason, it is the materials themselves that warrant a unified approach and it would benefit the field at large to view these materials for their inherent potential for collaboration. We can learn by formalizing and sharing tactics that have been successful in our engagement with these materials, and we can confront the linguistic and bibliographic diversity of these materials by taking stock of approaches that are consistent and replicable.

Of course, the volume and diversity of Buddhist studies holdings comprises only a small portion of this challenge. Just as the curricular, departmental, and scholarly diversity at institutions has given shape to wildly diverse collections, the materials within those collections are multilingual, transhistorical, and equally diverse in their representation of Buddhist communities and practices. These qualities can pose several additional challenges for the East Asian librarian.

**Challenges in reference**

Taken together, these challenges can emerge from linguistic, bibliographic, and practical aspects of the Buddhist studies field and/or Buddhist tradition and require consideration beyond those that typically occupy the librarian covering one specific East Asian country. While every subject field has its own set of unique aspects that require careful consideration by any librarian, the challenges outlined below differ because they are as much a byproduct of the Buddhist tradition as they are of the field’s scholarly conventions. That is, some of the very systems for organizing and taxonomizing knowledge produced by and for Buddhists are also those used by scholars studying the tradition. This means that a librarian’s engagement with these materials, whether secondary or primary, may likewise be enhanced by working within and across these same systems.

As one example of what I mean, I refer to the Chinese exegete Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), who developed and systematized commentarial frameworks for analyzing Buddhist scriptures, which became standard practice across East Asia. Part of his system, which came to be referred to as the “five categories of meaning” (wuchong xuanyi 五重玄義), provided scriptural commentators a template for investigating the meaning of a scripture’s title, purpose, essential teaching, social impact, and overall value within the Buddhist tradition. In
turn, textual scholars in Buddhist studies who read these scriptures also read the accompanying commentaries that excavate their “meaning,” and therefore Buddhist frameworks of interpretation also find their way into Buddhist studies scholarship on the textual and social history of a given scripture. Of course, East Asian librarians need not develop a comprehensive knowledge of premodern Buddhist commentarial practices. Rather, a basic understanding that certain aspects of Buddhist scriptures have been privileged, over time, as key sources of interpretation may inform approaches to research consultations and collection development; knowing that a certain text is taxonomically important to the tradition and to the scholars studying it may help to guide bibliographic support.

While Zhiyi’s practices relate to systems of interpretation, the following example focuses on the importance of abiding by some of the linguistic systems that emerged in Buddhist East Asia. Innovative departmental structures established within the library field over the last decade or more may encourage collaboration across languages to some degree, but the general tendency for siloed work within either Chinese, Japanese, or Korean reflects longstanding linguistic divisions expected of the subject librarian profession. The historical co-development of East Asian Buddhism and East Asian linguistic conventions across several centuries have continued, over at least twenty-five years, to throw into sharp relief several reference-based challenges related to language. In his prescient study, Kenneth Tanaka (1997) recognized the inherent problems in working with Japanese Buddhist terminology in subject headings and focused on a lack of Buddhist cross-references in some CJK terms. He also identified the need to provide vernacular readings of Buddhist terms that otherwise do not ideographically communicate their meaning to those unfamiliar with them. Tanaka identified the challenges inherent to Buddhism’s multilingual qualities across terms and titles and encouraged an inclusive approach to Buddhist terminology across CJK by expanding on the linguistic metadata in a given record. And yet, other similar linguistic challenges persist after twenty-five years and the field of librarianship continues to find ways to accommodate the cross-referential systems that are so necessary.

A major challenge I refer to here relates to historical phonetic conventions, which differ between Buddhist and vernacular uses of the same terms across Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. In the case of Japanese, modern reading conventions emerged from premodern reading conventions originally derived from Chinese (Jpn: on-yomi 音読み), which has three sub-conventions: reading conventions derived from the southern Wu region (Jpn: go-on 吳音, lit. “Wu sound”), reading conventions derived from the Tang era (Jpn: kan-on 漢音), and reading conventions derived from later Tang and Song eras (Jpn: tō-sō-on 唐宋音). Among these three, go-on conventions first arrived in Japan around the sixth century and became the standard for reading both legal and Buddhist texts in Japan. Sino-Korean, too, followed

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7 There are also examples of this convention in non-CJK languages such as Sino-Vietnamese. For example, dictionaries tend to give the vernacular reading of tri tuệ for 智慧 (“wisdom,” Chn: zhihui; Jpn: chie; Kor: jihye), while its reading in a Buddhist context is typically tri huệ. I am grateful to software engineer and non-Anglophone Unicode developer Lee Collins for bringing this example to my attention.

8 See Masayoshi Shibatani (2008, 121-122). While go-on is often the convention used for Buddhist texts across most schools, tō-sō-on is commonly used for texts specific to the Zen 禪 (Chn: Chan; Kor: Seon) school. According to Tranter (2017, 242), this is likely a reflection of the prominence of this
similar conventions regarding go-on, and scholar of Chinese linguistics Ik-sang Eom proposes (2015, 227-228) that these conventions arrived in Japan along with Buddhism from the Baekje kingdom during the sixth century. Some of these conventions remain in Sino-Korean today. 9 By and large, then, one (among many) unifying features of East Asian vernacular culture is that it has historically treated Buddhist textual material differently than it has its colloquial textual material.

Japanese readings of the Sinograph 経 help to illustrate this distinction by example: the native Japanese reading of 経 is heru (経る); the go-on reading is kyō; the kan-on reading is kei; and the tō-sō-on reading is kin. 10 As should be apparent, the reading of this Sinograph changes depending on whether or not it appears in a colloquial context or in a Buddhist context, and readings of the latter may be different depending on the school of Buddhism from which the text emerges. Similar examples appear in the Korean language as well: the Sanskrit term for bodhi (“awakening” or “enlightenment”) is rendered and read as bori, rather than boje 보리 in a colloquial context; the Sanskrit place name Grdhhrakūṭa (“Vulture Peak”; Chn: Lingjiu shan 靈鷲山; Jpn: Ryōju sen), or the Northern Indian site at which the Buddha is said to have delivered his Mahāyāna teachings, is read as Yeongchuk san 영축산 rather than the Yeongchwi san 영취산 in a colloquial context. These and many other exceptions to vernacular rulesets have persisted into the modern era, and for librarians who may be unaware of them, they amount to a general unpredictability with regard to reading and, therefore, romanization conventions for many characters that appear in CJK Buddhist contexts.

How might this present a challenge with regard to reference work today? While nearly all university library catalogs provide CJK search support, which means that searching using the original Chinese, Japanese, or Korean should suffice in search queries, some catalogs may treat variant forms of the same characters differently. The MARC-8 character set remains the standard for library information systems and provides a pool of limited but universally integrated CJK characters. 11 While this pool is robust, it does not include each and every variant across CJK and will therefore disallow certain Japanese variants to be processed because some unified ideographs among the pool derive instead from Chinese. This may also extend to other integrated library systems that do not provide equal support across the entirety of CJK. OCLC’s Connexion tool, for example, which provides a centralized network for sharing and managing bibliographic records, is supported by this limited pool of unified ideographs in China during the Tang and Song eras and the edification of the go-on linguistic convention in Japan prior to the arrival of Zen.

9 Eom has also published extensively on this topic in Korean (2008) and has also covered related topics in English (1999). I am grateful to him for corresponding with me about this issue.

10 These examples appear in Susumu (2000, 1658). There are dozens of go’on examples like this in Japanese and many of them appear as parts of titles of texts (e.g. kyō 経, to indicate a scriptural title, as in Dainichikyō 大日經), honorific titles (e.g. myō 明, to indicate the quality of wisdom as part of a pronoun, as in myoo 明王), or as key concepts in the Buddhist tradition (e.g. shinshō 心性 (“nature of the mind”) as opposed to the kun-yomi reading shinsei (“mentality”); funbetsu 分別 (“[mental] discrimination”) as opposed to the kun-yomi reading bunbetsu (“separation” or “discretion”), and so forth. For an excellent overview of these and other conventions, along with examples, see Ariga (1989, 5-20), which I also reference at the end of this section.

11 See https://www.loc.gov/marc/specifications/speccharintro.html.
ideographs. Ultimately, this means that searching using CJK characters alone may not suffice in retrieving helpful results. Yet, the unpredictability of Buddhist romanization conventions means that searching with romanized characters also may not prove effective.

Such romanization conventions may also affect day-to-day browsing of physical stacks. For example, in many libraries it is not uncommon for ILL slips to arrive without CJK scripts, which leaves the librarian to discern the correct CJK title using romanization alone. If only the (correct) romanization of a Buddhist title is provided on the slip, this may also prove confusing to a librarian scanning the stacks, unaware of the Sinograph from which the romanization derives. Buddhist linguistic conventions therefore present a set of related challenges to reference workflow and may slow the process of searching for and accurately identifying titles, names, or other key concepts that find their way into one's bibliographic coverage of a region.

A basic familiarity with Buddhist phonetic conventions across CJK might help to mitigate these challenges, at least initially. In Chinese, Qingzhi Zhu (2009) provides a historical overview, from several linguistic angles, of the impact of Sanskrit on the development of Chinese translations of Buddhist texts. In English, Sinologist Victor Mair (1994) has written on the use of vernacular Chinese and what he calls “Buddhist Hybrid Sinitic,” rather than literary Chinese, to translate texts entering China from India. In Japanese, Ariga Yōen (1989) offers helpful diagrams to explain some of the linguistic origins of reading conventions in Japanese and, as a reference work, his dictionary is an excellent resource for tricky terms that diverge from colloquial readings. While there are technical studies of Sino-Korean, much less exists compared to the volume of studies on Sino-Japanese. As mentioned above, however, Ik-sang Eom (2008; 2015) is a major authority in this area and has written on the historical relationship between Chinese and Korean, especially as it pertains to premodern Buddhist influences. In addition, Yong-ui Pak (2012) provides an excellent source for discerning the correct reading of Buddhist terms in Korean. Of course, these are only a few among many sources that may function similarly. No matter the case, keeping a small collection of handy reference works nearby is one way to confront some of the linguistic challenges outlined above.

Challenges in collections building

There are yet other challenges that derive from two primary historical aspects of Buddhism and Buddhist studies: the Buddhist tradition’s multicultural, multilingual, and chronological reach on the one hand and, on the other, an explosion of Buddhist studies scholarship beginning in North America in the mid-20th century. These historical aspects have shaped

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12 The Japanese glyph 戸 is a good example of this, as OCLC’s Connexion will convert to the Sinograph 戸 without recognizing the former. For a list of unified characters in CJK, see: https://www-unicode.org/charts/PDF/U4E00.pdf. I am very grateful to Order Specialist Sara Biondi and Catalog Librarian Nanako Thomas, both of Duke University, for bringing this example to my attention.
13 In addition to the sources listed here, I note that one of the most distinct features of Charles Muller’s Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, which I describe below (n. 22) in a section on electronic resources, is that it provides Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit pronunciations for all queries, and therefore meets several of the linguistic challenges outlined in this article. It also provides direct citations, usually by page number, to reference works for each entry.
the ways that libraries have organized and managed both primary and secondary materials. With regard to this first aspect, it is difficult to overstate the content variability of Buddhist textual corpora; it is comprised of scriptures, commentarial texts, disciplinary and legal texts, verse and poetry, ritual manuals, biographies, and didactic literature, to name only a few. This may seem straightforward in the grand scheme of religious literature generally, but it becomes much more complex when we consider the fact that these corpora have been refracted through every culture with which Buddhism has interacted. These genres assume slightly different form and function depending on whether they emerged within Mainstream Buddhist schools (such as Theravada Buddhism, one major branch of Buddhism that follows the Buddha’s earliest teachings) or Mahāyāna Buddhism (another branch that comprises the vast majority of Buddhism in East Asia and throughout the rest of the world). This variability is heightened even further when we consider the fact that three distinct bodies of canonical literature across at least three languages are acknowledged by the tradition, and each of these canons organize and privilege different subsets of the textual corpora: the Pāli canon, written in a Middle Indo-Aryan language called Pāli, is the scriptural collection in the Mainstream tradition; the Chinese canon, written in Chinese, is the scriptural collection in the East Asian Mahāyāna traditions; and the Tibetan canon, written in Tibetan, is the scriptural collection of Mahāyāna traditions in Tibet, Bhutan, and parts of Central Asia.¹⁴ Whereas some other religious traditions, such as Catholicism (barring liturgical distinctions), are anchored by a centralized Church that authenticates, disseminates, and stewards over a monolithic set of texts and ideas, the decentralized nature of the Buddhist tradition makes it difficult to assess its textual culture in monolithic terms. The multicultural and multilingual proliferation of the Buddhist tradition over time has only deepened and complicated its relationship to textual production and this distinguishing quality can present challenges for librarians in collections building.

With regard to the second aspect, an increasing volume of Buddhist studies scholarship during the mid-20th century introduced acute organizational demands to librarianship. Following World War II, there was a boom in research programs focused on East Asia with ties to surveillance and intelligence-gathering at the behest of the United States government. By the 1950s, these efforts were advanced by a growing interest in contextualized studies of the region by humanists, who sought to collect materials related to East Asia. This, in turn, introduced logistical challenges in organizing the materials, especially through centralized cataloging standards. These standards were first introduced as the Harvard-Yenching Classification System by Dr. Alfred Kaiming Chiu, Head of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, in 1943. This system was flexible enough to accommodate East Asian practices of bibliographic organization within an American context, and included new methods for adding romanized titles and authors along with Asian scripts within some records (Gee and Tan 2003, 146). Later, new systems were introduced by the Joint Committee on Oriental Collections sponsored by the predecessor of what is now known as the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) (Wu 2014, 164-165).

At the same time, especially in Chinese and Japanese Buddhist studies, drastic changes in scholarly foci have demanded new ways of confronting the diversity of studies across the

¹⁴ For a concise explanation and taxonomy of the three bodies of canonical literature see: Harvey (2012, Appendix I), pp. 459-462.
In a recent study (Tang, et al. 2020) focused on 135,000 Buddhist studies publications in Chinese, Japanese, and English, scholars have shown that studies published between 1957 and 1986 tended to focus on Chinese Buddhism’s relationship to pre-existing philosophies and religions in China. This comparative focus on pre-existing systems was also generally true of studies in Japanese Buddhism, though there was an additional focus on Japan’s lineages and “founder figures.” From 1987 to 2016, however, studies in Chinese Buddhism assumed a greater focus on areas peripheral to Buddhism such as education, economics, and science. Likewise, in this later period, studies in Japanese Buddhism tended to focus less on textual studies and more on modernity and sociological networks as guiding frameworks. At a basic level, this study reveals a vested interest in Chinese and Japanese Buddhist studies scholarship in diversifying both methods and areas of focus from roughly the mid-20th century.

Due to the dramatic increase and diversification in scholarship during this period, the Library of Congress established subject headings for Buddhism (BQ series) in 1972 to help taxonomize the widening pool of studies that comprised the bibliographic record. Prior to the establishment of these headings, Buddhism had been organized under the Religion subject heading (BM series), which eventually lacked the nuance and granularity necessary to effectively organize Buddhist materials by subject (Foskett 2012, 327). A brief glance at the Library of Congress Subject Headings for Buddhism reveals sixty-six heading and sub-heading groups, which cover topics ranging from histories and scriptures to biographies and ritual practices.\(^{15}\)

The multilingual and multicultural aspects of Buddhist primary texts, taken together with the complexity and breadth of secondary bibliographic taxonomies, signals further challenges in collections building, namely, how to assess the importance of works peripheral to critical editions. Holding a single copy of a critical edition of a Buddhist text is indeed important, but often ignored is the vast network of commentarial writings and earlier editions of the text that are equally important to scholars. This also includes secondary scholarship on these same writings. As described above, the largely referential and iterative nature of Buddhist writing means that the textual culture extends both horizontally and vertically; critical editions float to the top as paradigmatic translations in Chinese from the Indic original, or in Japanese and Korean from the Chinese, while a mass of commentarial literature grows outward, which gives rise to its own meta-commentarial traditions, and so forth. Buddhist texts have spent a millennium germinating and producing vast lineages of textual production, which means that, in addition to a critical edition, several iterations or variants of a given text, along with its commentaries, may also be crucial for textual scholars in the field of Buddhist studies.\(^{16}\) There are concrete reasons for this: studying the exchange of Buddhist ideas across geographical regions means that comparing the same text in two or more languages may be necessary; studies on lineal and sectarian teachings in East Asian

\(^{15}\) For a listing of the LC’s current BQ subclass, see: https://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/classification/lcco/lcco_b.pdf.

\(^{16}\) The process of collation is now a deep consideration for scholars studying Buddhist textual criticism and compilation across histories, geographies, and languages. See, for example, Bingenheimer (2014) and Buswell (2004). Newer studies have begun to include analyses of the position and value of variant texts in contemporary Buddhist studies. On this, see Long and Chen (2021), mentioned at the end of this section, and Wu and Wilkinson (2017).
Buddhism means a focus on iterative writing within that line or sect over time; and critical editions themselves often reflect culminations of intellectual histories across the tradition’s development.

For these same reasons, there are also challenges in effectively profiling for Buddhist studies through approval plans. Approval profiles tend to be broadly scoped to ensure that general titles on Buddhism arrive and may include principal studies of key Buddhist texts. The majority of niche studies on peripheral texts or variant editions, however, which are often included as chapters in specially themed edited volumes or as part of a running series, and which may be equally crucial for comprehensive research, may not be included. In my experience at Duke University, when approval lists do include works on key Buddhist texts they nearly always cover the critical edition of a text in translation. Scholars must therefore make targeted requests from librarians, as necessary, for peripheral studies of variant editions or commentaries. In these cases, where a librarian already knows of scholars working in a specific sub-area of Buddhist textual studies, relying on approval plans alone is not enough to develop the collection effectively at the point of need. With an understanding that scoping beyond the critical edition is a necessary part of acquisition in this area, hand-selecting peripheral titles may be effective for the horizontal development of a collection.

Effectively hand-selecting titles during collections-building, therefore, can be a difficult process without a consideration of the expansion, contraction, and intersection of textual lines across languages, regional histories, and geographical spaces. Gaining a sense of principal Buddhist texts and their earlier iterations, variants, and commentaries requires the use of several complementary reference works. For the most current collection of critical editions of scriptural literature, one might explore the *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō sōmokuroku* (2007), which lists titles (and variant titles) of each major scripture within the modern Chinese canon. Of course, a mere list of titles without a content summary does not necessarily communicate scholarly value to librarians. For this reason, one might also engage reference works that provide historical or biographical context by looking up key terms or turns of phrase from within the very title of a text (recall that one part of Zhiyi’s five-part taxonomy mentioned above focuses on the meaning captured by scriptural titles). In Japanese, for example, for each terminological entry in Mochizuki Shinkō’s *Bukkyō daijiten* (1958), the editor provides both a definition and titles of principal works from which the definition of the term derives. Engaging this reference work would allow the librarian to acquire a rough sense of the content of a given scripture. For the current collection of writings by multiple authors or one author within a specific sect or lineage, one might refer to any number of sets of complete works 全集 (Chn: quanji; Jpn: zenshū; Kor: chounjip), which very often contain important commentarial works. Likewise, many biographical dictionaries also list principal and derivative works at the end of entries for notable Buddhist individuals. In these cases, librarians would also benefit from using Ono Genmyō’s *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* (1974), which gives titles, authors, and short summaries of key scriptures that comprise the Chinese Buddhist canon and other Buddhist works recognized across East Asia. For a narrower view of Japan only, Shūyū Kanaoka’s *Nihon Bukkyō tenseki daijiten*

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17 Several Buddhist biographical dictionaries cover the three East Asian countries. For China, see Zhenhua (1999); for Japan, see Saitō and Naruse (1992); for Korea, see Yi (1993). Beyond East Asia, see Mitsuyoshi (1987) for coverage of Indian figures (in Japanese).
(1986) focuses on principal, variant, and commentarial works produced by Japanese Buddhists. Finally, Bodiford and Buswell’s (2005) web-based reference guide to East Asian Buddhism offers good coverage for the entire region and across CJK. Using these terminological, biographical, and bibliographic reference sources in tandem should give a sense of what variant or lesser-known texts are important for textual scholars working in East Asian Buddhism. While it is important to know that resources like these provide titles and translations for the most authoritative texts in East Asian Buddhism, it is equally important to bear in mind that variant translations and commentaries do exist and they may be important for scholars working across historical periods or languages.

A familiarity with the historical flows of Buddhist textual knowledge might also be of benefit. Jiang Wu and Lucille Chia (2020) provide an excellent overview of the channels through which the Chinese Buddhist canon traveled over centuries across East Asia with particular focus on the formation and dissemination of the printed canon. Long and Chen (2021) also provide coverage of the printed canon, but introduce compelling studies of canonical and extra-canonical compilation and categorization practices. Historical overviews like these are helpful for giving a sense of the processes of duplication and expansion that were central to the formation of what we now refer to as the Chinese Buddhist canon, but also of the impact of variant or commentarial writings that helped to shape the canon in early centuries. Jan Nattier (2008), who has contributed to paradigmatic shifts in the study of early Chinese Buddhism, also provides a helpful overview of key Indic texts and practices that helped to inform translation practices in China. Since writings peripheral to critical editions of texts are often produced within a sectarian context and, in fact, may sometimes include prefaces that situate the contents of the writing alongside the writer’s own sectarian doctrine, some basic knowledge of Buddhist sectarian divisions may also benefit librarians. Shūyū Kanaoka’s (1979) dictionary might be a good place to start and may lead to other, narrower works that explain sectarian histories and doctrines across East Asia. Of course, journals remain a rich site of information on up-to-date Buddhist textual studies and, among several others, the Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies (JCBS), the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies (JJRS), and the Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies (KJBS) provide examples of ongoing scholarship focused on several aspects of Buddhist textual production.

**Challenges in consultation and research advising**

At the consultation level, working with researchers in the field of East Asian Buddhist studies can also include challenges. Many librarians assist students and faculty in their preparation for research abroad, which can involve corresponding with in-country libraries, archives, and museums ahead of time and on behalf of the student or researcher, helping to identify appropriate sites for academic research, liaising with East Asian scholars on behalf of the student researcher, and so forth. While these processes vary depending on which East Asian country the researcher intends to visit, the basic approaches to these forms of support remain largely predictable under typical conditions. When it comes to research at a university or municipal library, the entry and affiliation process is generally clear; depending on the country, the foreign researcher will need to present some form of identification, perhaps include an advocacy letter from their librarian or principal investigator at their
home institution and fill out the necessary paperwork to be issued a library identification. Thereafter, the patron can enjoy the use of the stacks, make retrieval requests for titles in the case of closed stacks, make photocopies, and even request digitization, depending on the resources of the library and access to the item itself. This process and the patron’s privileges remain generally similar library to library, including those with religious affiliation. Libraries at Buddhist universities such as Ryūkoku University in Japan, Dongguk University in Korea, and Fo Guang University in Taiwan operate similarly to other university and municipal libraries insofar as clear processes are in place for gaining access to materials.

In the cases of Japan and Korea, many Buddhist universities were first established as seminaries by members of a given sect of Buddhism. This means that the curriculum and library holdings may be pitched more heavily toward that sect. For example, Japan’s Ōtani University was established in 1901 by a Shin Buddhist reformer and is thus affiliated with the Ōtani lineage of Jōdo Shinshū (or “Shin”) Buddhism, while Komazawa University was first established as a Zen (Chn: Chan; Kor: Seon) seminary and is affiliated with the Sōtō subsect. Other universities in Japan, such as Taishō University, are transsectarian, which means they represent a range of Buddhist schools. There are similar universities in Korea, such as Dongguk University, which is affiliated the Chogye subsect of Seon Buddhism, and Wonkwang University, which is affiliated with the modern reformist movement of Won Buddhism. In the case of Taiwan, its major Buddhist universities are affiliated with the Fo Guang Shan monastic order, a non-sectarian order which derives from the teachings of Venerable Master Xing Yun, who himself began his training in the Linji lineage of Chan Buddhism. As modern, degree-granting universities, these institutions often straddle the line between the religious and secular worlds; students attend these universities and fulfill their religious desires as necessary, but also receive training in non-religious courses in mathematics, sciences, and humanities. This dual role makes these universities a convenient entry point for researchers who wish to access temple archives because many of the university faculty members are connected to, or entered the university from, temples associated with a Buddhist school.

For students or faculty who would like to conduct archival research at a Buddhist temple, however, librarians must adopt a different approach in their guidance and support. Unlike university and municipal libraries, contemporary Buddhist temples do not have clear or predictable channels for gaining access to their temple archives. With some exception, and depending on the school of Buddhism with which the temple is affiliated, temples tend to operate on two distinct levels of access. At the public-facing level, people are generally allowed onto temple grounds to tour the landscape and architecture, and to appreciate the artwork and ephemera that is sometimes placed on public display. Likewise, many temples also offer overnight stays, which include meals and, occasionally, the chance to participate in a Buddhist service of some kind. On another, more private level, Buddhist temple archives tend to be much more tightly controlled in terms of access and visibility to the general public. Temple archives are not libraries in the sense that any patron can gain access, browse the holdings, and make requests for specific materials, and are more akin to a repository used to store materials for the purpose of preservation and for the material perpetuity of the temple and its affiliated sect. Of course, this does not mean that materials never see the light of day; occasionally, a temple may “release” or make public a set of important manuscripts or printed materials, but these are generally highly orchestrated, regulated, and strategic
efforts mediated by the temple’s representatives and the press, and sometimes coincide with a major memorial anniversary of a temple or temple founder.

English-language guides for conducting archival research in East Asia are scant, though Brian Ruppert (2006) provides one applicable model for accessing manuscripts at Japanese temples. The first step for researchers is to identify and locate a given text. In the case of Japanese Buddhist manuscripts, the Kokusho sōmokuroku (1989) provides a helpful index of texts published prior to the nineteenth century and gives locations of these texts across over 600 libraries in Japan, some of which are temple archives. For printed works in Japan, one might refer to the Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan database, which gives titles, authors, and locations of these works held in municipal, university, and temple libraries and archives.18 Additionally, several large-scale temples with their own repositories now publish catalogues for their own holdings, which include texts and other ephemera, and these should be consulted before organizing a trip abroad to visit the temple archive. Secondary studies on temple holdings may also serve a similar purpose in identifying and locating materials.19

With regard to a visit to the temple, Ruppert’s guidance reflects the realities not only in Japan but elsewhere in East Asia and his model may be replicated with some success at other temples. Generally speaking, access to temple archives is most successfully facilitated through an “introduction” by someone connected to the temple. This individual could be a religious affiliate or a scholar with good standing in the intellectual community. They should vouch for the researcher’s good-faith efforts in exploring and, ultimately, promoting the representatives within a temple are unaware of or cannot discern the scholarly value of items within their holdings, and thus this individual should act as a liaison between the religious and intellectual parties. As Ruppert describes (p. 366), however, unseen divisions and contentions between scholars and clergy can occasionally obstruct efforts to lay the groundwork for these connections. To avoid situations like this, it is best to confer with as many scholars as possible to get the best sense of the stakes of the relationships one intends to begin building. While some researchers may have had success by simply calling and making an appointment during a scheduled period of access during the year, this may only allow for access to very specific parts of a collection. In my experience, unsolicited attempts without a formal introduction tend to be far more inhibitive than beneficial.

In cases where access is granted, the request will usually undergo its own formal paperwork process and the researcher may be asked to pre-select the exact materials to be viewed and to designate a specific date or range of dates for arrival to the temple. Pre-selecting materials will be easier if the temple has cataloged and organized its holdings in a print or electronic database that allows for searching, or if the researcher has previously

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18 The Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan database can be found at: https://www.nijl.ac.jp/en/.
19 Prior to my own archival work at Chishakuin (Kyoto), I consulted the two-volume Chizan shoko shozō mokuroku: sōhonzan Chishakuin (1995). As for other examples in the case of Japan, the Shingon temple Daigoji publishes the four-volume Daigoji monjo seikyo mokuroku (2000); in the case of Taiwan, the Fo Guang Shan Temple Buddhist Research Center has compiled a list of Ming and Qing holdings here: http://120.101.67.49/platform/downloads/file/1090505/2020-05-05.pdf; direct access to temples in China can be difficult, though some modern gazetteer reproductions exist, such as the Zhongguo fosizhi congkan (2006), which provide detailed temple histories, biographies, maps, didactic stories, and artwork. One example of recent secondary studies of temples holdings in Japanese is the twelve-volume series edited by Nakayama (2019).
been able to identify texts using a general database unaffiliated with the temple, such as those listed in the previous section. In cases where the temple has no catalog or resource for searching through the holdings, researchers should expect a brief tour of the space to understand how things are organized and, later, long hours spent looking through materials unrelated to the project. In cases where copies and photographs are not allowed, which is generally the case, researchers should plan to bring notetaking materials and be ready to leave all digital devices behind before they are allowed entry to the archive. In cases where copies are allowed, there is often a limit to the number of copies that can be made and required paperwork to designate the titles to be copied. Researchers should also be prepared to make a “donation” to the temple in exchange for these materials.

Buddhist temples derive their identity not only from their physical architecture, historical presence within a region, and the practices of their followers, but also the texts and ephemera through which they claim historical authority and continuity. Archival holdings, some of which may be directly connected to the very founder figures of a school or lineage, are precious because they materially link the temple to its own history; archival holdings are self-substantiating for an entire school or lineage that stretches back centuries. For this reason, these materials are protected from damage, loss, and theft at great cost, and throttling public access to these materials ensures the temple’s material history remains intact in perpetuity.

**Future support and collaboration**

Buddhist studies materials provide a set of challenges that cut across the field of East Asian librarianship. These challenges are linguistic, bibliographic, and practical, and derive as much from the tradition as they do from the scholarly practices in the field of Buddhist studies. While some librarians may encounter Buddhist studies materials directly in collections development, I expect most will encounter them indirectly through work on peripheral topics in East Asian literary, historical, and art historical studies during consultations. In these cases, too, the same linguistic and bibliographic challenges may arise. I have attempted to outline above only a few solutions that I hope serve as a starting point for a broader dialogue about resources, strategies, and approaches to such materials. Many librarians may have already discovered ways to navigate some of these challenges, and in the spirit of collegial support, I hope they also feel encouraged to vocalize about what has worked for them in the past.

Like many other fields, Buddhist studies is undergoing a generational turnover. Recent PhDs are joining the faculty ranks and many of them have emerged from programs that offer cutting-edge training using new research tools and methodologies. Digital tools that visualize spatial or textual relationships and the use of linked open data that help to establish these relationships are now more common than ever. Platforms like BuddhaNexus, which allows for text-matching across Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan from within Buddhist textual corpora, facilitates the identification and visualization of textual connections across a few of the primary Buddhist languages. The movement of print materials to digital spaces over the last two decades, out of which have emerged such paradigmatic platforms as the Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō text database (also known as the “SAT” database) and the Chinese Electronic Tripiṭaka Collection (also known as the “CBETA” database), both of which host
electronic versions of the Chinese Buddhist canon, have also facilitated this type of work. Image-based infrastructures that allow for archiving and preserving manuscript materials for annotation are also now well-resourced, publicly accessible, and staffed by scholars, librarians, and technologists, such as the Buddhist Digital Archives (BUDA). East Asian librarians can support the use of these types of platforms in the same ways that they support digital research in other subfields: they can seek up-to-date studies such as those by Bingenheimer, et al. (2020), Veidlinger (2019), and Grieve and Veidlinger (2015); they can gain or maintain access to important digital dictionaries, encyclopedias, and databases; they can encourage their faculty researchers to leverage university centers and labs that offer the use of necessary software platforms for text-mining and visualization; and they can offer support to faculty through collective grant-writing for programs like the Digital Humanities Advancement Grants (DHAG).

Studies in Buddhist textual culture remain important, though new emphases on the lived experiences of Buddhist followers within and across cultural contexts have emerged. These emphases signal a field-wide recognition of the inter- and transcultural qualities that demarcate Buddhist practices. A recent edited volume by Mitchell and Quli (2019) includes historical, ethnographic, and theoretical methodologies across several regions and time periods. In this same vein, narrower studies have emerged on contemporary issues such as marriage and gender roles (Starling 2020), commerce (Bruntz and Schedneck 2020; Brox and Williams-Oerberg 2020), healthcare (Salguero 2021), consumer practices (Brox and Williams-Oerberg 2022), ecology (Elverskog 2020; Kaza 2019), and relations to the nation-state (McLaughlin 2018) to name only a few. Likewise, just as the history and literary fields have advanced our understanding of transnational and transcultural issues across time, contemporary Buddhist studies scholars are also exploring the diversity of Buddhist communities beyond Asia (Turner, Cox, and Bocking 2020; Starkey 2019). These few studies above reflect emergent trends in narrow humanistic sub-fields, but the field of Buddhist studies at large remains intensely interdisciplinary; scholars continue to approach materials through philology, history, ethnography, and the social sciences, and situate these studies within localized or transregional contexts. Some of these approaches may be enhanced through the use of the digital research tools mentioned here.

In this way, Buddhist studies offers an opportunity for East Asian librarians to work and collaborate across the entire region. This field of study provides inroads to creative solutions to the various linguistic and bibliographic challenges posed by its primary and secondary materials. Of course, this is not always easy: generally speaking, there are often disparities

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20 The SAT database, which is an electronic version of the Chinese canon based on the canon held at the temple Zōjōji and assembled during the first half of the 20th century (sometimes called the “Taishō canon”), can be visited here: [https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html](https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html). The CBETA database, which is an electronic version of the Chinese canon without the Japanese texts included in the Taishō canon, can be visited here: [http://www.cbeta.org/](http://www.cbeta.org/). I note here that, while these databases generally share in the same corpus, the common scholarly consensus in the field is that CBETA tends to be more reliable as it contains fewer typographical and punctuation errors throughout.

21 Charles Muller’s *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* (1995) remains one of the most easily accessible online dictionaries and is updated monthly by the scholarly community. Buswell and Lopez’s *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (2014), which is published in both print and e-versions, offers perhaps the most comprehensive terminological coverage, across six languages, of any English-language reference work in the field.
in financial support for collections development between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean; there may be varying capacities for collaborative endeavors within institutions and, in some cases, there may be a single librarian covering East Asia at one institution; and students and faculty with a focus on Buddhist studies may only occasionally consult with subject librarians across their geographical divisions. In these instances, it can be difficult to leverage collaborative opportunities effectively and equally.

It is surprising that bibliographic support for East Asian Buddhism tends to remain strictly partitioned according to linguistic or geographical boundaries, as Buddhism is a genuinely global tradition surrounded by a genuinely interdisciplinary field of study. While these boundaries tend to dictate work in East Asian librarianship and can make it difficult to identify and seize the moment for collaboration, this does not mean that librarians cannot work proactively across them. As the field of Buddhist studies continues to evolve, I hope that East Asian subject librarians feel motivated to work in mutually beneficial ways that serve not only the student or researcher, but also the greater community of librarians who all have a stake in the field.

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