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Book Review

Inside Major East Asian Library Collections in North America

Patrick Lo, Hermina G.B. Anghelescu, and Bradley Allard, eds. Emerald Publishing Ltd., 2022, 352 pages.

East Asian libraries are troves of hidden treasures in North America, housing resources for East Asian studies, and extensive collections of special and rare items in various languages, media, and periods. Previous scholarship on East Asian libraries and their stewards largely focuses on the collections and special/rare items in North America. Little has been written to spotlight librarians and their contributions to these collections. Librarians and their work often remain a mystery to the public and even to students and faculty within their own institutions. Therefore, *Inside Major East Asian Library Collections in North America*, a two-volume book published in 2022, provides a fantastic opportunity to showcase the work of East Asian librarians to both academic and public audiences.

This two-volume set contains fifty interviews with East Asian librarians working in the US and Canada. The interviews cover a range of topics, including personal stories, educational backgrounds, career paths, daily job routines, library management, and leadership. The introduction and conclusion highlight trends in East Asian libraries and librarianship, as well as future challenges for the field. Three significant themes emerge from the interview questions. First, East Asian studies librarians are diverse in terms of backgrounds, education, and career paths. Some of the interviewees are originally from East Asian countries. They pursued their higher education in the US and Canada, with a strong interest in information science and librarianship, eventually becoming academic librarians. Others are originally from North America and developed an interest in East Asian languages and cultures through educational and career paths. Most of these interviewees have years of experience studying and working in East Asian countries, while some have even obtained a PhD degree in the study of East Asian histories or cultures. Moreover, the career paths that brought the interviewees to East Asian librarianship are also diverse. Some came to the field with backgrounds in creative writing, had worked in museums, or were historians and associated professors at universities. Others first came to the field with PhD degrees in East Asian history or work experience in East Asian libraries and later obtained a master's degree in information science. These stories provide a vivid portrait of individual librarians and highlight the multi-cultural community of East Asian librarians.

The second theme that emerges from the interviews is the changing roles of East Asian librarians since the twenty-first century. With the rapid adoption of evolving information technologies in North American higher education, the demands of patrons have shifted. To better service these demands, East Asian librarians' roles have moved away from traditional bibliographers who collect and preserve information to information experts who curate and create research resources. Several interviewees noted changes in their positions to provide services that meet the needs of students who have grown up in the digital age and exhibit different research behaviors. The digital age has brought challenges to librarians, which require partnerships with experts outside of their field. East Asian librarians today are seeking collaborations with colleagues to assess the accessibility of information, undertake

digitalization projects for local resources in their institutions, and make resources open access to benefit researchers worldwide. The transformation of librarians' daily responsibilities represents two trends in East Asian libraries: first, digitizing, curating, and preserving born-digital materials with consideration for open access; second, the continued challenge of preserving and disseminating special collections for the future.

This leads to the last theme that emerges from the East Asian librarian interviews: the anxiety towards the digital future. Interviewees express concerns about the role of librarians and the impact of innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) on their jobs. When asked the question "In the age of Internet connectivity, why do we still need bibliographers," a number of concerns emerged. The possibility of job loss and the potential transformation of libraries, including a shift towards digital collections resulting in a library without physical items, have been discussed in the interviews. However, other interviewees highlight the continued importance of librarians in our rapidly changing society, stating that "in the age of Internet connectivity, we need bibliographers more than ever." The roles of librarians will need to evolve to meet the changing demands of patrons, but their expertise and skills remain essential to the quality of information services. The digital age also brings with it new challenges and opportunities for collection development. Interviewees highlight the need to explore innovative strategies for developing East Asian collections to better meet the research needs of patrons. Some of the interviewees propose a range of possible solutions to consider such as collective collection development to maximize resources and achieve a more comprehensive and diverse collection. Others propose building special collections that reflect their institutions' unique strengths and missions. Overall, the interviews reveal a complex picture of librarians' perceptions of the digital future, with both hopes and fears coexisting.

The two-volume set lifts the curtain on East Asian libraries and invites readers to come behind the scenes by highlighting the works and stories of their librarians. Alongside discussing the trends and challenges of East Asian librarianship, interviews delve into the leadership and management of academic libraries, and the myriad of positions held by East Asian librarians. The interviewees include librarians from academic universities and art museums, providing readers with a panoramic view of their work. However, the representatives from institutions outside academic universities are still limited. Future scholars have the opportunity to expand interviews to other institutions and regions such as Europe and Asia. Overall, this set serves to be informative for students of library science and East Asian studies, as well as scholars in both fields. The vivid personal stories of librarians will appeal to a wider audience, satisfying readers' curiosity about the work of East Asian librarians.

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