Meetings and Conferences

Louis Jacob
I. Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting

The 31st Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies was held at the Los Angeles Hilton Hotel, Los Angeles, from March 30 to April 1. Among the panels organized for the meeting, of particular interest to East Asian librarians was the panel entitled, "Librarians and Publishing in the People's Republic of China," chaired by Raymond Tang, University of California, Berkeley.

The first speaker was Antony Marr, Associate Curator, East Asian Collection, Yale University, who presented a paper on "Libraries and Bookstores in the People's Republic of China." Based on information gathered during a 25-day trip to 18 cities and towns in the PRC in the summer of 1978, Mr. Marr's paper contained observations on some of the major libraries he visited, including the National Library of Peking, the Shanghai Public Library, Futan University Library, and the Library of Scientific and Technical Information in Peking. He also identified several of the bookstores at which he purchased and detailed some of the difficulties he encountered in all post offices except in Peking in mailing book parcels back to the U.S. He observed that while book prices were very reasonable, many of the publications he saw in stores were not for export, and that while a limited number of old Chinese books were available, they tended to be quite expensive.

Karl Lo, Head, East Asia Library, University of Washington, presented the second paper, on "Publishing Trends in the People's Republic of China," in which he described the difficulties both in identifying recent Chinese publications because of the inadequacies of bibliographic controls, and in obtaining various types of materials due to the limited number of copies published and restrictions on distribution. (Mr. Lo's paper appears as an article in this issue of the CEAL Bulletin).

As panel discussant, Weiying Wan, Head, Asia Library, University of Michigan, in commenting on Mr. Marr's paper, provided additional information on major Chinese libraries, noting in particular some of the special collections at these libraries, and the high quality of the bibliographic specialists who were in charge of these collections. He also reported that the Library of Scientific and Technical Information in Peking was primarily concerned with the collection, reproduction, translation, and abstracting of foreign scientific and technical literature. With reference to Mr. Lo's paper, he stated that the present publishing situation in China was changing rapidly and that previous studies on this subject were now quite out of date. He also noted that the restrictions on overseas distribution of certain publications were not all made on the basis of political sensitivity, but also resulted from government efforts to satisfy domestic demand for certain publications before exporting copies of them abroad. At the conclusion of the presentations, Mr. Tang showed color slides, taken by Mr. Marr, Mr. Wan, and himself, of Chinese library and bookstore scenes.
During the American Library Association 1979 Annual Conference, held in Dallas June 23–29, the Asian and African Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries convened a panel entitled, "Issues and Problems of Non-Roman Scripts." With Y. T. Feng (Wellesley) in the Chair, the speakers were Christian Filstrup (NYPL), Karl Lo (University of Washington), Hideo Kaneko (Yale), John Schroeder (RLG, Stanford), and Louis Jacob (LC). The common theme was basic problems of automation and romanization.

Speaking of languages using the Arabic script, Mr. Filstrup took the position that only cataloging in the script is tolerable. He argued that the content cannot be separated from the form; that cataloging should be true to the visual content of the text; and that we should attempt to preserve rather than degrade the cultures which are our business.

The New York Public Library has developed a system for displaying Hebrew and Cyrillic scripts at a cost of less than $50,000. It is now working on a methodology for displaying Arabic script.

Mr. Lo stated that both romanization and ideographs will be needed for the cataloging of Chinese materials in the foreseeable future. Roman script will be needed for entries. Mr. Lo recommended that the Wade Giles system continue to be used except for personal names, which should be recorded according to the author's own spelling. Funding should be sought for systems design and data conversion in order to utilize already available hardware and software. A breakthrough is also needed in the coding of Chinese characters and the development of a keyboard design. The Chinese Coding Character Research Association has recently been formed in the People's Republic of China. Its work will supplement efforts already ongoing in Taiwan, the United States and elsewhere. Mr. Lo stated that machine processing of Chinese characters should be adopted as soon as practicable.

Mr. Kaneko noted the progress that has and is being made in Japan on the development of Japanese machine readable cataloging. The National Diet Library hopes to have Japan MARC operative in 1981. He noted that the frequent occurrence of homophones makes the romanization of Japanese impracticable.

Mr. Schroeder reported on a recent visit to seven centers in Japan which are using computers for various bibliographic purposes. The principal centers visited were the National Diet Library, the National Institute of Japanese Literature, Japan Information Center for Science and Technology, and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. He discussed basic inputting techniques, terminal devices and output devices, noting that the fundamental hardware is in hand or close but that work is still needed on software structures, communications problems and hard copy products. American technicians also need to have a clearer idea of what users' needs are in this country.
Mr. Jacob discussed progress in the development in India of a computer capacity to handle South Asian scripts and plans to develop such a capacity in the United States. In the meantime, LC has inaugurated a program to romanize South Asian scripts for cataloging purposes. The principle reason for this decision was to permit South Asian cataloging to be entered into the MARC data base immediately. Although it is LC's expressed intent to catalog in the scripts by machine at the earliest possible date, research and commercial development will need to be much further along to permit the development of practicable and economically feasible programs for doing so. As a consequence, most American libraries are likely to be working with romanized entry forms for South Asian language materials for a number of years.

(Louis Jacob)

III. Chinese-American Librarians Association

In conjunction with the 98th ALA Annual Conference held in Dallas, the Chinese American Librarians Association held a panel meeting, entitled "Asian-American Library Administrators: Experiences and Perspectives." The panel, moderated by John Yung-hsiang Lai, Associate Librarian, Harvard-Yenching Library, included three speakers and three discussants. Saktidas Roy, Director of Libraries, SUNY Buffalo, presented a paper on "Asian-American Library Administrators in General Libraries," which was discussed by Henry C. Chang, State Librarian and Director of Libraries, Archives, Museums & Archaeological Services, U.S. Government of the Virgin Islands. William S. Wong, Head, Asian Library, University of Illinois Libraries, delivered a paper on "Asian-American Library Administrators in Area Collections," which was commented on by Hideo Kaneko, Curator, East Asian Collection, Yale University Library. The final speaker was Ching-chih Chen, Professor and Associate Dean, Graduate School of Library Science, Simmons College, whose paper, "Library Management in Transition—What Are Your Responsibilities?" was discussed by Hwa-wei Lee, Director of Libraries, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.

IV. Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies

The Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies held its annual meeting in Tucson, Arizona, on October 13-14, 1978. Included in the program was a library panel entitled, "Research Materials for East Asian Studies," chaired by Ching-song Gene Hsiao, University of Arizona Library, at which the following papers were presented:


English Language Guides to Materials on Contemporary China, by Anthony Ferguson, Brigham Young University.


John B. Liu, University of Arizona, was the discussant for the first and fourth papers; and Gene Hsiao was the discussant for the second and third papers.