12-1-1993

My Professional Growth within CEAL

Thomas C. Kuo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol1993/iss101/26

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of East Asian Libraries by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
MY PROFESSIONAL GROWTH WITHIN CEAL

Thomas C. Kuo

Since the Ch'ing Emperor of China sent 933 volumes in 130 cases of Chinese books to the United States government as gifts in 1869, which later became part of the Chinese collection in the Library of Congress, a number of university libraries began collecting Chinese printed materials. At the onset of the twentieth century, those leading university libraries and the Library of Congress expanded not only their Chinese collections but also included other East Asian materials.

The interest of scholars and librarians in the field has been growing since the 1930s, but a professional entity to deal with the problems of administration, organization, bibliographical control, well-trained personnel, and international cooperation on resources among East Asian collections was nonexistent until 1958 when the Committee on American Library Resources on the Far East (CALRFE) was established. In the same year, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, ushering in more than twenty additional collections. The newly organized CALRFE, which was renamed the Committee on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) in 1967, became more preoccupied with professional problems. Thereafter, the professional status of the East Asian Library services in North America was recognized.

In 1961, this writer joined the University of Pittsburgh Library System where he was offered an opportunity to create and develop an East Asian collection. Coincidentally, while searching for ideas and ways to present proposals to the University Library Administration for reorganization, this librarian received an invitation in May 1965 from Professor T. H. Tsien to attend the Conference on "Area Studies and the Library" at the University of Chicago.

The papers delivered at the Conference generally dealt with the nature of area studies, their specific challenges for and their dependency on the universities and research libraries, and the positive suggestions for solving those problems. They were most useful in understanding the general trend of the major East Asian libraries in North America and in shedding light on developing area libraries.

In 1967, CEAL continued to expand and its functions concentrated more on practical matters. Under the chairmanship of Professor T. H. Tsien, a number of standing and project subcommittees were organized for fuller member participation in a variety of activities. In 1968, CEAL had members from more than one hundred institutions, representing all East Asian collections in North America.

Since its reorganization, CEAL has not only broadened its scope but also upgraded the academic standard of its activities. The most outstanding activities were the Summer
Training Institutes at the Universities of Chicago and Wisconsin. The main purpose of the former was to train the urgently needed East Asian librarians in all aspects of library services. The latter was conducted by the Library School of the University of Wisconsin and is believed to be the first institute of its kind in dealing mainly with vernacular East Asian materials.

Gradually, this librarian began to ponder upon the common problems shared by other East Asian libraries, such as the uncataloged backlog, the inadequate support from the university library administration, etc., and attempted to improve these problems both within the university and through CEAL.

At the annual CEAL meeting in 1971, this writer presented a paper entitled "Inter-East Asian Library Cooperation," in which he analyzed the causes of the huge backlog of uncataloged books and suggested the launching of an inter-East Asian library cooperative cataloging program under CEAL's leadership. The proposal was not immediately adopted by the Committee, but the idea undoubtedly stimulated some fresh thinking among his colleagues.

In 1972, the first Conference on Chinese Cooperative Cataloging was held in New York. At its conclusion, an ad hoc Committee on Chinese Cooperative Cataloging was appointed with Eugene Wu as chairman.

In 1973, this librarian was elected a member of CEAL's Executive Group and to the chairmanship of CEAL in 1974. At this time, CEAL had to deal with some important issues, such as (1) the implementation of the "The Proposals for a Chinese Cooperative Catalog," which was a result of three annual conferences and deliberations of the ad hoc Committee on Chinese Cooperative Cataloging; (2) the state of the East Asian libraries in the United States and the formulation of resolutions for improving service; and (3) the institutionalization of CEAL activities and the gaining of national recognition for them.

This writer realized that, in order to handle the aforementioned matters, all human resources must be pooled, and CEAL must take the initiative to cooperate with or win support from all groups and organizations related to East Asian studies. Furthermore, it must secure the minimum amount of funding to defray the costs of its activities, particularly the publication of its Newsletter.

In order to seek advice, this writer called a breakfast meeting of the CEAL Executive Group and of highly respected senior members in the field to discuss the issues and principles mentioned above. Consequently, a task force was formed to serve as a Subcommittee on Resources and Development to review the state of East Asian libraries in the United States and to recommend ways to improve their services.

The immediate work of the Subcommittee was to help the Chairman draft a petition to the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Secretariat and to the two regional councils.
immediately involved, the China Inner Asia Regional Council (CIARC) and the Northeast Asia Regional Council (NEARC) for financial support for the publication of the CEAL Newsletter and for a task force meeting planned for the fall of 1974.

Through a series of consultations and correspondence, the five Subcommittees and an editorial staff of the CEAL Newsletter were organized within a month. Also, the minutes from the Third Conference on Chinese Cooperative Cataloging and the outline of the proposals were distributed to relevant individuals at the Library of Congress and to the former ad hoc Committee members for consultation. The framework of CEAL's activities was laid.

1. The implementation of the Chinese Cooperative Catalog:

On July 1, 1974, the final version of the outline of the five Proposals for a Chinese Cooperative Catalog and a cover letter from the Chairman were sent to ninety-nine directors of research libraries and the East Asian librarians. Eighty percent of the respondents were in favor of Proposal II. In early November, the Chairman formally recommended to the Library of Congress the publication of a Chinese Cooperative Catalog under Proposal II. Ms. Gloria Hsia, Chief of the Catalog Publication Division of the Library of Congress, launched, with great efficiency, the Catalog in January 1975. Thus, through concerted efforts, a long overdue project was finally materialized.

Despite the fact that it was not a substitute for the future National Union Catalog on Chinese Materials, the Chinese Cooperative Catalog was very useful in processing Chinese materials at that time.

2. The CEAL Newsletter:

Because the Newsletter is an indispensable medium among East Asian librarians, a decision was made to institutionalize it by organizing a balanced editorial staff and securing minimum financial support from the two Regional Councils of AAS, each of which contributed $950 for its publication. Three enlarged issues of the Newsletter were recognized by the readers as a scholarly professional journal. Thus both the librarians and the faculty members suggested that its name be changed to match its content – to be called CEAL Journal or CEAL Bulletin.

Traditionally the editing of this publication had been one of the responsibilities of the CEAL Chairman. The enlarged Newsletter and the expanding CEAL activities demanded not only more and more of his time, but also a great deal of secretarial assistance. This concern was discussed at the next annual meeting, and five subcommittees were subsequently formed.

3. The Subcommittees' activities:
The new Chairman's general policy was to encourage teamwork among its Subcommittees and the members. He particularly welcomed the initiatives to promote special projects and activities. As a result, the following outstanding jobs were accomplished in the first year: (1) the Subcommittee on Technical Processing recommended that the Library of Congress expand the classification schedules for Chinese materials; (2) the Subcommittee on Liaison with Chinese Libraries planned a delegation to visit the People's Republic of China; (3) the Subcommittee on Union Catalog conducted a detailed analysis of the responses to the Proposals for a Chinese Cooperative Catalog, laying foundations for the subsequent implementation by the Library of Congress; (4) the Subcommittee on Japanese Materials made a brief survey of the holdings of Japanese works by subject in East Asian libraries and compiled a union catalog of Japanese serials; (5) the Subcommittee on Resources and Development reviewed the state of the East Asian libraries in the United States and recommended ways to improve their services.

4. CEAL Task Force (the Subcommittee on Resources and Development):

The Task Force held an all-day special meeting at the University of Pittsburgh on November 8, 1974 to study the overall development of East Asian collections in North American libraries, seeking to identify projects offering broad solutions to the most pressing needs of the entire field of East Asian studies. The meeting produced some documents regarding (a) CEAL's role in the activities discussed, (b) resources development, (c) bibliographical control, (d) education for librarianship, (e) a library survey, and (f) a handbook on East Asian libraries.

In May 1975, this writer presented a proposal for a conference entitled "Priorities for the Development and Funding of Library Programs in Support of East Asian Studies" to Dr. Reuben Frodin, Program Advisor of the Ford Foundation, for funding such a conference. Two months later, Dr. Frodin decided to finance the American Council of Learned Societies to organize a Steering Committee to examine the issues, including the roles of the university administrations, library directors, East Asian librarians, and scholars specializing in East Asian studies.

After the Steering Committee was organized, a series of position papers were commissioned, then a number of conferences were conducted, and a booklet entitled *East Asian Libraries: Problems and Prospects* was subsequently published in 1977. The Subcommittee had accomplished its timely mission through team effort.

Another important task of the Subcommittee was to make a thorough survey of East Asian collections in terms of library resources, subject content, acquisition and processing, financial assistance, unit cost, staffing, and library support of institutional programs in teaching and research. The survey was conducted under the guidance of Professor T. H. Tsien, soliciting technical advice from Professor William Parish of the University of Chicago. The outcome was printed in *CEAL Newsletter* no. 49 (March 1976), which has been extensively used by
various libraries, institutions, and funding agencies. Thereafter, CEAL would conduct similar surveys every five years.

5. Ad hoc Committee on CEAL Procedures:

In redefining the tenures and the responsibilities of the chairman and the editor, this chairman appointed an ad hoc Committee on CEAL Procedures to launch a thorough study and present a proposal to the next CEAL executive meeting for action. It was agreed that the future editor of the CEAL Newsletter would be appointed by the chairman, the Newsletter would be renamed CEAL Bulletin, and the tenure of both the chairman and the editor would be for three years.

6. Liaison with other organizations:

In view of the complexity and the magnitude of the problems the East Asian libraries were confronting, it was obvious that CEAL alone could not solve them all, although it is the only organization representing the interest of the East Asian libraries. The members must encourage and cooperate with those organizations which are sympathetic to and interested in their causes. During his two-year chairmanship, this writer had strived to involve the AAS Secretariat and the two regional councils, CIARC and NEARC, in CEAL activities and to win their support. He also tried to communicate with the American Council of Learned Societies-Social Sciences Research Council Task Force on (Chinese) Collections. He has requested the American Library Association and the Association of Research Libraries to send representatives to CEAL meetings as liaison. The Councils had promised to do so, but this important relationship must be pursued by future chairmen since this chairman’s term ended at that time.

7. The following are some samples of letters of encouragement:

A highly respected CEAL senior members wrote:

"When you assumed the Chairmanship, it was the first time that a person was elected who did not belong to the privileged group of Ivy League Universities or the biggest state institutions of high[er] education. I remember well that when you were elected in 1974, some member[s] were doubtful whether the standard of the CEAL Newsletter set by Mr. Tung could be maintained. However, under your chairmanship, it has become an even more valuable publication which has benefitted both faculty members and librarians in the field."

Another CEAL senior colleague wrote:

"I also wish to use this occasion to commend you for your superior leadership as Chairman of the Committee on East Asian Libraries. I and the fellow
members of CEAL with whom I spoke at our recent meeting in San Francisco have been gratified by your energetic contributions to our organization's stature and activities. Under your editorial direction, the CEAL Newsletter has even surpassed the high standard set for it by your predecessor, Shih-kang Tung of Princeton. It has become a vehicle for thorough communication of the trends of thought and the many activities of the East Asian library community. Both its enlarged size and the excellent quality of its contents testify to the significant amount of work you have put into it to make it fulfill all the purposes for which it was conceived. The East Asian library community is better informed and more tightly linked together as a result of your efforts. . . . "Also under your leadership, CEAL has obtained long-needed financial support from the Association for Asian Studies and the Ford Foundation so that it may launch project[s of] benefit to the East Asian Community."

Professor David M. Keightley of the University of California at Berkeley commented: "The CEAL Newsletter is an excellent production in every way."

Professor Ronald Knapp of the State University of New York at New Paltz remarked: "Although I had known that it existed, I had not realized how useful it was to those of us who are not librarians."

Professor Richard L. Park, Secretary-Treasurer of the Association for Asian Studies, Inc., wrote:

"I want to take this opportunity to thank you, on behalf of the Board of Directors, for your excellent leadership as Chairman of the Committee on East Asian Libraries. You and your Committee accomplished a good deal during your tenure. Among other achievements, CEAL Newsletter has taken on good form and its contents undoubtedly have been of value to East Asian Librarians."

The experience of being CEAL Chairman was most rewarding. Sometimes it was not without difficulties and painful moments. However, this writer had witnessed many able and resourceful colleagues devoting much of their time to work for the success of the various activities and projects. Indeed, their talents, unselfish efforts, and high standards of professionalism have demonstrated true intellectual idealism in the best of human consciousness. They certainly can provide assurance that CEAL will be a truly professional organization disseminating human knowledge in the years to come.

Even though his chairmanship ended in 1976, this writer's professional growth continues as he discharges his daily responsibilities as Curator of the East Asian Library at the University of Pittsburgh.