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CEAL AT THE DAWN OF THE 21ST CENTURY*

Eugene Wu

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen:

It's good to be back at the CEAL meetings, and I am honored to be speaking here today. The topic Bill McCloy assigned me was "CEAL At the Dawn of the 21st Century." I thought it would be useful for us to look back at some of the milestones in the history of CEAL, to find our roots, so to speak, and to remind us of the legacies left us by some of our pioneering colleagues. I would also like to share with you some of my thoughts about technology and the future of East Asian libraries.

The Beginning

CEAL doesn't really have a long history. We can trace its origin back to 1948 when a group of concerned scholars and librarians interested in East Asian libraries got together at the American Library Association meeting in Atlantic City in June of that year to discuss problems of mutual concern. Although it was an informal meeting, the effort that was made at that time ushered in an organizational movement which eventually evolved into CEAL.

As I have written elsewhere: "The development of East Asian Studies in the United States is basically a post-World War II phenomenon. Although a few universities offered some courses on East Asia (then referred to as the Far East) before World War II, full-fledged study of East Asia, in all the disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, did not develop until after the end of the Second World War. The war in the Pacific, the transformation of Japan into a democracy, the communist revolution in China, and the Korean War contributed to a heightening of American awareness of the importance of East Asia in a changing world, and of the need for better understanding of their histories and civilizations. The universities, with generous foundation and government support, responded by expanding their teaching and research programs on East Asia, and today, after 50 years, East Asian studies in the United States is probably the largest and the most comprehensive in the Western world. A concomitant development in this academic enterprise was the building of library resources. Although several American libraries had begun collecting in the East Asian languages long before World War II (the Library of Congress began as early as 1869, Yale started in 1878, Harvard in 1879, UC-Berkeley in 1896, Cornell in 1918, Columbia in 1920, Princeton in 1926, and Chicago in 1936), they all experienced their greatest growth after 1945. A number of today's major collections, such as those at Michigan, Hoover, and UCLA, came into being only in the late 1940s; and others such as Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, in the 1960s."

* This address was given March 8, 2000 during the Plenary Session of the annual meeting of the Council on East Asian Libraries in San Diego, California.
So, there weren't that many East Asian Collections in existence at the end of the War in 1945. But a number of common problems had already become apparent a few short years later. That was the reason for the 1948 Atlantic City meeting, as the East Asian libraries felt the need for some cooperative solutions to help manage the problems of acquisitions, cataloging, and the training of personnel. The result of that meeting was the forming of an informal committee named the National Committee on Oriental Collections in the U.S. and Abroad.

It's instructive to note that the problems they discussed - acquisitions, cataloging, and the training of personnel - are still among our main concerns today, albeit in a different context from that of 50 years ago. In all likelihood we will continue discussing them for many more years to come. This reminds us once again that the basic mission of the library - collecting and the provision of service - never changes, only the way we go about carrying out that mission.

This informal committee was replaced a year later in 1949 by a Joint Committee on Oriental Collections, sponsored by the Far Eastern Association (the predecessor of the Association for Asian Studies) and the American Library Association. This act was a recognition on the part of both the scholarly and the library communities that neither was adequately equipped at that time to administer and develop special collections in the East Asian languages, and something had to be done about it. So, for the first time in the history of American libraries an official body, joining forces between the academic and the library communities, was established with the specific purpose of dealing with the developmental problems of East Asian collections in the United States.

The significance attached to this new Joint Committee can be seen in its membership. There were six members, with three each appointed by the Far Eastern Association and the American Library Association. Representing the former were Arthur H. Hummel, Chief of Orientalia Division, Library of Congress; Osamu Shimizu, Head of Japanese Section, Orientalia Division; and Elizabeth Huff, Head of East Asiatic Library, UC-Berkeley. Representing the latter were Warner G. Rice, Director of the University of Michigan Library; Charles H. Brown, Director of Library, Iowa State College; and Robert B. Downs, Director of the University of Illinois Library and UI's library school. Howard Linton, Curator of the East Asian Library at Columbia University, who belonged to both associations, became the executive secretary. It was an auspicious beginning.

The principal accomplishment of the Joint Committee in its three-year existence was the agreement by the Library of Congress to reproduce for purchase unedited Chinese and Japanese catalog cards sent in by cooperating libraries under LC's Oriental Card Reproduction Project. It was not cooperative cataloging, to be sure, but a mechanism for catalog card exchange, as it were, which did not exist before. After going through a series of metamorphoses the Joint Committee became in 1954 the Special Committee on Cataloging Oriental Materials of the American Library Association (the name was later changed to Special Committee on Cataloging Far Eastern Materials).
Developing National Cataloging Standards for East Asian Materials

This new Special Committee on Cataloging Far Eastern Materials was chaired by G. Raymond Nunn, Head of the Asia Library, University of Michigan, who would later become the chair of the Committee on American Library Resources on the Far East of the Association for Asian Studies, CEAL's immediate predecessor. The Special Committee occupies a very special place in the history of CEAL, as it was under its and LC's leadership that a set of national standards for cataloging East Asian materials was established for the first time. It was the result of four years' laborious work by the Special Committee and the Oriental Processing Committee (OPC), an interdepartmental committee at LC concerned with a variety of issues involving the processing of Oriental-language materials. The two committees worked tirelessly together, from 1954 to 1958, to amend the twin American standards for cataloging - ALA Cataloging Rules for Author and Title Entries and the Rules for Descriptive Cataloging in the Library of Congress - so that they could be more effectively applied to East Asian materials.

Our newer colleagues in the profession may not realize that cataloging in East Asian libraries was not always the way it is today. In the old days not only there were no computers, there were no national standards for cataloging Chinese, Japanese, or Korean materials. Every library was on its own, using its own format and following its own rules, although many opted for the Harvard-Yenching scheme for classification work. No library used subject headings (some maintained a classified catalog) and there was little authority work. There was even disagreement as to whether the main entry should be by author or title. So, what the two committees accomplished under those circumstances was a very significant milestone in the development of East Asian libraries in North America. Indeed, it was epoch-making. There is a Chinese saying: "People before us planted trees, we can now enjoy the shade." So we will always be indebted to these two committees for their lasting contributions to our profession.

In this connection we should remember in particular the leadership provided to the work of the two committees by G. Raymond Nunn, Lucile Morsch, C. Sumner Spalding, and Charles H. Hamilton. Ray Nunn was an indefatigable workhorse, and he guided the work of the Special Committee with that spirit. Lucile Morsch and C. Sumner Spalding, who were successive chairs of the OPC in their capacity as chief of LC's Descriptive Cataloging Division, were incisive and always willing to meet us halfway. Charles Hamilton, chief cataloger at the East Asiatic Library of UC-Berkeley, who had the rare ability to discern linkages among seemingly disparate rules and their potential impact on cataloging East Asian materials; his arguments often revealed our ignorance of the subtlety in the intent of some of the rules. It can be safely said that without his participation, the work of amending the rules would have been much more difficult.

The adoption of the amended rules as national standards did not mean, however, the end of East Asian libraries’ cataloging problems. The new challenge was implementation, and there was great expectation that everyone's dream of shared cataloging might come true at last. Toward that end LC established in 1958 a special Far Eastern section in the Processing Department under the direction of Warren Tsuneishi, who would later become
Chief of the Orientalia Division and the first director of the Area Studies Department at LC. The purpose of the new section was to initiate a cooperative cataloging program for East Asian publications, patterned after what LC had been doing for decades for publications in other languages. Unfortunately, this program really did not get off the ground as expected and was soon terminated. The main reason for this was the lack of sufficient manpower at LC to meet the editing demand that was required to bringing the cataloging copies from the participating libraries up to the very strict LC standard.

The demise of this short-lived program notwithstanding, the drive toward some sort of shared cataloging did not lose its momentum altogether. It survived in part and in a different form when LC established a Japan office under its NPAC program (National Program of Acquisitions and Cataloging). The purpose of NPAC was to insure both adequate coverage of current publications and the speedy availability of bibliographical records for them. The NPAC Japan office, under the direction of Andrew Kuroda, Head of the Japanese Section of LC's Orientalia Division, did just that for a number of years. It was a good and useful program. Unfortunately, it had to be dismantled for budgetary reasons.

With the establishment of the NPAC Japan office, discussion on establishing a similar program for Chinese-language materials, perhaps in Hong Kong, began both within and without the Library of Congress. (This was in the early 1970s, and there were no diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing. It was impossible even to think of setting up a NPAC center on the China mainland at that time.) However, the discussion never got anywhere. Since libraries in those days all looked to LC to get things done, East Asian libraries thought it best to continue to engage LC in their effort to find a better solution to help them with their problems in Chinese acquisitions and cataloging. For that purpose, the Harvard-Yenching Library invited twelve large East Asian libraries and the Library of Congress to a series of meetings on Chinese cooperative cataloging, beginning in New York in 1972 and followed by a second meeting in Chicago in 1973, and a third in Boston in 1974.

An Ad Hoc Committee on Chinese Cooperative Cataloging was set up at the first meeting with the charge of investigating the feasibility of cooperative Chinese cataloging. The subsequent deliberations centered on several issues: the slowness in LC's distribution of its printed Chinese catalog cards; exclusion from the National Union Catalog, published by LC, of records in any East Asian language; and the duplication of efforts among East Asian libraries as a consequence.

In response, LC proposed the compilation of a new LC publication to be called Chinese Cooperative Catalog incorporating all the cards submitted by the cooperating libraries. There were some misgivings about the LC proposal, of which the main one was the concern about East Asian cards being permanently left out of the National Union Catalog once the Chinese Cooperative Catalog was published. This whole matter was turned over to CEAL, which at that time had appointed a Subcommittee on the National Union Catalog, and the Ad Hoc Committee was dissolved. The CEAL Subcommittee continued the discussion on the LC proposal. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient support for the
proposal and it was dropped. East Asian libraries had to wait for a decade until the mid-1980s before a truly national and international shared cataloging program was in place, thanks to technology that brought us online cataloging and the services of RLG and OCLC.

Issues in Collection Development

At the same time as many universities introduced teaching and research programs on East Asia in the post-World War II years, new East Asian collections also came to be established at these institutions. Their collection development needs were somewhat different from those at the older libraries. The newer ones had to start from the ground up while the older ones, having already established a core collection of the basic texts essential to an East Asian library, had the advantage of being able to concentrate on current publications. But building a new East Asian collection where there was none presented a daunting challenge, even when there was adequate financial support, as was the case in the 1960s.

The problem was that there simply weren’t that many sources of supply of older publications needed by the new collections, particularly in Chinese, which was what most of the newly established collections were interested in. Neither was the procurement of current Chinese publications an easy task. The volume of publications from the People’s Republic of China at that time was limited, and the Chinese government did not allow direct purchases by foreign libraries. Every book had to be acquired in Hong Kong or Japan. The number of new publications in Taiwan was also small, and the publishers did not aggressively engage in export. A number of them were busily engaged in reprinting block-print editions of centuries ago, exactly what was needed here. But these reprints were mostly to satisfy Taiwan’s own needs, and the publishers seemed oblivious of the overseas market.

So, the AAS Committee on American Library Resources on the Far East (CEAL’s immediate predecessor succeeding the ALA Special Committee on Cataloging Far Eastern Materials in 1958, also chaired by G. Raymond Nunn) submitted in 1963 a proposal to AAS for the establishment, under AAS auspices, of a Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center in Taipei for the benefit of American libraries. The purpose was to coordinate and reprint out-of-print titles needed by the Chinese studies community in the United States. With AAS approval and with initial grants from it, as well as from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Council on Library Resources, the Taipei Center was set up and began operation in the fall of 1964. Robert L. Irick, a Harvard Ph.D. in Chinese history, was appointed as director. Since then the Taipei Center, which later became independent, has reprinted thousands of out-of-print titles and helped filling the shelves not only in American libraries, but also in foreign libraries that collect Chinese-language publications.

Meanwhile, current Chinese publications also demanded attention, particularly those from the People’s Republic of China. As has just been mentioned, American libraries were not allowed to buy directly from China in the 1960s, and exchange was possible
only with the National Beijing Library. Buying indirectly from Hong Kong or Japan was
at best a poor substitute, as the supply was limited and many titles were not available at
all because the Chinese government did not allow their export. At the time AAS was
setting up the Taipei Center just mentioned, an effort was also made to open up additional
sources of supply of contemporary Chinese publications, especially those from the
Chinese mainland.

The Joint Committee on Contemporary China (JCCC), of the American Council of
Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council, took the lead in this in hopes
that the fast-growing teaching and research programs on contemporary China in the
universities could be more adequately supported. Toward that goal JCCC thought it
important to find out how institutions in other countries were dealing with the problem of
sources, especially contemporary publications, and see what we could learn from them. I
was asked to conduct a survey and also submit a report with recommendations. The
survey was a year in the making and included visits to all the major research and library
centers in Chinese studies in this country and abroad.

It was discovered in the survey that a number of libraries in the Soviet Union and Eastern
Europe, and to a lesser extent in Western Europe and Japan, were receiving research
materials originating in the PRC, in a variety of ways, that were not available to us. Also,
most of these libraries were receptive to the idea of some sort of exchange with us. So in
the report submitted to JCCC, the principal recommendation I made was the
establishment of a national center to identify, assemble, and reproduce for distribution
contemporary Chinese publications and other hard-to-find research materials on 20th-
century China, which were either unavailable or available only in a very few American
libraries.

This not-for-profit enterprise, the Center for Chinese Research Materials (CCRM), was
launched in 1968 under the auspices of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in
Washington, D.C., with a generous Ford Foundation grant. P. K. Yu, a Lecturer in
History at the University of Hong Kong and owner of the prestigious Long Men Book
Company in Hong Kong, was recruited to be the director. Additional grants from the
Andrew Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities made it
possible for CCRM to become an academic publishing going concern in a very short
period of time.

For more than three decades CCRM, now independently incorporated but still a not-for-
profit organization under the directorship of Pingfeng Chi, has been singularly
responsible for making available to libraries world-wide a great quantity of rare and hard-
to-find research materials on 20th-century China. It has become one of the most
important support facilities for modern and contemporary China studies in the world. I
would not be exaggerating to say that Chinese collections in East Asian libraries around
the world would be poorer today if not for CCRM.

In collecting PRC publications East Asian libraries also have benefited from significant
and timely help provided by the federal government. In the early 1960s when no Chinese
local newspapers were available for subscription or purchase by foreign libraries, the government released to the Library of Congress its holdings of some 1,200 such papers published before 1960. While the great majority of them were incomplete files, and many were very fragmentary (some containing only a few issues), the significance of this release cannot be overemphasized, as none of the publications was available elsewhere at that time. (Now we can read many of the local newspapers online free of charge!) The release of the Red Guard tabloids in 1967 by the State Department to the academic community was another case in point.

Soon after the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, normal publishing in China was supplanted by the issuing of millions of copies of the Quotations of Chairman Mao and The Selected Works of Mao Zedong, and the vendors in Hong Kong and Tokyo had little else to offer. So when reprints of a number of Red Guard tabloids began to appear in Hong Kong, they became instant best sellers. Although some of these publications were highly polemical, most contain a great deal of information and documentation not available elsewhere. The rarity and importance of these new sources made them must-have items on everyone’s list overnight, and libraries from around the world competed with one another to acquire them, pushing the already high price charged for them even higher. The Joint Committee on Contemporary China (JCCC) (Chairman: John H. Lindbeck), mentioned earlier, was again asked for help.

JCCC approached the State Department with the request that it consider sharing its collection of Red Guard materials with the academic community. The State Department responded in the affirmative and invited JCCC to send a representative to Washington, D.C. to examine the materials and determine whether their release would indeed be as helpful to the academic community as believed. I undertook that mission for JCCC and, after examining the materials, urged their immediate release. The materials thus released formed the bulk of the 20-volume Red Guard Publications issued by CCRM in 1975. This kind of government-academe relationship, I believe, should be encouraged.

I have dwelled on issues in Chinese collection development because they were the most pressing among the collection development problems facing East Asian libraries in the 1960s and the 1970s. This is not to say that there were no problems in Japanese or Korean collection development work. Indeed, there were.

Generally speaking, the Japan case has not been a matter of availability but of cost. South Korea came close to Japan in this regard; and there was a great deal of resemblance between North Korea and China, at least in the early years, in terms of the difficulties involved in acquiring publications from them. The establishment of the National Coordinating Committee on Japanese Library Resources (NCC), funded by the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission and the Japan Foundation, and the Korean Collections Consortium of North America, funded by the Korea Foundation, represented two important milestones in the development of Japanese and Korean collections in American libraries. In the interest of the time allotted me, I will let my colleagues on the panel address these developments in more detail.
Technology in East Asian Libraries

While general research libraries were seriously exploring in the 1960s and the 1970s the use of technology to improve operation, East Asian libraries were still occupied with the more mundane problems of cataloging standards and how to build or strengthen collections. Automation was far from everyone’s mind and not on East Asian libraries’ agenda. A 1975 statement CEAL was invited to submit to the Ford Foundation on the "Priorities for the Development and Funding of Library Programs in Support of East Asian Studies" did not make any particular reference to the role the emerging technology could play in East Asian library development. This was not East Asian libraries’ fault. No serious work was being done on East Asian character codes in this country at that time, and computers could not handle any of the East Asian languages.

But the various needs presented in the 1975 CEAL statement were so persuasive that in the same year the Ford Foundation urged the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) to appoint a Steering Committee for a Study of the Problems of East Asian Libraries, composed of the following persons:

George Bechman, Professor of Asian Studies and Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Washington (Chairman)
Albert Feuerwerker, Professor of History and Director, Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan
Herman H. Fussler, Martin A. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago
Hanna H. Gray, Provost, Yale University
Warren J. Haas, Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian, Columbia University
William F. Miller, Provost and Vice President, Stanford University
Warren Tsuneishi, Chief, Orientalia Division, Library of Congress
Eugene Wu, Librarian, Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University

As a guide to its work, the Steering Committee commissioned a series of papers, a number of them written by CEAL members, including Karl Lo, T. H. Tsien, Weiying Wan, Raymond Tang, Thomas Kuo, Thomas Lee, Richard Howard, Warren Tsuneishi, and myself. The Steering Committee made a report in 1977 on "East Asian Libraries: Problems and Prospects" with recommendations for bibliographical control, collection development and access, and technical and personnel matters. The report attracted significant attention in library and academic circles.

In the following year ACLS, joined by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), co-sponsored a Joint Advisory Committee to the East Asian Library Program in order to continue the work begun by the Steering Committee. The following persons were appointed to the Joint Advisory Committee:

Patricia Battin, Vice President and University Librarian, Columbia University
Charles Churchill (1980-1981), Dean of Library Services, Washington University
Hideo Kaneko, Curator, East Asian Collection, Yale University Library
F. W. Mote, Professor of East Asian Studies, Princeton University
Robert E. Ward, Director, Center for International Studies, Stanford University
Eugene Wu, Librarian, Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University
John W. Haeger (ex-officio), Director, ACLS-SSRC-ARL East Asian Library Program

It was the work of this committee that led to online cataloging in East Asian libraries at a later date. In its report on "Automation, Cooperation, and Scholarship: East Asian Libraries in the 1980s," the Joint Advisory Committee stated that "after a decade of unprecedented growth along a course linked primarily to foreign area studies programs rather than to the development of research libraries in general . . . East Asian libraries were at a crossroad." and with the lessening of federal and foundation funding, they ought to embark upon a new course of sharing work, materials, and access, and of relying "on automation as a principal planning and management tool." The keystone to this, according to the report, "is the capability to input, manage, store, transmit, display and output bibliographic records containing East Asian vernacular characters in exactly the same automated systems already created to perform similar functions for Western language materials and general research libraries." This basic reorientation of the course of development of East Asian libraries in North America, as advocated in the report, would fundamentally change the way East Asian libraries operated, but it was welcomed by all concerned.

The immediate result of the Joint Advisory Committee's recommendation was the decision by the Research Libraries Group (RLG) to introduce in 1983, with Ford Foundation support, the CJK enhancements to the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), RLG's operating arm. This move made possible for the first time the creation of cataloging records at one library which could then be copied by other libraries and also viewed by researchers everywhere. In 1986 the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) established a similar CJK bibliographic utility. The rest, of course, is history.

Remembering the Pioneers

As we reminisce about our past, it is important that we honor the pioneers in our profession. I would like to salute two of them in particular, as I knew them the best: A. Kaiming Chiu (1898-1977) and Mary Clabaugh Wright (1917-1970). As you know, Dr. Chiu was the first Librarian of Harvard-Yenching Library and served in that position with great distinction for thirty-eight years, from 1927 to 1965. Dr. Wright was the first Curator of the Chinese Collection at the Hoover Institution for eleven years, from 1948 to 1959. I had the singular honor of succeeding both of them, Mary Wright in 1959 and Kaiming Chiu in 1965.
Dr. Chiu’s name has long been synonymous with East Asian librarianship in the United States. He was the very first person to be appointed Librarian of an East Asian library at an American university, and his tenure of almost four decades at the Harvard-Yenching Library remains to this day the longest among the nation’s East Asian librarians. But his legacy lies elsewhere. He will be remembered for his Harvard-Yenching Classification Scheme, the first such work for cataloging Chinese, Japanese, and Korean books in the Western world. The scheme was adopted for use by the major East Asian libraries in the United States and several leading East Asian collections in Europe and Australia until the 1970s and the 1980s. He will also be remembered for putting romanization along with the vernacular script on the catalog card, something we take for granted today, and for introducing separate catalogs and shelving by language.

Dr. Chiu was also a great mentor. A number of people he trained at the Harvard-Yenching Library later achieved prominence, among them were James S. K. Tung, who became Assistant University Librarian and Curator of the Gest Library and Oriental Collections at Princeton; Fang Chao-ying and Tu Lien-che, known for their impeccable scholarship on Ming and Ch’ing history, who collaborated with Dr. Arthur H. Hummel and Professor L. Carrington Goodrich respectively in the compilation of *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period* and *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, two publications of lasting importance to Chinese studies; Tien Hung-tu, who became Librarian of Yenching University Library; Teng Yen-lin, who served as the Reference Librarian at the National Library of Peking, and Chen Hung-shun who taught at the Department of Library Science at Peking University after 1949.

Of course, Kaiming Chiu’s greatest legacy is the collection he built at the Harvard-Yenching Library. He was a giant in this respect, as he succeeded in building from almost nothing one of the greatest libraries for East Asian research in the Western world. It is unlikely that his accomplishments will ever be duplicated. In the words of the Trustees of the Harvard-Yenching Institute who paid him tribute upon his retirement, he was "a scholar who exemplifies the best in the traditions and accomplishments of both East and West."

Prof. Mary C. Wright was another legendary library builder. Trained as a historian at Harvard, she was with her husband, Arthur Wright, in Peking when Pearl Harbor came. Subsequently they were interned by the Japanese in Wei Hsien in Shantung for the duration of the War. When the War ended, she accepted an offer from the Hoover Institution at Stanford University to collect materials for a Chinese Collection that was being planned at Hoover. Since Hoover’s main interest was, and still is, in modern and contemporary affairs under the rubric of "War, Peace, and Revolution," Mary Wright was asked to focus on her acquisitions work accordingly. This she did, with entrepreneurial energy, skill, resourcefulness, and imagination. She traveled to all the major cities in China, sought advice from eminent scholars and bibliographers, badgered government agencies for their publications, and negotiated exchange agreements with major libraries and universities. Her painstaking efforts gathered tons of materials, including a large number of journals, newspapers, and other ephemeral materials that are essential to social
science research and which up to that time had not been systematically collected by most other libraries.

Mary Wright did not confine herself to the ordinary channels in her collecting activities. In 1947, having wangled a seat on a U.S. military transport, she flew to Yenan, the base of the Chinese Communist Party, where she succeeded in obtaining a large group of Chinese communist publications issued there and in other communist-controlled areas. These publications were not even available elsewhere in China at that time. The almost complete set of the Chieh-fang jih-pao (Liberation Daily), the official organ of the Chinese Communist Party, she acquired on this excursion remains to this day the only original copy in the Western world. Following her return to the United States in late 1947, she managed to acquire the Harold Issacs Collection, a group of underground Chinese communist publications of the late 1920s and early 1930s collected by Mr. Issacs in Shanghai in the 1930s when he was editor of the China Forum. Soon afterwards she reached agreement with Nym Wales (Helen Snow) for the sale to Hoover of the Nym Wales Collection, containing Chinese communist and other related publications and documents of the mid- and late 1930s collected by Edgar Snow and Nym Wales when they visited Northwest China. The Harold Issacs and Nym Wales Collections together provided the basis for much of the subsequent research on the early history of the Chinese Communist movement by scholars from all around the world - a task theretofore impossible for lack of documentation.

As a scholar and library-builder, Mary Wright left us with a lifetime of work rich in insight and inspiration. As a pioneer in East Asian librarianship, she provided vision and ingenuity in her collection-building efforts. She supplied the necessary perspective as a scholar and active library user on what a research library should be like and how it should function, and then went about creating such a library.

The Future

It is often said that only fools make predictions. So I am not going to make any here today as to where East Asian libraries will be in another ten, twenty or fifty years. But I do want to say a few words about technology and East Asian libraries as we enter a new millennium. High technology has done wonders. It has made it possible for libraries to do things that could hardly have been imaginable ten or twenty years ago. Libraries can now manage much more efficiently and serve their users much more effectively. Much is now available at our fingertips. We can look up a university library catalog or view a museum collection in China, Japan, Korea or anyplace else. We have access to full-text databases. We can read journals and newspapers online and order copies. We have tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of specialized web sites that provide information of all types, and the list goes on.

High technology will undoubtedly continue to develop to an even higher level of accomplishment, and libraries and library users will all benefit. The unprecedented and incredible contribution high technology has made to libraries and scholarship notwithstanding, we must not forget that technology is but the means to achieve an end,
and not the end itself. While we continue to seek out new technology in the service of scholarship, we must also continue our efforts in building collections as we have in the past.

For in the final analysis, what scholarship demands of libraries is the substance of information, and that substance can only come from what libraries are able to collect. In the words of that great American naturalist, Henry David Thoreau, who made Walden Pond famous, we cannot afford to have "improved means to an unimproved end." It will serve us well as librarians to remember these words as we proceed with digital libraries and apply more technology to our work.