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CHINESE STUDIES LIBRARIANS TRAINING AND THE LUCE SUMMER INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH*

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With the generous support from the Henry Luce Foundation, the University of Pittsburgh’s University Library System will organize a summer institute focusing on Chinese studies librarianship in 2004. This is great news to many Chinese studies librarians. When we announced this institute during our presentation at the annual program of the Committee on Chinese Materials of the Council for East Asian Libraries (CEAL) in New York in March 2003, we could clearly sense the enthusiasm among our audience. The message we received was clear: The field has waited long enough and the time for such a training program is due.

East Asian librarianship is a specialized field within the profession of library and information science that requires librarians with a particular combination of subject expertise and language and information skills. As the United States becomes an increasingly active member of the Asian Pacific world, the need for understanding the other side of the Pacific grows. With the proliferation of East Asian studies in this country and the publication explosion in East Asian countries, demand on East Asian librarians to effectively provide access to research and information resources in various formats has also escalated. Moreover, with the rapid advancement of library technology librarians now need the knowledge of electronic resources and digital projects to provide services in addition to our traditional roles and fulfilling our job requirements. On the other hand, the small market for East Asian studies librarians has not persuaded library schools to consider providing the necessary curriculum or training in the field.

The lack of systematic education and training for East Asian librarians over the years has had a serious impact on the provision of qualified personnel needed in the field. During the last half a century, the only degree program focusing on East Asian librarianship that ever existed was the Joint Program for Far Eastern Librarianship offered at the University of Chicago through its Graduate Library School and the Department for Far Eastern Languages and Civilization between 1964 and 1979. The program produced six PhDs and about thirty-five graduates. Some of the graduates are now holding prominent positions in the field.

There were two summer institutes that helped train East Asian librarians. One was the six-week Summer Institute for Far Eastern Librarianship sponsored by the University of Chicago in 1969. The program trained a total of thirty-one East Asian librarians, including twenty Chinese Studies librarians. The curriculum included history of books, library management, and reference materials. The next training, however, would not occur until nineteen years later. In 1988, the University of Washington, under the able leadership of Karl Lo, received funding from the Department of Education to offer a two-week “Summer Institute on East Asian Librarianship.” Twenty East Asian librarians attended the training. The goal was to enable the participants to advance their knowledge.

* This paper was originally presented March 27, 2003, at the annual meeting of the Committee on Chinese Materials of the Council on East Asian Libraries of the Association for Asian Studies in New York City, New York.
of East Asian library operations and to become familiar with the important developments in information technology. It aimed to provide practicing librarians with the knowledge to use computer technology to improve library management and to understand the possibilities of future applications of this technology. Other topics addressed in the training program included the current state of different fields in East Asian studies, the needs of the scholars, and the impact of information technology on library applications, East Asian bibliography, library management, and library cooperative ventures. The majority of the participants of this program are still active in the field.

No substantial training program has taken place since 1988. However, short-term workshops have been offered to librarians specializing in the fields of Chinese, Japanese, or Korean studies during the past few years, notably the 2000 Committee on Chinese Materials workshop, 2001 Committee on Korean Materials workshop, and 2002 Junior Japanese Studies Librarian Professional Training Seminar sponsored by the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC). Although the Committee on Chinese Materials sponsored a one-day workshop in San Diego in 2000, the coverage was limited; thus, the need for in-depth training remains.

With a leading East Asian library, strong Asian studies program and library school, the University of Pittsburgh takes the lead in developing a program that will fill the void in library education and training for East Asian librarianship. Supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation and working closely with the Committee on Chinese Materials of the Council for East Asian Libraries, the University Library System at the University of Pittsburgh will organize a summer institute, named Luce Summer Institute for East Asian Librarianship: China Focus, to provide professional training for Chinese studies librarianship to enhance the core competency of Chinese studies librarians and to develop leadership for American East Asian libraries.

The Luce summer institute will implement a three-week program focusing on Chinese studies librarianship and library management. Of the three weeks, there will be a one-week distance learning component to reduce the amount of time demanded of the participants to be away from their jobs. The summer institute is designed to provide training for Chinese studies librarians and library managers. The curriculum covers major aspects of East Asian librarianship, including trends in research and publication in East Asian studies, bibliography and book trade, digital technology and resources in the East Asian vernacular scripts, CJK cataloging and preservation, public services and bibliographic instruction, fund raising, library management, and creative leadership. A certificate will be issued to each participant upon successful completion of the program.

A solid understanding of the special subject area in which they are providing library services is essential to the success of practitioners of East Asian librarianship. The lack of a broad vision regarding the field limits the librarian’s ability in taking new initiatives to improve library services. The introduction to the state of the field of East Asian studies and publishing trends in general and Chinese studies in particular will broaden the vision of the participants and enable them to position their daily library work in the larger context of East Asian studies.

In the digital information world today, no single library can collect all the information needed by their users. How best to allocate limited financial resources to collect the most needed materials while building a collection with character and integrity becomes a very challenging question. The training on East Asian collection development, including bibliography, book trade and vendor relationship, as well as acquisition of East Asian language materials in print and electronic formats
will enhance the trainees’ skills in managing and optimizing limited budgets to build collections reflecting the focus of the research and teaching missions of their home institutions. This part of the program will also furnish the trainees with the important tools and knowledge to meet such challenges.

Advances in information technology have had a major impact on the library profession and brought about perennial changes in the landscape of information resources for East Asian studies. The summer institute will teach the latest developments in information technology pertinent to the Chinese language, including language software, Internet skills in relation to Chinese script, application of Unicode, and digitization of Chinese language materials. It will also teach the latest development in technical processing of Chinese language materials such as cataloging and preservation of and access to classical Chinese books.

Public service is becoming an increasingly important aspect of East Asian librarianship. With the rapid development of electronic resources and new media, it becomes critical for library users to learn how to navigate the enormous amount of information to get to what they need. The increased availability of electronic research tools in Asian studies is transforming what students need to know in order to conduct research, which invites librarians as information specialists to participate in reforming the teaching of research methods for a new generation of Asian studies scholars. All of these developments and changes present new challenges and opportunities to East Asian librarians. It is important that Chinese studies librarians keep up with the latest developments and take the initiative in teaching the use of information and new research methods. For the area of public services, the summer institute will teach current awareness of the development of and access to electronic resources for East Asian studies in general and Chinese studies in particular, faculty liaison, and the teaching of research methodology for East Asian studies and the use of information resources.

The institute will also offer instruction on library management and leadership skills. It will address the issues of fundraising, outreach, and institutional collaboration for resource sharing. It will train the future leaders of East Asian libraries to apply creative leadership to open up new areas of library services and to lead the profession in the new direction of the digital information age of the 21st century.

Internship opportunities are built into the program for participants to develop their final projects. Participants will be required to dedicate ten hours of their time during the two-week to on-campus training. Through the internship, each trainee will design a project that reflects his or her interest related to the curriculum. The internship will provide each trainee with hands-on experience using the resources at University of Pittsburgh’s East Asian Library while working with the faculty of the institute. The final projects can be on any topic of the participant’s choice, such as managing electronic resources for Chinese studies, collection development in the electronic age, or designing an East Asian Collection from scratch.

The program will also organize two project-oriented field trips to other major Chinese collections in the Midwest and East Coast areas. In order to expand the knowledge and understanding of the culture for which we librarians provide information services to users in the United States, the institute also plans to organize a post-program trip for the trainees to visit academic libraries in China. This trip is optional, and participants will bear the expenses of this trip.
The institute will be managed at the University of Pittsburgh by three committees. They are the management team, the curriculum committee, and the working committee. The faculty of the summer institute will include senior librarians from the University Library System, faculty members from the Asian Studies Program and the School of Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh, as well as senior librarians from other East Asian libraries in the U.S. and library school faculty from China.

All costs for the program, except the $300 registration fee, will be covered by the institute, including round-trip airfare to Pittsburgh, lodging, course materials, distance learning, and field trips. All information related to the institute, such as program, application requirements and application forms, calendar, course materials, distance learning, and certificate requirements, is posted and updated regularly at the official web site of the institute. The web site will serve as the information center for the institute. New information will be added to the site from now until the conclusion of the institute. To assist in the development of the program, a curriculum survey is posted at the web site. We welcome your input and ask interested colleagues to respond to the survey by July 31, 2003.

URL for the official web site: http://www.library.pitt.edu/luce/
Email of the institute: EAL-Institute@library.pitt.edu