Parity of Holdings: Is It Possible for Chinese and Japanese Collections?

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Introduction

The East Asian Studies Program of the Center for Asian Studies at Arizona State University (ASU) received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the academic years 1991-93 to enhance its undergraduate East Asian studies. A total of eight outside evaluators were invited to come on campus to assess the program and make recommendations for its improvement and future direction. Six written reports were submitted by the evaluators. While the reports generally remarked favorably on the University Libraries' East Asian Collection, two of the reports noted the disparity between the number of library holdings for the Chinese and Japanese languages and recommended that, because of the higher cost of Japanese-language publications, funding for Japanese-language material acquisitions should be increased to such a level that the Japanese collection which had about 23,000 cataloged volumes at the time of the evaluation be developed to equal the number of volumes in the Chinese collection which stood at about 26,000 volumes. Such recommendations have left behind the disturbing impression that library acquisitions was biased toward Chinese- and against Japanese-language material.

Understanding that the development of a particular library collection ties in closely with the growth and strength of the instructional and research programs of the particular area of study as well as the financial ability of the library to support such programs, I found it difficult to accept the recommendation for parity in the sense given in the two reports and was encouraged to examine whether a parity in collection size of the two language areas is feasible or even justifiable.

Library appropriations

Traditionally the number of students, the number and levels of courses offered, the size of faculty, the types and costs of the library materials needed to support these, and the body of literature available for purchase are some of the factors taken into consideration in determining the library materials budget for a discipline. Use statistics and the programs
of excellence or strategic importance to an institution are often taken into consideration in the decision making process of the budget; one factor is never used alone to arrive at a library appropriation for a certain subject area.

Some libraries may give special one-time extra funding for library support for a new course that has not been taught previously or for a new faculty member; some may simply factor this in the number of courses offered or the size of the faculty body without providing extra funding for the purchase of retrospective materials. While the cost of material is regarded as an important element of the library allocation system, "this conventional practice of subsidizing disciplines characterized by expensive library materials such as German and Japanese materials" has been challenged as to its continued practicability at the expense of other disciplines.

Other than library appropriations, many East Asian libraries rely for expanding their collections on grants, endowments, and financial support from the East Asian studies programs at their institutions, in addition to gifts and exchanges with other institutions. In 1992, twelve of the sixty-one East Asian collections in North America reported having an endowment income ranging from $1,000 at the University of Kansas to $169,876 at the Harvard-Yenching Library; another twenty-five reported having received a grant of $3,000 at both Los Angeles Public Library and the University of Pittsburgh to $272,934 at the Harvard-Yenching Library; and another seventeen reported having obtained financial support in various amounts from their East Asian studies programs.

The annual library appropriations for East Asian collections in North America given in the annual report, "Current Status of East Asian Collections in American Libraries," in the Committee on East Asian Libraries Bulletin unfortunately do not give a breakdown by language. However, several of my colleagues were generously supportive in responding to my request for such information that I posted in the fall of 1993 on the listservers of the Committee on East Asian Libraries and the Research Libraries Group East Asian studies members. Richard Wang of the University of California at San Diego responded with the information that his book fund for Chinese materials was $85,000 in 1992. Hideyuki Morimoto, who was then at the University of Iowa, reported that in 1992 the University of Iowa had appropriated $22,500 to Chinese and the same amount to Japanese in addition to a grant of $7,000 for Chinese and financial support of $20,000 each for Chinese and Japanese from its East Asian program. Kris Troost shared the information that Duke University had appropriated $11,342 (including a grant of $9,650) for Chinese and $81,386 (with the actual expenditure of $92,202) for Japanese, and that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill had spent $42,800 for Chinese and $3,830 for Japanese.

Thomas Lee of Indiana University provided a formula he had used to allocate his East Asian materials budget with 35% for Chinese, 45% for Japanese, and 20% for Korean, which at the time of his report was about $36,498 for Chinese and $46,926 for Japanese. Cathy Chiu reported that one-third ($23,667) of the University of California at Santa Barbara's East Asian budget of $71,000 in 1992 had been used for Chinese and two-thirds
($47,333) for Japanese. Phyllis Wang of the University of California at Davis reported a monograph budget of $15,291 for Chinese and $46,493 for Japanese. Harvard-Yenching Library spent $176,092 for Chinese and $226,547 for Japanese in 1992/93. Chau Mun Lau of the University of Hawaii replied that Hawaii appropriated $46,000 for Chinese and $70,000 for Japanese. Jean Han reported that the University of California at Berkeley had spent $144,510 for Chinese and $175,416 for Japanese. Amy Heinrich of Columbia University reported that 34% of her acquisitions budget was allocated for Chinese, 50% for Japanese, and 6% for other languages. ASU appropriated a total of $16,253 for Chinese and $45,209 for Japanese during the 1991/92 fiscal year.

Since information about the appropriation for Japanese was not available from the University of California at San Diego, I was not able to make a comparison of the Chinese and Japanese materials budgets for that institution. However, the other eleven institutions, with the exceptions of the University of Iowa and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, all had a greater library expenditure for Japanese than for Chinese in 1992; the amount of the appropriation ranged from 8 times more for Japanese at Duke University to 1.2 times more at the University of California at Berkeley. The reason why Duke University had a much higher appropriation for Japanese was due to its agreement with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to concentrate its purchases on Japanese-language materials while the latter focuses on Chinese. If I had put Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill together as if they were one institution, I would have derived a spending of $96,032 for Japanese and $54,142 for Chinese at these two institutions and brought the gap down to 1.8 instead of 8 times more for Japanese.

Despite more funds having been channelled by libraries into acquiring Japanese-language materials, the disparity in collection size between Chinese and Japanese continues to exist. This demonstrates that, as long as the development of a Japanese collection depends on the provision of a limited library materials budget, parity in collection size can never and will never happen in reality but may in theory.

**Historical background and current status of Chinese and Japanese collection sizes in North America**

In addition to a review of the factors used by the library at ASU to appropriate funding for individual subject disciplines, which affect also the funding for the Chinese and Japanese areas, I surveyed the field to find out the collection sizes of the Chinese and Japanese collections in other East Asian libraries to help determine whether parity in collection size would be possible for Chinese and Japanese language collections.

Historically, the establishment of the majority of the East Asian collections began with a Chinese-language collection, not a Japanese-language collection. For example, the Library of Congress started with its Chinese collection in 1869;\(^2\) Harvard-Yenching Library in 1928; University of Michigan in 1948; Arizona State University started with a blanket order plan in 1968 long before it began a Japanese blanket order in 1990; and the University of...
Colorado, which was mentioned as a peer institution to ASU in one of the two evaluation reports, also started with a Chinese collection which stood at 22,170 volumes in 1992 and added a Japanese one later which had 3,678 volumes in the same year. The earlier establishment of the Chinese collection also reflects an earlier development of the Chinese academic programs on campus. In addition, there was the vigorous expansion of Chinese collections in the mid-twentieth century due to "a period of unprecedented and spectacular growth [of China studies which] ... took place during the 1950s and 1960s. ... The basis of this sudden growth was large amounts of funding from ... Ford Foundation ... [and] the United States government." These historical facts of the earlier start of Chinese studies programs and Chinese collection development are irrefutable and have contributed a great deal to the greater strength of the Chinese collections nationwide.

The "Current Status of East Asian Collections in American Libraries, 1991/1992" provided the statistics on collection size for sixty-one East Asian libraries in North America. Fifty-six of these libraries gave a breakdown of their holdings in volume by language; the other five were unable to report separate figures by language. The difference in size between Chinese and Japanese language collections at these fifty-six libraries ranged from 4 percent at the University of Hawaii to 6,000 percent at Earlham College, Indiana. Along with the University of Hawaii, only four other institutions reported having a gap of less than 10 percent between Chinese and Japanese collections. These institutions were the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Maryland at College Park, Georgetown University, and the University of Toronto.

On average, the Japanese-language holdings of American libraries in 1992 equaled only 66 percent of the Chinese. Of the above mentioned fifty-six institutions, only seven reported having larger Japanese collections, while the other forty-nine had larger Chinese collections. The majority of these forty-nine institutions indicated that their Japanese holdings were in the 40 to 50 percent range of their Chinese holdings. The seven libraries having larger Japanese collections were the University of California at San Diego, Duke University, Earlham College (Indiana), the Library of Congress' Asian Division and its Far Eastern Law Division, Peabody and Essex Museum (Salem, MA), and the University of Texas at Austin.

These differences again demonstrate that realistically one-to-one parity between Chinese- and Japanese-language holdings within an institution is unlikely. If achieving parity in size were the goal and the rectification of historical imbalance meant a meddling in the library funding that would decrease the acquisitions of current Chinese research materials, would this not create yet another inequity making current Chinese research materials less available?

Statistics of published literature

Annually there have been more titles published in China and Taiwan than in Japan. According to the 1994 edition of the *Statistical Yearbook of China*, compiled by the State Statistical Bureau of the People's Republic of China and published by China Statistical Publishing House in Beijing, the number of books published in China in 1992 was 92,148 and that of serials was 7,361. The 1994 edition of the *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic
of China published by the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics of the
government on Taiwan gave a total number of 13,501 books and 4,747 serials published in
Taiwan in 1992. The 1993/94 issue of the Japan Statistical Yearbook published by Sorifu
Tokeikyoku reported that 45,595 books and 3,851 serials were published in Japan in 1992.

Conclusion

There are many factors that affect the building and set the size of a collection. Achieving
parity in quantity should not be the aim. Instead, building a collection in terms of quality
to attain adequate support for the academic program of one's institution needs to be the
focus of our concerted energy and commitment.

From these statistical figures, one can be reasonably certain that, although more funding has
been funnelled into acquiring Japanese materials, disparity in collection size of Chinese- and
Japanese-language materials exists in East Asian collections and will continue to exist. The
increase of more endowments and outside funding by institutions individually or collectively
for the purchase of Japanese materials is one solution while coordinated collection
development and management is another. Establishing gifts and exchange programs of
library materials with institutions in Japan is another avenue worth exploring and studying
further. Some of the cooperative ventures among East Asian collections are best
demonstrated by the activities of the Research Libraries Group as a consortium and the
National Coordinating Committee on Japanese Library Resources which was established by
outside funding for the specific purposes of cooperative collection development, improved
access, and other Japanese library-related issues.

With the development of electronic technology and the rapidly expanding information
dissemination and document delivery that future technology can bring about, together we
can work creatively to assure our library users of adequate access to collections beyond our
physical confinement and limited funds and concentrate our efforts in making information
contained elsewhere available to our faculty and students, and not in parity issues nor in
competition between Chinese and Japanese collections. As we know so well, the "just in
case" mindset that has dominated collection development and acquisitions in the academic
libraries for years is being vigorously replaced by the "just in time" paradigm shift. In a time
of continuing budget constraints, providing access to information is indeed more important
than ownership of material.

NOTES

1. Charles W. Brownson to the Dean of ASU University Libraries, "Management of


3. Ibid., 42.