

**Inside Major East Asian Library
Collections in North America, Volume 1**

“This compendium of interviews with East Asian librarians in the USA and Canada affords the reader insight on multiple levels into the careers of individual librarians and the commonalities and distinctive aspects of individual East Asian collections, particularly rare items. A valuable introduction to the world of East Asian librarianship, the book provides a variety of perspectives on daily work, career paths, administration, problems facing the field, and fulfilment found in the work. Collectively, the essays are an affirmation of the importance of printed collections and a ringing endorsement of East Asian librarianship.”

—**Gail King (Retired Asian Librarian, Harold B. Lee Library,
Brigham Young University)**

“Someday, when we all realize how special librarians are, we shall find that this book offers a most intimate insight into their lives. With a consistent set of questions, a comparative perspective emerges from this direct methodology – a new dimension to library studies that allow real librarians to speak for themselves.”

—**Prof. Lian-Hee Wee (Department of English Language and Literature,
Hong Kong Baptist University)**

“I am very glad to hear of the publication of this new book introducing some of the major East Asian library collections and their curators. I am sure it will be read with interest not only by professionals in the field but also by anyone concerned with recent developments in area studies.”

—**Charles Aylmer (Head of Chinese Department,
Cambridge University Library)**

“*Inside the World’s Major East Asian Library Collections in North America* is a highly informative and much anticipated account of many of the world-renowned Asian book and manuscript collections connecting East and West. Celebrated and supported by their academic institutions locally, the libraries discussed in this comprehensive volume are often unparalleled behemoths of knowledge holding published and archival resources that are at times completely unique and yet accessible regionally, nationally, and internationally. In our globally connected 21st century, these exceptional libraries collect the literary genius and recorded histories of the past and allow present and future scholars to study some of the rarest primary sources to advance our field of study in the decades and centuries to come.”

—**Dr Florian Knothe (Director of the University Museum and Art Gallery,
University of Hong Kong)**

“*Inside the World’s Major East Asian Library Collections in North America* is an important new title to collections experts of Asian materials. At a time when the world is facing tragedies of anti-Asian racism, it is critical to continue to collect and preserve Asian collections for scholars and students for teaching, research, and learning to continue sustaining awareness and understanding of Asian cultures and histories. The editors of this volume have insight and experience in balancing the languages and areas of academic libraries of North America, focusing not only on CJK, but important ethnic collections from the Okinawan

to Cantonese collections. It is an outstanding contribution to the field and serves as a key reference tool for librarians, researchers, and cultural administrators.”

—**Allan Cho (Community Engagement Librarian, Program Services,
Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, University of British Columbia)**

“A profoundly interesting and useful volume of 42 interviews with librarians administering East Asian collections in North America. It is an excellent read for those interested in developing an international library collection, as well as students and researchers in East Asian Studies. Contributors discuss how they entered this branch of librarianship, developed their collections, and share their practices. As a developer and instructor of the course “ILS 450: Global Perspectives in Librarianship,” this is a perfect model embracing trends in international collections, a specialization path in Library Science, and research on how international collections are developed. Overall, it is a well-articulated compendium of interviews that are addictive and hard to stop reading.”

—**Dr Tamara E. Blesh (Adjunct Instructor III,
University of Maine at Augusta)**

“The interview-based approach to writing about librarianship is a fascinating choice by editors of this volume. Through conversations with over 40 leading experts in the field, *Inside East Asian Collections in North America* not only charts the history and landscape of the most important East Asian library collections, but it also brings quiet librarianship to life by offering rare insights into the work-related joys, anxieties, and strategic thinking of these key professionals. Their success stories are just as diverse as their backgrounds and career paths. Highly recommended for anyone interested in East Asian studies or area studies librarianship.”

—**Dr Shexiao Tong (East Asian Studies Librarian,
Edinburgh University Library)**

“The library is an important hub for the exchange of human knowledge and an important organizational form for the exchange of different cultures. For a long time, libraries in North America have collected a lot of valuable literature resources from Asia, especially East Asia and Southeast Asia. These resources have become important in promoting inheritance and mutual learning of Eastern and Western civilizations. Professional librarians who contribute to the collection and service of these resources are the civilized messengers and guardians of this culture. The unique achievements of this book reveal their efforts and ideals for us. It is not only worthy of learning and reference by professionals, but it also enables our wider audience to realize the sublimity of this profession.”

—**Professor Qingshan Zhou (Department of Information Management,
Peking University)**

“The book, being a collection of interviews with North American East Asian librarians, is extremely informative for professional librarians, oral historians, and enthusiasts for literature and libraries. Furthermore, it is inspiring for East Asian

Librarians, and it could enrich their work in terms of building collections and library management. It provides a useful comparison between East Asian collections/libraries in North America – it’s quite an accomplishment for the editors.”

—**Katarína Feriančíková (Librarian, Library of Far Eastern Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague)**

“The diverse experience of East Asian librarians showcased in this book give readers a kaleidoscopic view of this unique group of experts. As an advocate of Eastern culture in the Western world, they ventured into the field with interest and built a successful career with passion. The stories will inspire anyone who listen to their heart.”

—**Esther Woo (Director of Library Services, The University of Hong Kong Libraries)**

“Ultimately, the success of any library depends on its ability to connect with its users through its resources. This publication is a very unique overview of some of the major East Asian Library Collections found across North America. The librarians’ reflections included here not only highlight the commitment they have to protecting information that is culturally and historically significant, but they also explore their professional obligation and determination to provide users with academic sources that reflect a truly global community. The items housed in these great libraries are no longer curiosities; they are acclaimed and relevant academic resources that do much more than simply supplement university collections. Now, at last, an extensive publication has been produced to showcase the great variety of libraries, librarians, and institutions aiming to empower students to find resources that will enable them to produce academic works of cultural significance and scholarship.”

—**Andrew J. Stark (Associate Dean and Head of Libraries and Information Services, The Southport School, Queensland, Australia)**

“This book offers a lively, original, and very instructive introduction to the wealth and diversity of East Asian collections in North America, the largest outside Asia. Focusing on librarians’ perspectives, it underlines the challenges of East Asian librarianship in the context of an ever more globalized and technological world where flexibility, creativity, and cooperation are at the heart of knowledge collecting, sharing, and mediating. As a librarian, I welcome the editors’ approach, which brings to light the passionate efforts of a profession often left in the shadows. These librarians contribute to the essential tasks of advancing knowledge and, even more crucial in these challenging times, helping bridge the gap between cultures. Not only will this book be of special interest for librarians, academics and students in East Asian studies, but it will also prove to be an informative reading for anyone interested in the evolution of area studies librarianship.”

—**Soline Suchet-Lau (Deputy Head of Collection Development Department; Asia Team Leader; Subject Librarian, Taiwan and Chinese Pre-modern Collections, BULAC: University Library for Languages and Civilisations (Paris))**

“Patrick Lo, Hermina Anghelescu, and Bradley Allard introduce the major East Asian and Southeast Asian collection libraries in North America and their librarians to us through a series of interviews they have conducted. This is a grand tour of librarianship and the wealth of knowledge that is well preserved and developed in these major libraries.”

—**Prof. Tai-Lok Lui (Chair Professor of Hong Kong Studies; Director, Academy of Hong Kong Studies; Director, Centre for Greater China Studies, The Education University of Hong Kong)**

“With all of the tensions worldwide, it is important to resolve misunderstandings and build trust. This exploration of East Asian collections in North America, as described by different East Asian Studies librarians, is a doorway to the culture of East Asia.”

—**Kazuyuki Sunaga (Professor of Library and Information Science, Kokugakuin University in Tokyo, Japan)**

“Through this volume, Patrick Lo and his co-authors bring to light what is known by some, but unknown by many: that libraries in North America hold some of the world’s greatest collections of East Asian materials. Across Canada and the United States, the range and depth of these collections is brought to light in this fascinating exploration of these major collections. In addition to these explorations, the editors include introductions to the librarians and curators who build and maintain these collections, as well as the scholars who utilize them to serve the growing global interest in East Asian studies.”

—**Peter E. Sidorko (Senior Consultant and Former University Librarian (2011–2021), The University of Hong Kong)**

“Librarians are the bridge between readers and books. East Asian librarians are the bridge between Eastern culture and Western culture. This book is the bridge between the outside world and the East Asian library. It brings to light the characteristics and management of East Asian library collections from the perspective of the librarians, making the East Asian Library a place with warmth and vitality. Through the introduction of this book, the general public can learn that there are so many distinctive East Asian libraries in the United States and Canada.”

—**Prof. Chao-Chen Chen (Chair Professor of Center for General Education and University Librarian of Chung Yuan Christian University)**

“For so many of us, libraries are a place of sanctuary – a space for contemplation, learning, and inspiration. *Inside the World’s Major East Asian Library Collections in North America* takes us behind the scenes of world-leading East Asian libraries and offers an intriguing and detailed insight into the working practices of librarians, as well as the challenges and frustrations they face in managing collections both large and small. This two-volume set not only provides a lens through which to understand librarianship today; it also identifies new trends in

the field and possibilities for the future. In sum, an inspirational and thought-provoking read.”

—**Amelia Allsop (Research Manager at the Hong Kong Heritage Project,
and Co-founder at History Ink)**

The book *Inside the World's Major East Asian Collections in North America* adopts interviews as a unique approach to capture the vigorous development of East Asian librarianship and East Asian collections in the past thirty-plus years. It paints a colorful picture of librarians in this field. They come from different cultural and academic backgrounds – many entered the field as their second-career choice, but all have devoted their passion, energies, and various professional training to librarianship. They have experienced the dramatic changes in the field and have grown and contributed so much. They are one of the main reasons that we see the flourishing condition of East Asian libraries and collections in North America today.”

—**Luo Zhou (Librarian for Chinese studies, International & Area Studies
Department, Duke University Libraries)**

Inside Major East Asian Library Collections in North America, Volume 1

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Foreword 1

The interviews in this volume bring readers inside some of the “world’s major East Asian collections.” It is to the credit of the editors that the major focus is not on the print books and bound journals or e-book packages and databases that constitute East Asian collections. Rather, the focus is rightly on the talented professionals whose expertise is essential in developing East Asian collections and connecting resources to readers.

The contributors vary greatly in terms of national and linguistic background, academic field, and the type of credential they bring to their positions. Their library roles are also diverse. Many are subject librarians in an academic library who support one or more area studies program. Some direct departments that group together all area studies collections. Others are special collections librarians or cataloging and metadata specialists. However, all are eloquent in describing the dynamic and stimulating nature of their professional lives.

There are a number of explicit themes that emerge across the interviews. One, of course, is the “digital turn” in scholarship and information resources, and there are frequent references to the digital humanities, digitization of library resources, open access, and e-resources. Another is the contributors’ extraordinary commitment to supporting their constituencies: the energy they bring to engagement with faculty and students in the classroom and individual research consultations, and to development of web sites, online research guides, exhibits, and innovative new services. A strong focus on special collections also comes through in the essays, with many contributors discussing the need to surface “hidden collections” of rare books, gray literature, and archival materials. As acquisitions practices result in more and more homogeneous collections, academic libraries have increasingly emphasized unique or “distinctive” special collections, and the interviews in this volume show that East Asian collections are very much part of this mainstream.

Also fascinating are some of the less explicit themes that emerge in these chapters, all of which point to a significant blurring of boundaries across the terrain occupied by East Asian studies librarians and collections. One of these shifts has been clear for some time: more and more East Asian studies librarians are not native speakers of the region’s languages. Improvement in language training in past decades has equipped a cohort of non-native speakers to function as effectively as native speakers in these roles. National boundaries have also become less of a hindrance in some cases, as is clear in references to the “opening” of the People’s Republic of China, which allowed so many talented individuals to move into North American universities and, ultimately, jobs in East Asian collections.

Another boundary – that between faculty and librarians – has also clearly become permeable. While this is easy to discern in discussions of faculty status, there is a more fundamental restructuring underway. When subject librarians are fully qualified to teach – and do teach – academic “content” courses and pursue scholarly research objectives like their faculty colleagues, it suggests that the old divide between the two groups has gradually become less salient. Unlike the “scholar-librarian” of old, these new library professionals are equipped with a formidable range of knowledge and skills related to librarianship in addition to their deep subject knowledge. This, along with their immersion in the world of digital technology, gives their roles unique relevance in contemporary academic institutions.

Within the academic library itself, East Asian collections are no longer a world apart. Several of the contributors mention how technological barriers to the input and processing of East Asian scripts fell some time ago. This has allowed the integration of East Asian materials processing into centralized operations. In like way, East Asian studies librarians are increasingly situated within larger departments and their activities directed, in some cases, to support of larger operational goals. Some contributors also mention participation in library-wide anti-racism initiatives, showing how East Asian collection staff are enlisted in support of broader library and institutional goals.

The fundamental barrier between local collections and regional and national collections is also clearly crumbling. So many of the contributors allude to collaborative collection development, collaborative preservation initiatives, and inter-institutional library services. The move away from dependence on local collections based on “just-in-case” logic toward a notion of the “shared collection,” as cogently argued by theorists such as Lorcan Dempsey, is already discernable among East Asian collections.¹ Collaborative approaches are blurring the boundary between East Asian collections, leading to increased cooperation between their librarians and an immeasurably improved access to regular and special collection materials.

Finally, the boundaries of the East Asian collection are no longer fixed in yet another way. Collection resources that are “owned” can only be considered in relationship to resources that are potentially owned (as with patron-driven acquisitions), licensed for use, or identified as open access. The librarians who contributed to this volume are in the midst of grappling with this fundamental shift in thinking about “the East Asian collection” and clearly find the challenges of collection development in a networked environment intellectually rewarding.

The loss or diminution of boundaries that emerge through the interviews suggest the constantly changing nature of the library profession. Some of these changes have been ongoing for some time; some are entirely new. These contributions were being written precisely when previously unimaginable change

¹Dempsey, L. (2016, January 31). The facilitated collection. *Lorcan Dempsey's weblog: on libraries services and networks*. Retrieved from <https://blog.oclc.org/lorcand/towards-the-facilitated-collection/>. Accessed on March 5, 2021.

occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic was underway. Some of the interviews highlight the concern over a push to focus primarily on electronic resources in support of campus-wide online teaching, despite the fact that East Asian publishing practices still have a strong bias toward print.² There is also mention of intensifying pressure on area studies collections' materials budgets and staffing. However, there is also evidence of creative approaches to new services in light of pandemic constraints.

All of the above challenges require not only problem-solving and innovation, but also advocacy for East Asian collections and services and the needs of those who use them. As the interviews show, East Asian studies librarians in North America are already serving as admirably effective advocates. Their stories offer compelling evidence of the importance of the East Asian studies librarian and testimony to the exceptional commitment these individuals bring to their jobs.

Ellen H. Hammond
Head of the East Asia Library
Co-Director of the Department of Area Studies and
Humanities Research Support
Yale University Library (Retired)

²Several East Asian studies librarian professional associations have addressed this issue. See the "Council on East Asian Libraries' (CEAL) Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic." Retrieved from https://www.eastasianlib.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CEAL_Statement_COVID-19_FINAL_2020.8.13.pdf. Accessed on March 5, 2021.

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Foreword 2

My first extensive experience with a significant East Asian collection in North America is with the Harvard-Yenching Library. I started to learn about the library's holdings as an undergraduate, working with primarily English-language resources to complete my assignments and toward graduation, with Chinese and Japanese materials to write my senior thesis. As a graduate student, my experience with the library deepened. I spent more time in the library to conduct research and for a year, to work on reshelving and checking the Western, Japanese, and parts of the Chinese and Korean collections to ensure that everything was properly placed in their new locations. The library became my second home, even when my actual residence was just three minutes away by walking. I met other graduate students who spent most of their waking hours poring over texts in the reading room. I relied on the librarians to find materials that were recorded in the online catalog as "lost" and discussed the progress of my work with them. Their responses to my questions and our informal conversations about my research showed that they not only cared about my intellectual growth but also often guided me subtly toward new ways of thinking about the topics.

Although more than a decade has passed since I left both the Harvard campus and the United States, I still consider the nine years that I spent in the Harvard-Yenching library as a formative period of my professional development. Now I am based in an East Asian country and at a university that has an eminent collection of resources for research about China. I am privileged to work with librarians as my colleagues who are knowledgeable in various areas of East Asian Studies and who are generous with their time and wisdom to support not only my work but that of my undergraduate and graduate students. I regard the classification and Romanization systems for East Asian language materials that I learned from the Harvard-Yenching Library as valuable tools that I use regularly to search for sources, and which have endowed me with a common idiom that I share with my librarian colleagues.

This volume opens up the inner lives of several important East Asian collections in North America through the candid narratives of the librarians who cultivate them. It provides insight into how these significant repositories operate, and how the field of East Asian librarianship fits into the broader context of information science and technology around the world. The experiences of individual librarians also reveal meaningful patterns about how their libraries serve their diverse groups of users and how librarians are overcoming many external constraints to the maintenance of their collections. Compiled during the era of

the COVID-19 pandemic, this book stands out as a record of extraordinary circumstances. It is moreover a testament of how librarians have always exercised resilience and creativity in dealing with obstacles in their shared professional mission and that such attributes have just been magnified in the past two years.

As described in many of the interviews in this volume, expanding the breadth of their collections and facilitating access to both physical and non-physical resources are profound challenges even and perhaps due to the technological advances of this century. Librarians use every method possible to develop the collections, even as factors like budget constraints, digitization, and unexpected disasters like fires and pandemics complicate this work. This volume teaches us about how managing the quality and quantity of holdings depends palpably on the librarians' expertise in information science, which is often taken for granted by users. Moreover, we see that librarians are actively contributing to the evolution of information science through strategic decisions about collaboration with peer institutions, including joint purchase and use of electronic resources, and the dissemination of knowledge through alternative means during the closures of physical spaces. In particular, although the field of digital humanities is widely regarded as an innovative mode of scholarship and an effective means to enhance the reputation of sponsoring institutions, the data management of libraries, including but not limited to digitalization, is less appreciated because its execution is often seamless and therefore less visible. However, the day-to-day work of librarians affirms that the conservation *and* expansion of collections, including increasing both in-person and remote access to them, are not merely "routine activities" within libraries, but rather are achievements that are possible because of the keen ability of librarians to discern how to make essential improvements.

The interview-based approach of this book furthermore reveals the intertwining of the multi-dimensional remits of librarians as researchers, teachers, and administrators. The user experience in the featured libraries is directly enhanced by many librarians who are active scholars and who therefore understand how to adapt their collections to users' needs and to respond to broader trends in scholarship. Librarians' work in publishing about their professional experiences embodies the best of practice-based research. Those who are active scholars and teachers in their disciplinary fields build and sustain intellectual networks that connect libraries not only in North America but in East Asia and other parts of the world. It is likewise necessary to recognize the value of librarians as teachers to their colleagues and students. Handling voluminous correspondence as a part of every librarian's day shows that the librarians are indeed "the libraries embodied" because they must know and convey the details of the collections to both users within and outside of their home institutions. As project managers of their units and divisions and as members of faculty or university-wide committees, librarians assume many active roles in administration. The diverse backgrounds of librarians, especially the overwhelming majority who have transitioned into their current positions from other professions, are veritable assets in carrying out their complex responsibilities. Their experiences confirm that specialized knowledge is necessary but that they often inspire the "eureka" moments for users by drawing upon their personal, interdisciplinary repositories of knowledge. Librarians are

indispensable representatives of their own disciplinary areas and ambassadors who can address the comprehensive and varied interests and concerns of senior administrators, donors, and users.

All of these interviews also remind us that East Asian libraries in North America are vital gathering places for research and guided learning and gateways to knowledge even as accessing resources remotely becomes preferable for both voluntary and involuntary reasons. The individuals who have shared their insights about East Asian librarianship inspire us to welcome their tireless efforts to make their valuable collections more open and available, reducing the factor of distance to make them substantial even when virtual.

Dr Loretta E. Kim
Associate Professor and Director
China Studies – Arts Stream
School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Faculty of Arts
The University of Hong Kong



Photo 1. Loretta E. Kim.

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Foreword 3

How do we describe libraries and collections today? What makes a collection special and unique, what makes a library important, good, or indispensable? Usually, the size of a collection, the outstanding quality, important services, or the influence of a library on other collections are cited to answer these questions. What is certainly true is that excellent collections need sufficient resources, both human and financial, and that they need time to develop.

A big budget does not guarantee a first-class collection. A large budget over a short period of time does not necessarily ensure building a truly significant collection. Collections also need time. They are built to last and defy, just a little, today's pressure to produce quick and lasting success messages on an almost daily basis. One aspect is that it is also very important when considering collections is responsibility. Who is responsible for a collection? Who influences directions and services? Who seeks joint projects with whom, in order, for example, to find contemporary answers to questions in the process of digital transformation services?

Here, curators, librarians, and also mixed teams in libraries are as important as a good acquisition budget or good infrastructural framework conditions of the institution. Librarians bring their own experience and background, their knowledge, their skills, and their ideas. They work in larger libraries as part of a team and thus influence others while at the same time benefiting from the exchange within departments. Curators, however, always influence collections. They are responsible for specific and smaller imbalances in collections that are so important. Good collections reflect the personal interests of a librarian. In this respect, the impact of curators and librarians should not be underestimated. In addition to the necessary management tasks, the passion of librarians plays an important part. Even if passion is nowadays somewhat relegated to the background in view of the challenges of digital transformation, it is precisely this challenge of digital transformation that demands good management in combination with passion.

In this book, the change of perspective, away from the important libraries and their collections and toward the individuals, offers a complementary view of what constitutes and influences East Asia and Southeast Asia collections. We learn, alongside the personal careers of colleagues from North America, how they themselves and their institutions are coping with the expansion of computational methodologies into the traditional research areas in the context of the sweeping digital transformation. All this will have an impact on other Asian libraries and the professional and unofficial networks. The book offers this change of perspective and focuses on North America.

As a representative of a large Asia collection in Europe, I can say that here, too, infrastructural conditions and people play a major role. The large European collections have much longer histories than the North American ones. Nevertheless, I have to say that Asia collections in Europe have a quite different status. European Asia curators and librarians today have to solve somehow very different problems than our colleagues in North America. For this reason, too, it is an advantage that the book focuses on the North American collections and libraries. A complementary work with colleagues in Europe would have to take into account the fact that in Europe, entirely different framework conditions make for very unstable and not always sustainable conditions.

Inside Major East Asian Library Collections in North America offers interesting insights into what collections are all about. And these insights are wonderfully complementary to what we know about different collections in North America.

Matthias Kaun
Director of the East Asia Department
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz



Photo 2. Matthias Kaun.

East Asian Librarianship and Library Collections in North America: Introduction

Hermina G.B. Anghelescu, Partick Lo and Bradley Allard

East Asian Studies as Field of Research and Education

The modern states of East Asia consist of China, including Hong Kong and Macau, two small territories that are under Chinese sovereignty, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan. East Asian studies is a distinct multidisciplinary field of scholarly enquiry and education that promotes a broad understanding of East Asia's past and present. East Asian studies is part of the broader field of Asian studies, also an interdisciplinary field that incorporates socio-political sciences and humanities. Research and education programs related to Asia, covering a wide range of topics and time periods, from ancient to modern history, language, literature, geography, religion, politics, socio-economic development, arts and culture, have been hosted by many universities worldwide, including the United States and Canada, where East Asian languages and civilizations or cultures departments offer specializations in Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

The Cold War competition in the international sphere led the US government to support the development of area studies through the Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958¹ which was passed in response to the Soviet acceleration of the space race. The law provided federal funding to ensure trained manpower of sufficient quality and quantity to meet the national defense needs of the United States. Title VI of NDEA provided funding for language and "area studies" program activities ranging from undergraduate to advanced degree studies placed in all types of educational institutions.

NDEA heralded a major U.S. commitment to devoting new attention to the world beyond its borders – first to teach more of the

¹Flemming, A. S. (1960). The philosophy and objectives of the national defense education act. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 327, 132–138. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1033973>

2 *Inside Major East Asian Library Collections in North America*

uncommonly taught foreign languages, and then to learn in depth about the histories, societies, cultures and political systems of the key foreign powers. (David Wiley, 2001)²

With the political and economic rise of China, institutions of higher education in the United States have experienced a corresponding growth in interest toward East Asia in general, and China in particular. The interest in Chinese studies in the United States and Canada focused both on China's early history and on contemporary China, as a People's Republic, created the need for in-depth research in all fields (economy, trade, culture, education, politics) that required acquisitions of books, papers, reports, and countless newspapers and periodicals that enabled scholars to investigate new trends in Chinese finances, business, banking, commerce, and the institutions and organizations engaged in these fields.

A Scholarly Review of Chinese Studies in North America (2013) consists of a collection of twenty-one essays that offer an overview of the paramount academic development and ever-growing scientific production on Chinese Studies in North America (mainly in the United States with some references to Canada) in the last three decades were published in 2013 by the Association for Asian Studies. Leading scholars specialized in different domains of Chinese studies discuss current trends in academic research related to China.³ Libraries in the United States and Canada are engaged in supporting research and teaching East Asia-related topics with a wide range of print and digital resources, including movies, documentaries, monographs, periodical publications, newspapers, manuscripts and rare books as well as web resources.

The above-mentioned volume is complemented by another one, also published by the Association for Asian Studies, which focuses on prominent library collections that support Asian studies research.⁴ The chapters of *Collecting Asia: East Asian Libraries in North America, 1868–2008* (2010) are authored by leading East Asia specialists, librarians, and scholars, who examine the development of twenty-five major East Asian libraries in the United States and Canada and the highlights of these collections. The volume also features the pioneers who helped shape these collections.

²Wiley, D. (2001). Forty years of the title VI and fulbright-hays international education programs: Building the nation's international expertise for a global future. In O'Meara, Patrick et al. (Eds), *Changing perspectives on international education* (p. 13). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

³Zhang, H., Xue, Z., Jiang, S., & Lugar, G. L. (2013). *A scholarly review of Chinese studies in North America*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies. Retrieved from http://www.asianstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/A_Scholarly_Review_ePDF.pdf

⁴Zhou, P. X. (2010). *Collecting Asia: East Asian Libraries in North America, 1868–2008*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies. Retrieved from <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/8587261>

East Asian Library Collections in the United States and Canada

Tsuen-hsuei Tsien (1964,⁵ 1979⁶), traces the beginnings of the first major collections of East Asian language materials in American libraries. He states:

The first large acquisition of Oriental books by an American library occurred in 1869 when 933 Chinese volumes were “presented to the government of the U.S.A. by His Majesty the Emperor of China.” This was not exactly a gift but an exchange, which took some two years of negotiations and involved, at least three agencies of the U.S. government. The Smithsonian Institution initiated the exchange in 1867 when the Congress passed an act to provide fifty copies of U.S. government documents in exchange for official publications of other countries.

In subsequent years, several major gifts of materials in Chinese and other Asian languages were added to the Library of Congress. It was the Yale University Library that acquired the first Japanese materials in 1906, when a collection of some nine thousand volumes on Japanese literature, history, and institutions was added to its holdings (Tsien, 1979). On the West coast, “increasing business contacts with Asia necessitated some action by the University of California to supply needed training,” states Tsien (1979). At the turn of the century, Columbia University added the first Chinese materials to its collections. In 1944, the University of Chicago purchased some twenty-one thousand volumes for the Newberry Library and some five thousand volumes for the Field Museum (1979). The New York Public Library and other major libraries in the United States also started adding Asian materials to their collections.

The interwar period witnessed the growth and systematic development of East Asian collections aimed at supporting the field of Asian studies in American universities (Wu, 1996).⁷ Private donors, institutions, and foundations such as Rockefeller and Carnegie became involved in supporting acquisitions of Asian materials to encourage study and research of oriental languages.

In 1926, McGill University in Montreal, Canada, received a gift of 75,000 volumes from a private donor. During this period museums in the United States

⁵Tsien, T.-H. (1964–1965). First Chinese-American exchange of publications. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 25, 19–30.

⁶Tsien, T.-H. (1979). Trends in collection building for East Asian studies in American libraries. *College & Research Libraries*, 40(50), 405–415. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/39905>

⁷Wu, E. W. (1996). Organizing for East Asian studies in the United States: The origins of the council on East Asian libraries, association for Asian studies. *JEAL*, Oct 1996, Vol. 11. Retrieved from <https://www.eastasianlib.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/OriginsofCEAL.pdf>

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and Canada started developing Asian art collections and their libraries started to incorporate books from this part of the world. The post-World War II period represented an era of rapid expansion “not only in the number of new collections but also in size and type of new acquisitions” (Tsien, 1979). Tsien (1971) states that

the year 1960 may be used as a benchmark for the development of East Asian collections in American libraries. The acquisitions made during the decade 1960–70 equaled the total number of volumes accumulated over the 100 years preceding 1960, and as many new collections have been established since then as those founded before that date.⁸

Major universities such as Harvard, Cornell, Princeton, Washington, Hawaii, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Toronto, and British Columbia introduced Asian studies academic programs supported by field specific acquisitions.

“During the past hundred years or so, the growth of East Asian materials and the increase of the numbers of East Asian collections in the United States and Canada have been steady and at times phenomenal,” states Thomas E. Lee in the Preface of his *Guide to East Asian Collections in North America*, the first of its kind, published in 1992.⁹ Lee makes reference to “milestone surveys” conducted by the Committee on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) of the Association for Asian Studies, the professional organization representing East Asian libraries in North America. The CEAL data indicate that by 1975, there were about 6.7 million volumes in 93 collections. In 1980, the number of volumes reached about 7.9 million.¹⁰ A decade later, the survey reveals that the collections exceeded 10 million volumes.¹¹

The statistical data published in 2020, covering the period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019, reveal that on June 30, 2019, the 46 (out of a total of 48) reporting institutions (43 in the USA and 3 in Canada) harbored a total of 21,155,464 print volumes, 3,398,618 serial titles, a number of 112,217 “other materials” on top of 2,446,096 materials in a variety of formats, such as microforms, videos, DVDs, scores, digital images, manuscripts, etc. Expenditures for access to electronic resources (computer files, electronic databases and serial publications) amount

⁸Tsien, T.-H. (1971). East Asian library resources in America: A new survey. *Association for Asian Studies Newsletter*, 16, 1–11.

⁹Lee, T. E. (1992). *Guide to East Asian collections in North America*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.

¹⁰Tsien, T.-H. (1982). Current status of East Asian collections in American libraries: 1979/1980 (Final Report). *CEAL Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/11303>

¹¹CEAL. (1991). Current status of East Asian collections in American libraries: 1989/1990. *CEAL Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/11300>

to 3,373,143 USD. A number of 39 reporting institutions provide subscription-based access to 93,299,401 volumes in e-book format.

In addition to library holdings, the comprehensive statistical data compiled by Vickie Fu Doll from the University of Kansas and Wen-ling Liu from Indiana University, Bloomington, include fiscal data for acquisition of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and other East Asian materials, budgets for staffing, staff activities such as presentations, reference transactions, and interlibrary loan requests and borrowing requests processed. As of June 30, 2019, the 46 East Asian Libraries employed a staff consisting of a total FTE of 409.69, with 171 FTE professionals, 146.36 FTE support staff, 68.63 FTE student assistants, and 23.27 FTE listed under the “other” category.¹²

The Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) collects and processes statistical data on collections, expenditures, staffing, and user services on East Asian collections in American and Canadian libraries, published every year in the February issue of the *Journal of East Asian Libraries (JEAL)*.¹³ All historical and current data are available online in the CEAL Statistics Database hosted by the University of Kansas.¹⁴

The Library of Congress

The Asian Division of the Library of Congress harbors one of the largest collections of Asian materials outside of Asia, consisting of 4 million items encompassing approximately 200 languages and dialects from across the Asian continent. “These materials in print, manuscript, microform, and digital formats are organized into the following collections: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Tibetan” mentions the Library’s website.¹⁵ Each collection is presented through individual research subject guides that highlight the holdings pertaining to each country or region.

As already mentioned, in 1869, the Library received a collection of ten works in 933 volumes from Emperor Tongzhi of China.¹⁶ Nowadays, the Chinese collection has reached 1.2 million volumes.¹⁷ The Japanese collection was initiated in 1875 as an exchange of government publications between the USA and Japan.

¹²Doll, V. F., & Liu, W.-L. (2020). Council on East Asian libraries statistics 2018–2019 for North American Institutions. *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 170, Article 4, 8–26. Retrieved from <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2020/iss170/4>

¹³Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL). Published Statistics [1957 to date]. Retrieved from <https://ceal.ku.edu/citations>

¹⁴Council on East Asian Libraries Statistics Database. Retrieved from <https://ceal.ku.edu/>

¹⁵Asian Collections at the Library of Congress: An Overview—Introduction. Retrieved from <https://guides.loc.gov/asian-collections/introduction>

¹⁶Hu, S. C. (1979). *The development of the Chinese collection in the Library of Congress*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

¹⁷Asian collections at the Library of Congress: An overview—Chinese Collection. Retrieved from <https://guides.loc.gov/asian-collections/chinese-collection>

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Today, the collection consists of 1.2 million monographs, serials, microform holdings, as well as rare books, watercolors, drawings, woodblock prints and lithographs.¹⁸ The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 led to the establishment of the Korean collection which has become “the largest and most comprehensive outside of Asia.” The print collection consists of 445,000 volumes of monographs, over 8,600 serial titles, and 250 newspapers. In addition, the collection holds 5,600 reels of microfilmed materials.¹⁹

The Mongolian collection consists of approximately 10,350 monographs, 170 serial titles, over 3,900 microfiche, 168 microfilm reels, and 600 volumes of rare books. Since 1992 the Library has been actively acquiring publications from Mongolia, in both classical Mongolian script and Cyrillic.²⁰

All of these collections are open for research *in situ* by scholars and the general public. Subject-area specialists are available for research consultations on site and online.

During the fiscal year July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019, the Library of Congress acquisition budget for East Asian materials amounted to 1,754,382 USD spent as detailed in [Table 1](#).

During the fiscal year July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020, a COVID-19 pandemic year, the Library of Congress continued its acquisition activity, but less items were available on the market because the publishing industry was also affected by the worldwide pandemic. The amount spent on acquisitions is not the result of a budget cut. It is mostly due to a less abundant offer in the book trade during the global shut down ([Table 2](#)).

The Library of Congress’ collections have grown so steadily that as of June 30, 2020, the holdings of East Asian materials totaled 3,100,850 volumes, consisting of: 1,287,253 volumes in Chinese, 1,258,672 volumes in Japanese, 337,175 volumes in Korean, and 217,750 volumes in other East Asian languages.²¹

From July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019, the Library of Congress employed the highest number of subject-area professional librarians in North America, amounting to a total of 32.75 FTE, consisting of 13.59 FTE for the Chinese language, 10.88 FTE for Japanese, and 8.28 FTE for Korean. The Library’s support staff for its East Asian collection amounted to a total of 14.82 FTE and

¹⁸Asian collections at the Library of Congress: An overview—Japanese collection. Retrieved from <https://guides.loc.gov/asian-collections/japanese-collection>

¹⁹Asian Collections at the Library of Congress: An Overview—Korean Collection. Retrieved from <https://guides.loc.gov/asian-collections/korean-collection>

²⁰Asian Collections at the Library of Congress: An Overview—Mongolian Collection. Retrieved from <https://guides.loc.gov/asian-collections/mongolian-collection>

²¹Doll, V. F., & Liu, W.-L. (2021). Council on East Asian libraries statistics 2019–2020 for North American institutions. *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 172, Article 5, p. 32. Retrieved from <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2021/iss172/5/>

Table 1. Library of Congress Acquisition Budget for East Asian Collections, July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019.*

	Monographs	Serials	Electronic	Other	Total
China	\$370,146	\$20,663	\$240,604	\$22,565	\$653,978
Japan	\$214,353	\$121,940	\$63,185	\$442,998	\$842,476
Korea	\$121,973	\$50,165	\$81,470	\$4,320	\$257,928
Total	\$706,472	\$192,768	\$385,259	\$469,883	\$1,754,382

* Doll, V. F., & Liu, W.-L. (2020). Council on East Asian libraries statistics 2018–2019 for North American institutions. *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 170, Article 4, 8–26. Retrieved from <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2020/iss170/4>

Table 2. Library of Congress Acquisition Budget for East Asian Collections, July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020.*

	Monographs	Serials	Electronic	Other	Total
China	\$224,462.44	\$12,260.57	\$350,764.00	\$23,895.00	\$611,382.01
Japan	\$306,687.33	\$81,723.58	\$63,900.99	\$65,819.03	\$518,130.93
Korea	\$120,928.17	\$40,247.15	\$35,044.52	\$3,181.53	\$199,401.37
Total	\$652,077.94	\$134,231.30	\$449,709.51	\$92,895.56	\$1,328,914.31

* Doll, V. F., & Liu, W.-L. (2021). Council on East Asian libraries statistics 2019–2020 for North American institutions. *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 172, Article 5, p. 32. Retrieved from <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2021/iss172/5/>

1 FTE student assistant,²² making it the largest team of subject-area specialists in Asian Studies working within the same division. Despite repeated efforts to secure an interview with a representative from the Asian Division of the Library of Congress our emails have remained unanswered. We would have welcomed first-hand accounts from those in charge of one of the most significant East Asian collections in North America.

East Asian Digital Collections

Digitization projects are costly and time consuming. They are made possible through competitive grants from various institutions and organizations. Associated costs related to preservation and curation of digital archives are also significant. Digital collections provide access to a wealth of selected primary source documents, manuscripts, early prints, maps, unique and rare items, old periodicals,

²²Doll, V. F., & Liu, W.-L. (2020). Council on East Asian libraries statistics 2018–2019 for North American institutions. *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 170, Article 4, 8–26. Retrieved from <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2020/iss170/4>

oral histories, etc. Instant online access to digital repositories makes scholars' research easier and faster to complete. Travel restrictions imposed during the global COVID-19 pandemic made in-person library visits impossible. However, digital libraries have remained open and have received high usage regardless of physical barriers.

Libraries engage in all types of digitization projects to make their collections widely accessible online. Subject-area librarians collaborate with digital librarians to identify resources for digital projects. They become responsible for identifying relevant materials to be digitized, for coordinating digitization efforts, for organizing digital information, and for preserving electronic collections. They are expected to provide domain expertise in support of the library's digital scholarship services. Subject-area librarians engage in outreach efforts to promote digital collections and to ensure interactive user engagement with the library's digital content.

East Asian library holdings are rich in books, manuscripts, historical maps, albums of models of calligraphy, inscriptions on all kinds of media, block prints, scrolls, rare and unique artifacts. Outstanding East Asian digital collections at major universities in the United States have been digitized and made available to the general public via the internet. East Asian collections of historical images present searchable visual archives that stand for valuable resources available to researchers.

It is not only the remote historical past that constitutes digital resources. Data from contemporary social media sites have been harvested to enable research on current social issues, such as the Chinese Anti-Corruption Campaign and Social Media Web Archiving Project, a joint collaborative project funded by a Mellon innovation grant, where three university libraries have contributed effort and expertise. Johns Hopkins University Library²³ (the host institution), George Washington University Library, and Georgetown University Library built two digital collections. The online exhibit for the Tibet Oral History Project²⁴ at the Stanford University Libraries consists of three hundred interviews conducted over a decade (2007–2017) with elderly Tibetan refugees who fled Tibet to avoid Chinese persecution. Interviews were filmed with interpreters present, and all interviews were subsequently transcribed in English.

The Yale Silk Road²⁵ is a database containing 11,000 images of major sites in the Silk Road region taken during site seminars by faculty from the Art History department at Yale University Library. The collection serves as a multi-disciplinary resource with relevance to students and faculty working in the fields of art and archaeology, religious studies, history, East Asian languages and literatures, Central Asian and Islamic studies. The Princeton University Library's East Asian

²³Johns Hopkins University Library-East Asian Studies. Retrieved from <https://guides.library.jhu.edu/east-asia/digital-collections>

²⁴Stanford University Libraries – The Tibet Oral History Project. Retrieved from <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/tohp>

²⁵Yale University Library–Yale Silk Road. Retrieved from <https://web.library.yale.edu/digital-collections/yale-silk-road>