


October 26, 1992

To: Pauline Yu
Chair, East Asian Languages and Literature

From: Bill Wong 
East Asian Librarian

Re: East Asian Collection Development

Thank you for your memo dated October 15th. I welcomed the idea of appointing a Library Committee to guide the future development of our East Asian Collection. The size of the East Asian literature faculty has grown from three to nine in two years. Furthermore, there are new East Asian faculty in the School of Humanities. At the same time, the library holdings have increased substantially. It's time to organize our group formally. It's time to rethink the 80/20 formula (80% of the budget for Japanese and 20% for Chinese). It's time to open discussions on selection priority and fund distribution. I appreciate the leadership you initiated and look forward to working with the four-member committee on a regular basis.

Perhaps, in an attempt to provide you and the committee members with background information, I would like to make the following comments on our East Asian Acquisition program during the past two years.

First, in the absence of a formal committee, I have maintained close contacts with the designated faculty representatives, Professors Ted Hutters and Steve Carter. I have consulted Ted on all major Chinese acquisition projects, including 1) the Library of Congress (LC) duplicates, 2) the reprint series entitled *Pai pu ts'ung shu chi ch'eng*, 3) the collection from the University of Washington Library, and 4) the cooperative arrangement with UCSD Library. In the Japanese field, Steve offered some advice on selecting most of the major titles. A spending pattern of 80% for Japanese and 20% for Chinese materials can be seen in the statistical reports for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Secondly, given the different nature and special characteristics of book trade and publishing industry in China and Japan, I have different approaches and methods for acquiring library materials from these two countries. The prices on Chinese books are low, the market supply is short, and the dealers' services are poor. When describing acquiring materials from China, I tend to emphasize collection rather than selection. On the other hand, the costs of Japanese publications are extremely high, the market is stable, and second-hand dealers are well-organized and managed. Acquiring Japanese materials should be a highly selective process.

Thirdly, in addition to a commitment of a large allocation for Japanese materials, serial subscriptions and shipping/binding/handling costs were also included in our budget. As a result, there was little money left for Chinese publications. This money was used to order current reference materials and the literature books recommended by Ted. Besides the current Taiwanese publications are covered in a five-year gift program provided by *Chinese Daily News*, Los Angeles edition, most of the Chinese books we purchased were from China or Hong Kong.

Fourthly, as you know, many recently acquired Chinese volumes were gifts or donations. Because the gift books are usually with current imprints, I recommended the aforementioned four major Chinese acquisition projects. These projects contain important and hard-to-get retrospective materials (average price is \$1.00 per volume) which would supplement and complement our holdings of current publications. I anticipate that when we receive a large amount of gift books, the question of quality vs. quantity would be raised. For example, should we accept some of the materials in the Noma Collection which are indeed duplicates to our existing holdings? I believe that if I can spend time on sorting, selecting and weeding the materials, I would welcome all gift offers. This was why I worked closely with Chinese and Japanese book donors and accept their gift books liberally.

Next, I want to say a few words about the much criticized LC duplicates, a program which ended this past September. Before the decision was made last year, I checked with a library colleague at Brigham Young University Library who has experience in dealing with these materials. I was fully aware of the danger of receiving a great quantity of unsuitable and unwanted materials. However, I figured it was a chance worth taking in the rudimentary stages of our East Asian collection program. We offered a bid lower than BYU's original cost several years ago. During the past year, I was personally responsible for eliminating the unsuitable materials.

The retainment rates among the three different languages varied: Chinese 60%, Japanese 30%, and Korean 50%. Because LC has a comprehensive exchange program with the Chinese government, and at the same time, contracted a wide-range blanket order with a dealer in Beijing, the two programs resulted in substantial overlapping and duplication. Despite a large number of unwanted materials, we cannot deny that there are useful and important books covered in this project especially in the Chinese field. In fact, the two new Chinese dictionaries (*Han yu ta tz'u tien* and *Hsin pien shih yung han yu tz'u tien*, published in 1986 and 1990 respectively) you asked me to order last week were actually part of the LC collection. Just in one area of T'ang literature, the 71-volume *Ch'uan T'ang shih kao pen*, edited by Ch'ien Chien-i (1582-1664), and the 5-volume *Ch'uan T'ang wen* are also included in the LC collection.

It is true that there are many fragmentary pieces contained in the LC collection. However, if the volumes are important, though they may not be in complete sets, they are still valuable for a new collection, like ours. Given the budget situation now, I don't think that "completeness" should be a key criterion for selection. Meanwhile, the library staff should face the challenge from the "lacunae legacy" to spend time and energy on gap-filling research and record maintenance.

Finally, my comments will not be complete without a brief description of the present status of our East Asian Collection. Not including the Noma Collection, we expect our holdings to reach the 50,000-volume mark by this December (Professor Fritz Mote of Princeton University once said that the minimum requirement for an East Asian vernacular research collection is 100,000 volumes.) Eighty percent are Chinese holdings, 19% Japanese and 1% Korean. Our Korean books were mainly obtained through the gift and exchange channels. With the exceptions of the Japan Foundation and Toshiba grants, a majority of our Japanese publications were purchases. Almost all publications from Taiwan were donations and all publications from Hong Kong and

China were purchased. While the Japanese collection is highly selective and specially focused on Japanese literature, the Chinese collection has a comprehensive coverage with an emphasis on both classical and modern literature. The level of the Chinese reference books we collected now is adequate for graduate studies. Meanwhile, our holdings of the basic *Ssu-k'u* series, *Ts'ung-shu* (collectanea) series, Buddhist texts, anthologies of literary works, collected works of major authors of traditional and modern periods are fairly complete. After making a quick check against our holdings concerning the items on the "Wish List" that was attached to your memo, I can confirm that we have most of them. However, due to a huge backlog of unprocessed and uncataloged materials, access to these materials is very difficult, if not impossible. We need the help from the staff of the Technical Services units.

Three weeks ago, the Head of the Cataloging Department and I met with the top library administrators to discuss the East Asian technical processing project in general and staff needs in particular. Although no decision was made at the meeting, I still hope that recruiting a staff with Japanese background would be seriously considered when the Library's fiscal future looks brighter. I will, of course, keep you informed on the future developments.

cc: Joanne Euster
Judith Paquette
Steve Carter
Chung-moo Choi
Michael Fuller
R. Bin Wong