LIS Education and the Changing Face of East Asian Librarianship

NORIKO ASATO, Ph.D.

Library and Information Science Program
University of Hawaii at Manoa

314G POST, 1680 East-West Rd.
Honolulu, HI 96822, USA
asaton@hawaii.edu

Introduction.   This paper is an examination of the changing nature of East Asian librarianship. It is a preparatory study towards creating a course in East Asian Librarianship. Courses appropriate for educating a new generation of East Asian librarians appear absent from Schools of Library and Information Science in the United States and Canada. This study synthesizes recent literature highlighting current trends and the future direction of the profession in order to understand the requirements to be an East Asian Studies librarian in the 21st century.

Method. Literature review of research on Asian and East Asian librarianship.

Results.   The study finds technological change continues to revolutionize the profession, as are changes in North American research library management styles.

Conclusion. The article offers strategic planning steps by the University of Hawaii Library and Information Science Program to educate the next generation of subject specialists including exchange programs with graduate LIS schools in Asia.

Introduction

Although Asian materials were collected by North American libraries as early as 1869, modern East Asian collections only became part of American libraries in the last six or seven decades—roughly paralleling World War II. Since that time, many research universities built large collections primarily focusing on East Asian languages, especially Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (CJK) to meet the needs of American scholars specializing on East Asia. One can imagine that being an East Asian librarian is a challenging position requiring a great deal of expertise beyond linguistic ability. Indeed, at one point during the 1960s and 70s the University of Hawaii and University of Chicago regularly offered courses preparing such subject specialist (Committee of Suzuki Yukihisa Sensei Kiju Kinen Ronshu, 2001). However, courses that would raise the next generation of East Asian librarians appear virtually absent from Schools of Library and Information Science in the United States and Canada. Beyond the MLS, it appears to be something learned; more like an apprenticed craft passed down by generation to generation. This paper is a preparatory study in order to establish a regular course on East Asian librarianship at the Library and Information Science Program at the University of Hawaii. It synthesizes recent literature to highlight current trends and the future direction of the profession in order to predict the requirements to become an East Asian Studies librarian in North America in the 21st century. I hope this paper can start a dialog among LIS educators in Asia that will assist my research and teaching of East Asian Librarianship.

The Portrayal of East Asian Librarianship

The recent economic and technological developments that have so changed librarianship have had even more impact on East Asian Studies librarians. Academic institutions are facing challenges that are greatly different from what professionals faced in the past. To illustrate these changes, let me share results of a survey conducted in 2006 by the North American Coordinating Council (NCC) on Japanese Library Resources. Forty five Japanese librarians in North America responded with comments on their continuing education (CE) needs (North American coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources). Regarding collection development/acquisition, 78 percent responded "electronic resource and databases" are highly important, while less than half of respondents marked "non-print materials" (44%) and "books" (42%) as highly needed. For cataloging, they wanted workshops on "metadata" (44%), "electronic resources" (40%) and "rare books" (33%). Far fewer librarians wanted education on more traditional skills, such as "monographs" (18%), "continuing resources" (29%), or "authority control priorities" (29%). Since this survey examined continuing education needs of current practitioners, we cannot say that traditional skills such as cataloging of monographs no longer have value. However, the list of desired skills shows that East Asian librarianship has greatly expanded from a time when subject specialists primarily needed to master key reference tools and transliteration schemes.

In the category of reference and access CE needs, the first and second most important skills are "user instruction for information literacy" (51%) and "public relations" (47%). Knowledge of "licensing" (76%) and "copyright" (56%) were indicated as highly relevant CE needs regarding legal issues. Survey respondents stated "digitization" (58%), knowledge of "searching tools" (51%), and "Website creation and management" (47%) as other important areas they wanted presentations on. In light of global budget constraints, respondents agreed that "grant proposal writing" (78%) is a highly necessary skill they want to improve.

These survey results demonstrate that East Asian librarianship has been impacted by the same forces that are shaping academic librarianship at large. One can see this in how East Asian librarians utilize available information technologies, such as open access or commercial databases, digital libraries, and catalogs of electronic resources. Perhaps because of this, they want CE to keep up with the fast pace of technological developments.

Another facet of today's East Asian Studies librarian is being a solo librarian managing a rather small but expensive collection of East Asian materials in small to medium size academic institutions where such collections may be a fairly new development. In this type of library, the East Asian Studies librarian may have a background in one area, for example Chinese history, but is also expected to handle Korean and Japanese materials. Such librarians most likely provide basic reference service and instructional sessions. They also do a small amount of original cataloging and assist with transliterating materials for paraprofessionals who do copy cataloging. He/she also manages collection development and public relations. In order to compensate for the limited size of the collection, the librarian needs expert knowledge of affordable online resources, interlibrary loan, as well as fostering working relationships or agreements with peer institutions to exchange materials or establish cooperative collection management plans.

On the other hand, in medium to large academic institutions, there might be several East Asian Studies librarians—typically one for each language area. They, however, have to be able to function in the general areas of librarianship. In this situation, an East Asian librarian is not primarily a highly specialized professional but rather a team member in a library's units. The technologies introduced in libraries and current fiscal constraint set new standards for East Asian librarians who seem expected to perform multi-tasking serving many units in a library.

Who are the Users of East Asian Libraries?

Traditionally, East Asian Studies librarians mostly served the students and faculty in East Asian languages, history, art, and other humanities with their teaching and research needs. Due to the exotic nature of "Oriental languages," there was a prevailing notion that East Asian collection users are "a small number of closely defined users," (Kamada, 2002) and assisted by librarians who knows their faculty and "what their interests are" (Troost, 2000). This has shifted in response to today's multinational and interdisciplinary environment which encourages crossing academic disciplinary borders. This globalized network of interdisciplinary scholars have created new users of East Asian libraries. Users now come from colleges of social sciences, natural sciences, and business.

According to Yasuko Makino, these new users not only come this network of academics, but also may include "consulting firms, research institutions, corporations, government agencies and law firms" (Makino, 2000). Their expectations for materials often exceed what would have satisfied traditional users, Makino explained. Frequently these new users demand "primary sources and statistical data" (Makiko, 2000).

It is predicted that East Asian Studies itself will became more mainstream because distance education allows non-traditional students to supplement their focus areas (Troost, 2000). Serving them requires virtual reference services, such as web portals to introduce digital resources.

The roles of Informational Technology in East Asian Libraries

The revolutionary changes brought about by Information Communication Technologies in libraries have meant that traditionally distinct areas of professional work, such as public services, technical services, and collection management/development, are becoming increasingly intertwined. The concept of user services, according to Hitoshi Kamada, is shifting from collection based services to "access-oriented service delivery where customer satisfaction with information access is primary" (Kamada, 2002). The majority of East Asian materials are still in print format although they are slowly catching up with western resource models (Riedy, 2003). However, an East Asian Studies librarian cannot use the present situation as an excuse for not delivering materials requested by users who are accustomed to receiving services, such as full text, interlibrary loan, and free web reference resources. The mission of the East Asian Studies librarian is still to meet users' expectations. Therefore, knowledge of electronic resources, interlibrary loans—both domestically and internationally—are even more crucial for East Asian Studies librarians. For CJK languages, there are dozens of databases and other commercial electronic resources to choose from, so the professional knowledge is the ability to evaluate them critically since the cost of implementation and training can be such a major investment. The ability to negotiate with vendors is another new area expected for East Asian Studies librarians. In addition to these commercial databases, librarians need to be familiar with free digital resources in both vernacular and English languages on the Internet. When the Internet was new, librarians were expected to create websites with relevant links, but now are expected to transform the unstructured Web into create web portals of East Asian resources (McVey, 2005), following library standards both to compensate for collection limitations and to serve remote users.

Librarians' role in reference services has changed with the development of information technology. Increasingly library users do their own searches—first on search engines and then databases rather than consulting with a reference librarian. In this environment, although an East Asian Studies librarian might not have as much face-to-face reference services, he/she might have to spend more time offering virtual reference services through telephone, e-mail, chat or Skype. Beyond this, librarians have to offer information literacy instruction, including how to input search terms in vernacular scripts as well as in Romanization, how to use databases effectively, how to search books and articles with full text, and how to evaluate information. This goes far beyond the traditional approach of bibliographic instruction, featuring a buffet of print reference sources, although some users still need these core skills.

Technological change has even more dramatically transferred cataloging of East Asian materials. Cataloging of non Latin scripts entails different levels of decision making, and East Asian languages are no exceptions. In the past, some questions included choice among competing Romanization systems and technological difficulties with machine-readable records containing vernacular characters. Therefore, the advent of Research Libraries Group's CJK cataloging system followed by that of OCLC (they merged in 2007), as Kaneko called it, was "a singularly momentous occasion in the annals of the East Asian collections in North America"(Kaneko, 1993). It made possible the input of scripts in the bibliographic databases, and lowered the costs of original cataloging materials by sharing bibliographic records. However, catalogers of individual languages still struggle with unique difficulties, such as authority control and cataloging of special collections. Further, some large East Asian libraries were faced with a huge backlog of uncataloged items. This provoked discussion of the option of outsourcing cataloging, which many feared would lead to a decrease of the quality of cataloging copy as well as the status of professional cataloging positions (Tsiang, 2006). A librarian at a small East Asian Studies collection is still expected to possess an advanced cataloging skills to be able to catalog the occasional unique item. At the same time, they have to be able to catalog online or digital materials so they can be found and accessed by users (Riedy, 2003).

Collection Development in the Age of Information Technology

The 2001 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) statistics forecast that research libraries would continue to decrease their purchasing power of monographs and serials and increasingly "focus on providing access to, rather than ownership of, library resources"(Kyrillidou, 2000). Interpreting these statistics, Riedy claimed universities would invest less on purchasing print publications which will represent an even smaller percentage of the output of still growing American publishers. On the contrary, subscriptions to electronic materials will become an increasingly large chunk of library budget. Riedy predicts the time for the conceptual change in East Asian collection development.

> It is very likely that as the access model continues to offer more information at lesser cost to an increasing number of people, the ownership model may be reserved for the high-cost, low-usage information resources that are of value to smaller groups of people (Riedy, 2003).

This trend would generally apply to all library collection development at present. However, this still is a revolutionary conceptual change for East Asian Studies librarians, as the majority of collections emphasize print formats, which their relatively small number of campus users are using. With this perspective, Ai-Hwa Wu, who was the Chinese librarian at Arizona State University, argued that "with limited resources, we must be mindful of what we are collecting and how it fits into the vast pattern of national resources"(Wu, 1999). As more materials will be available domestically and internationally through electronic resources, databases, and interlibrary loans, collection developers have to consider several factors.

First, regardless of the format, East Asian materials are usually quite expensive, so libraries need to cooperate with other units in the library to maximize limited budgets to build a useful collection and expertise to serve inter/cross-disciplinary users. Therefore, cooperation on campus is the first step towards maximizing modern East Asian collections.

The costs of commercial databases and other electronic resources are so high for any one institution so that it is even more essential for East Asian Studies librarians to form consortia systems between institutions. Through groups, such as the Council of East Asian Libraries and consortia, East Asian librarians are able to stretch their limited budgets to provide access to a variety of printed and electronic resources.

This cooperative collection development should be international. Libraries traditionally have established reciprocity for document delivery or exchanging print materials, and other special materials. Especially for rare grey materials, according to Riedy, the future Asia collection should be capable of creating thematic digital projects and make their collection more accessible to users. This requires not only collaboration with other North American libraries, but also between museums, publishers, and government offices overseas (Riedy, 2003).

Gathering materials from specific organizations' websites, such as governments, universities, businesses, and NGOs is increasingly important for East Asian Studies as well as other areas of librarians. These contents may be available on websites, specialized databases, or only in print. Librarians "must hunt them down, examine their contents, and make a determination," as to what is the most effective and efficient way to preserve the content (Riedy, 2003). Considering the short life of digital information, librarians have to collect for present and future research needs.

In order to perform these tasks, a future East Asian Studies librarian "should possess superior searching skills both on the web and databases, [and be able to] develop web and database design skills" (Riedy, 2003). Ai-Hwa Wu argues that East Asian librarians' collection management skills not only include subject knowledge but an ability to negotiate contracts with vendors as well as the ability to persuade administrators and donors to secure needed funds (Wu, 1999). These requirements are in addition to traditional skills of knowing publishers, vendors, and library resources.

Collaboration

The majority of research from Asia still comes in print format, so present-day East Asian Studies librarians will need to continue to collect them. However the capacity of purchasing print materials will diminish and quickly be taken over by digital format as the current technological and economic trends shape North American institutions. Regardless of publication format, the current situation mandates librarians to change the mentality of collection development, from ownership to access base. This new concept is incumbent on East Asian librarians to establish a collaborative collection development environment with peer institutions which divide the areas of specialties and share their collections freely among participating circles. Librarians can no longer resist highlighting the failure of the Farmington Plan and other historic cooperative agreements. Riedy emphasizes the importance of involving East Asian Studies faculty in this project. Working together, librarians should be able to collect materials tailored to their teaching and research needs, and help meet the library's mission to serve its primary users. He correctly warns that consortia's agreements, however, require libraries to collect "at levels for some subjects or regions which are beyond what we would otherwise" (Riedy, 2003). Such collecting obviously is the price of collaborating.

Kamada stresses establishing collaboration or a team based environment inside the library. He argues that East Asian and other non Latin language collections have been perceived as independent units isolated from the mainstream library because of their language specialties, and unique processes for purchasing, lending, and cataloging as well as special reference services. However, Kamada emphasizes that the organizational change prevailing in academic libraries no longer values independent collections, such as Asian collections which are isolated autonomous units in the large organizational structure. Kamada argues that special unit librarians should be re-trained as team members working along with other librarians and get involved with the administration and decision-making process striving for quality services. This echoes Wu's argument that an East Asian Studies librarian should be politically empowered to appeal to user's needs and work closely with administration. The interdisciplinary trend in higher education would encourage working with other subject area librarians to deliver quality services.

International collaboration could play an important role in East Asian Studies librarians' efforts to promote services to users. This would include working with peer libraries to exchange document delivery services, monographs, and digital materials from East Asia. For example, the NCC's Multi-Volume Sets

(MVS) Project sponsored by the Japan-United States Friendship Commission allowed American libraries to acquire reference resources that would have been unavailable if it were nor for this international collaboration and creating a network within the United States. Libraries receiving MVS items mustl interlibrary loan these items when requested by other libraries in North America (North American coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources). This is an excellent model for future cooperation.

Conclusion

By looking at articles on East Asian Librarianship published in the past decade we can see a definite shift in expectations. The field has transformed from the Golden Age of subject specialization during the Cold War when federal funds allowed East Asian librarians to focus their time on building and cataloging research collections to a period that stresses cooperation and technological competencies. East Asian libraries increasingly understand that their future rests in being part of a larger team on many levels.

As scholars, of course, we can never conclude an overview without calling for further research. However, I do hope that this brief paper summarizes some of the changes that have transformed the specialization of East Asian Librarianship in the past decade. This is only a first step, as there is a need for research using surveys of East Asian librarians and their supervisors, as well as recent job postings in order to triangulate future employment trends and career needs. This is my next assignment before creating a syllabus for an East Asian Librarianship course.

Still, I hope that this paper shows that the expectations for East Asian Studies Librarians are enormous, and if anything seems to be growing. As professors of Library and Information Science, the question remains how we can raise the next generation of East Asian Studies librarians. As long as North American research libraries continue to demand an ALA-accredited Master's degree for professional librarians the answer has to come from the nearly 60 accredited Master's degree programs in the United States and Canada.

I am pleased that in 2008 the University of Hawaii LIS Program made a strategic goal to "Strengthen the emphasis on Hawaii, Asia, and the Pacific in teaching, research, and service"(University of Hawaii LIS Program). In terms of courses, this means revisiting Asian and Pacific content in existing classes as well as the creation of new courses. We are also working on campus to allow cross-listing of courses, and promote our dual Master's degree with Asian Studies.

We also hope to "Establish at least one formal partnership with a university in Asia as a step toward building relationships with scholars, organizations, and practitioners in the region." We were fortunate to be able to send one American (native English-speaker) to study abroad at Kyoto University. We also were pleased to have a doctoral student on exchange from National Taiwan University, but would like to formalize exchange agreements since these can assist with visas, credit transfers, and tuition.

My hope is that one solid course on East Asian Librarianship as well as a strengthened core that reflects Asian librarianship will create the scholarly environment needed to nurture a generation of East Asian subject specialists who can achieve all of the expectations that librarians, scholars, and other users hope they can accomplish. This would be ideal if supplemented with internships guided by expert practioners and the possibility of study abroad at leading Asian LIS Programs. I look forward to working with you to help us achieve this goal. This will help the LIS Program return to its historic role as a bridge between Asia and North America. More importantly, my hope is that these specialists will not only maintain Asian research collections, but help our discipline to continue to develop cooperative understanding both as librarians and global citizens. 56

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About the Author

Noriko Aasto earned a BA in Educational Psychology from the University of Ryukyus, an MA in East Asian Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a Ph. D. in Foreign Language Education from Purdue University. She is currently an Assistant Professor of LIS at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, specializing in Asian Librarianship.