2010 Book-Buying Trip Report

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Thanks to grants from the East Asian Studies Center, InULA, and the Library, I took a book-buying trip to China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan this past summer. The entire trip took six weeks, from May 9-June 23, 2010, and covered the following cities: Beijing, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Seoul, Taipei, and Tokyo.

I wanted to accomplish two goals with the trip: 1) to resume contact with our vendors overseas and stay up to date on new print publications, electronic resources, and publication trends; and 2) to reinforce cooperative relations with our international exchange partners and to learn of library innovations in East Asia. I was also invited to give a talk about library collections and local digitization efforts at Indiana University to colleagues at the National Central Library on June 9 in Taipei.

The visits to libraries helped me stay informed and connected. With prior arrangements, I visited twelve university and public libraries. I was able to keep my colleagues, who are often less informed about U.S. libraries in the Midwest region, updated on IU libraries and services. These visits have made possible person-to-person meetings to exchange views and inform each other of policies, changes, emerging trends, and impending plans. For example, I became aware of the personnel changes and library expansions and reorganizations in East Asia in the past two years. The newly appointed Head of the Qinghua University Library, Dr. Jingkang Deng 鄧景康, introduced me to the second expansion plan of the library. I found that several of my contacts have assumed new responsibilities.

Here is a brief summary of my trip.

Libraries

In China, I visited seven exchange partners: Qinghua University Libraries, Beijing University Libraries, National Library of China and its new addition National Digital Library of China, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Library, Fudan University Library, Shanghai Public Library, and Zhejiang University Library. I took time to visit a small private children’s library, first visited in 2008, for migrant workers in Beijing. Located in the very worst ghettos of the well-to-do Haidian area, the library has since gained support from the local official and moved to a cleaner space. However, the entire community will be gone in the near future because a few developers have acquired building rights to the entire community. We can see that the fast changes in China may directly affect this small library as well.

In my visit to the National Library of China (NLC), I was impressed by its new addition, National Digital Library of China. Only recently opened to the public in early May, it is being fully embraced and utilized by library users. All public workstations were being used. People also
seemed to adapt quickly to browse online newspapers in front of desk-size workstation screens. The libraries, fully air-conditioned, are sanctuaries against the oftentimes polluted air outside. Zhejiang University, a two-and-a-half-hour train ride away from Shanghai, is one of IU’s newly developed sister universities. I toured two of its libraries (Yuquan 玉泉 campus and Zijingang 紫金港 campus) and interviewed a professor in the School of Library Science and Technology. Both libraries have a newly appointed Head, and the priority of the libraries in recent years has been digitization and advanced technology. In the Fudan University Library, I had the pleasure to meet with Mr. Ge Jianxiong 葛劍雄, Head of the Library (recently appointed) and a known scholar of Chinese history and culture. Bright and welcoming, the Shanghai Library provides exceptionally user-friendly services to all visitors. The colleagues there also demonstrated to me the self-developed full-text database National Index to Chinese Newspapers & Periodicals: 1833-1910.

In Seoul, I visited the Seoul National University Library, National Library of Korea, and the Korea Film Council. Both libraries have long and successful gift and exchange relationships with IU, and IU, in recent years, is one of the Korea Film Council’s selected book and film recipients in North America. The National Digital Library of Korea, opened in May 2009, is an addition to the National Library of Korea. The library includes a digital art museum and an art and cultural exhibit place. Taking the chance of visiting the Seoul National University Library, I stopped by Kyujanggak 奎章閣 located on campus. Built in 1776, Kyujanggak, with 200,000 volumes of rare materials, is the largest rare book collection in Korea. Dr. Noh Tae-Don 노태돈, a professor of ancient Korean history and newly appointed in February, told me that there are three goals of the collection: to secure the Kyujanggak materials, to support scholars’ research related to Korea before the Choson period (1392-1910), and to introduce classical works through reprints. However, the library, in recent years, has not received much financial support from the government for digitization projects.

In Taipei, I visited the National Central Library and the National Taiwan University Library and its university press. Indiana University Libraries have several decades of a strong gift and exchange relationship with the National Central Library. In recent years, we have also benefited from its document delivery services when we could not find the requested documents in North America. Its Center for Research in Chinese Studies has hosted several of our faculty members in the past.

In Tokyo, I visited our exchange partners the National Diet Library and Waseda University Library. I was given a tour of Waseda University’s well-known theatre museum, Engeki Hakubutsukan 演劇博物館, and learned much about the development of theatre in Japan. The Tokyo Main Library of the National Diet Library has built an annex, four floors above ground and eight floors of stacks underground, for newspapers, journals, and part of its digital resources, such as CD-ROMs/DVD-ROMs.

**Vendors**

My visits to vendors have reinforced our relationships. These direct contacts usually generate prompt purchase and delivery service. We exchanged information about publication trends, watched demonstrations of new products from well-known electronic resources companies,
browsed new monograph sets, and selected films from video retailers. I visited bookstores and major vendors of ours, and reviewed our approval plans. Our vendors in Beijing and Shanghai took me to video-shop districts to select films. We visited several electronic resource companies and watched demonstrations of e-products (such as *Database for 10,000 Basic Rare Monographic Sets in China*) and new interfaces (such as *China Statistics & Census Yearbook Database* distributed by East View in U.S.). The staff of our Japanese vendor Kinokuniya helped me select books that were published most recently. Our Korean vendor browsed with me new publications and clarified its market plan for *E-Korean Studies*. In Taiwan, I visited two e-journal vendors (Tudor and Airiti) to see demonstrations of their products. At IU, we have not yet subscribed to any databases that contain e-journals from Taiwan.

Both print and electronic resources vendors in East Asia currently seem to co-exist well. Some of the print vendors were expanding their businesses further by utilizing the decades-long associates with libraries abroad to become agents or distributors of electronic resources. Some were waiting for new laws and policies in regard to copyrights, publishers, print materials, and electronic resources. There are still large markets for print-only vendors.

However, there is no doubt that the field of East Asian studies has experienced a proliferation of specialized digital products. In addition to the dramatic growth of large-scale digitization efforts in China, some e-providers in China and Taiwan have established collaborative marketing strategies for their products. It is also worth noting that the book trade between China and Taiwan is growing at rapid speed, which was hard to imagine a few years ago.