

BOOKS FROM ASIA : COOPERATIVE COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT IN AUSTRALIA

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At the last ASAA Conference in 1984, Harrison Bryan, then Director-General of the National Library of Australia, spoke about national planning of Asian collections as follows, "The overall limitation of funds available for the development of library resources in Australia renders essential a high degree of co-operation among institutions and a rationalization of their activities". However he then added, "This is extremely difficult to achieve, even in an environment which has always been characterized by a most commendable degree of co-operation".<sup>1</sup> In what ways and to what extent have Australian libraries co-operated in collecting Asian publications? What have been the problems and what courses of action should be taken in the future?

In this paper the emphasis is on East Asian collections, with some reference to Southeast Asian materials. My primary concern is with Asian vernacular books, rather than Western language publications about the region.

There are long-standing formal acquisition agreements between the National Library and the Australian National University covering Japanese and Chinese publications. Both agreements date from 1955, but while the Japanese agreement has remained unchanged since then, the Chinese has had a more difficult history, including a major revision in 1973. Developments concerning these two agreements are of particular interest at a time when budget and staff restrictions are compelling Australian libraries to look more closely at possibilities for collection rationalization in Asian Studies and other fields.

The original 1955 agreements involved three parties, the National Library, ANU and Canberra University College (which later became the School of General Studies of the ANU). It was considered that the need for stronger Chinese and Japanese collections for research and teaching and the vastness of the literature of these countries necessitated a formal scheme for avoiding wasteful duplication and achieving maximum economy in acquisition and processing. All three institutions were aware of the long-term national importance of co-operating to build such collections.

The 1955 agreements divided collecting responsibility according to subject fields and by type of material. Broadly speaking the National Library was to cover publications in the social sciences and more recent periods of history (after 1868 for Japan and post 1911 for China) as well as periodicals and newspapers. Traditional literature, history, religion, philosophy and also general series were shared between the two academic institutions. Copies of these agreements are appended to this paper.

The Japanese agreement has continued to operate quite successfully to the present, with both parties adhering fairly closely to the original guidelines. Each has concentrated on its own fields of major responsibility, recognizing that the extent and cost of Japanese publications mean that neither can hope to cover all subjects satisfactorily alone. A degree of flexibility has been maintained through consultation, for example when one side has had more money to buy expensive items which lie in the other's area of responsibility. Strict adherence to the guidelines is not feasible when scholars' formed collections are purchased or donated, as these often cover several disciplines. Nor can the

two libraries keep rigidly to a period division based on the Meiji Restoration of 1868. A slight amount of overlap for bakumatsu and early Meiji material is not unreasonable. Nevertheless detailed statistics for the Japanese holdings of the two institutions by subject and form of material confirm that both sides have collected mainly within their allotted fields.<sup>2</sup>

The results of this agreement have been most beneficial. "This shared responsibility has worked effectively. As a result, the Japanese collections of both libraries have gained the status of world-wide significance. Compared with the Japanese collections in the United States, both libraries rank in the group of medium-sized collections..... This means that the Japanese collections of ANU Library and the National Library comprise as a whole a collection comparable to those of Princeton and UCLA".<sup>3</sup> These were the findings of the Shiraiwa report which examined the Japanese collection at ANU in 1984. Shiraiwa strongly recommended that the existing co-operative policy be maintained, so that each library could concentrate on developing its own specialized collections.

Of course the fact that the agreement is being adhered to, and that regular consultation between the two libraries has occurred, does not solve all problems. Rising Japanese book prices and the decline in the value of the Australian dollar have made collecting more difficult even within specified subjects. There are also grey areas which do not fit neatly into either library's field of responsibility and which may thus have been neglected. For example the study of Japanese myth and ritual appears to be one such gap.

The history of the Chinese agreement has been quite different from the Japanese. While the original guidelines were followed in the early years, a gradual shift in emphasis from traditional to modern Chinese studies at ANU and in particular the establishment of its Contemporary China Centre in 1970 created pressure on the University library to collect on modern and contemporary China, although by the 1955 agreement Chinese social science and post 1911 history were assigned to the National Library. As a result of this pressure, representatives of the two institutions met and revised the agreement in September 1973. A copy of the 1973 document is attached as Appendix III.

The 1973 Chinese agreement was much looser than its predecessor. In particular it allowed both libraries the freedom to "acquire materials to serve the present and future needs of their own clientele according to the scale of priorities which they judge to be appropriate regardless of any other agreements or arrangements which may be arrived at for various reasons."<sup>4</sup> The most significant specific subject reallocation was that Chinese history of all periods was assigned to the ANU. Many of the divisions in the 1955 document including social science and periodicals were not mentioned, nor were important new areas of acquisition such as science and technology.

The revision of the agreement weakened the co-operative arrangements between the two largest Chinese collections in Australia. While there has continued to be frequent and valuable consultation to avoid duplication, particularly of expensive items, the 1973 agreement has not provided a sufficiently clear division of responsibilities between the two libraries. This is in contrast with the Japanese agreement which has continued to operate more effectively.

For co-operative acquisition agreements to succeed, there must be continuity. Although some flexibility is needed, major shifts in subject allocation should be avoided. As with China, the emphasis in Japanese research at ANU has altered, the change being from cultural and historical to economic and linguistic studies. ANU Library does not have strong holdings in Japanese economics, as this is a National Library responsibility, and ANU scholars make regular use of National Library economic materials. The Shiraiwa report sensibly advises ANU against extending the boundaries of subjects assigned to it "since it would cause serious duplication of materials with the National Library and deterioration of the quality of the Japanese collection in the ANU Library."<sup>5</sup>

Korean, the other major East Asian language is not covered by any similar agreements. There have been three significant Korean collections in Australia, at the National Library, ANU and the University of Sydney. However ANU has recently decided to stop acquiring Korean publications, leaving the National Library as the main collector. Much smaller holdings in other East Asian languages including Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan are also located in Australia, almost all at the National Library or ANU.

Beginning in 1982 a series of meetings were held between senior National Library and ANU staff to look at ways of improving co-operation for Asian materials. Smaller area committees were set up for China, Japan, South, Southeast and West Asia. These no longer meet regularly, but more informal contact between librarians at the two institutions has continued to help reduce duplication for expensive items.

In the past thirty years there has been a great expansion in the number, size and range of Australia's East Asian collections, but no systematic national plan for their co-ordination. In the mid 1950's when the National Library and ANU developed rationalization schemes for Chinese and Japanese publications, Canberra was unquestionably the centre of Asian research in Australia. As late as 1961 only the National Library, ANU and the University of Sydney had East Asian collections, with some 100,000 volumes in all.<sup>6</sup> However, by December 1984 a survey by Sidney Wang found that 32 Australian libraries held East Asian publications, and these collections contained 587,802 volumes of monographs and 9,802 current serial titles.<sup>7</sup>

While there is still a concentration of resources in Canberra, a national acquisition plan would need to include other major research libraries across the country. In 1984 the National Library and ANU together held 381,403 East Asian volumes or 65% of the Australian total. The Universities of Sydney and Melbourne combined accounted for another 21% and several newer centres of Asian Studies held most of the remainder.<sup>8</sup>

National co-operation has been developed further in the area of East Asian union catalogues than for collection development. Preparation of an ACT union catalogue began following the 1955 rationalization agreements. Maintained in card form by the National Library, the Union Catalogue of East Asian Monographs (UCEAM) has since expanded greatly to include the Chinese, Japanese and Korean holdings of 19 Australian and New Zealand libraries. UCEAM was microfilmed and distributed to other libraries in 1978 and again in 1982. While of particular importance for inter-library lending, it is much less useful for co-ordinating selection, since it lacks currency and the considerable cataloguing backlogs of the larger contributors make it far from comprehensive.

The situation for East Asian serials is more acute. A Union List of East Asian Serials (ULEAS) with 22 Australian and New Zealand libraries as contributors is maintained in card form only at the National Library. Staff restrictions have so far prevented the major task of editing, filming and distribution. A published union list of Chinese periodicals held at ANU and the Universities of Sydney and Melbourne issued in 1970 and revised in 1973 is now very much out-of-date, as are the guides to the National Library's holdings of Chinese, Japanese and Korean serials published in 1976, 1977 and 1978 respectively. All of these collections have grown considerably since these publications were released. The problem is particularly serious for Chinese, as the number of serials available from the People's Republic of China has increased rapidly during the 1980's. In response to this the National Library has issued four special Current Awareness Bulletins since 1981 listing its new Chinese serials. The University of Melbourne published a list of its Chinese serials in 1977, updated in 1980 and 1984 with Japanese items also included. ANU is also maintaining an automated list of its East Asian serials, in romanized form. Nevertheless an up-to-date union list covering all the significant East Asian serial collections in Australia is an essential pre-requisite for national co-ordination of acquisitions.

Other means of communicating about major East Asian acquisitions have also been developed. The East Asian Librarians' Group (EALGA), an association linking librarians in this specialized area of the profession, issues a Newsletter which includes information about recent publications received by each of the main collections. However, the Newsletter is irregular, appearing about once a year, and it can only publicize a few of the more significant new purchases. The Chinese, Japanese and Korean language Current Awareness Bulletins compiled by the National Library are most valuable for informing libraries and readers of new holdings. These too are selective, not comprehensive, listings.

Turning to Southeast Asian materials, there are no formal co-operative acquisition agreements comparable to those for China and Japan. Nevertheless, a fair degree of co-ordination has been achieved for Indonesian, the Asian language most studied in Australia, through the Indonesian Acquisitions Project which is operated by the National Library. Under the terms of this scheme, officially established in 1971 after three years of pilot projects, a group of major research libraries each receive a set selection of current items supplied through the National Library's acquisition office in Jakarta. This common package of publications is a subset of the much larger volume of Indonesian material the National Library acquires for its own collection. In the early 1980's the participant libraries were receiving about one-quarter of the number of titles obtained by the National Library.

The Indonesian Acquisitions Project has continued to provide a most valuable service nationally, despite facing many obstacles. It has created a world-class collection of Indonesian publications at the National Library, and has provided other research libraries with important current Indonesian monographs and serials, which would otherwise be extremely difficult to obtain. It is regrettable that government restraints have meant that staffing in Jakarta, and back in Canberra for processing what is sent, has always been minimal. Thus the scheme could never do more than provide a set package of items to participants, albeit selected according to an agreed policy and with regular consultation. Individual selection for each library has never been possible. In 1983, following the government Review of Commonwealth Functions, the National Library was required to downgrade its Jakarta operation, notwithstanding vigorous opposition to this from academics, librarians,

officials and others concerned about the national importance of the scheme. Fortunately three years later it appears that full restoration of the office is likely in the near future. In the meantime the National Library has managed to maintain its own Indonesian collection-building but has had to reduce its level of acquisition for other libraries very significantly.

Considering the struggle to retain even one Australian co-operative acquisition office in the region the chances of establishing others in South and Southeast Asia as recommended more than a decade ago in the Sutton report seem increasingly remote.<sup>9</sup> Even the Library of Congress has had to reduce certain overseas operations in recent years. A more modest proposal by Sutton, namely that the National Library's Jakarta program be expanded to cover material from Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei just as its Library of Congress counterpart does, is worthy of serious reconsideration.<sup>10</sup> If implemented this would help counter the heavy weighting in favour of Indonesia in Australia's Southeast Asian holdings.

Another possibility considered in the early 1980's was that an international co-operative acquisition program be based in Jakarta. This might have combined the existing American and Australian operations, while also including participation by other countries in Europe and Asia. However considerable administrative problems were involved, and no action was taken. In actual fact Australia now has access to most Indonesian government and institutional publications recently acquired by the Library of Congress. The great majority of these items are being microfilmed by LC and the National Library has a complete set of the fiche.

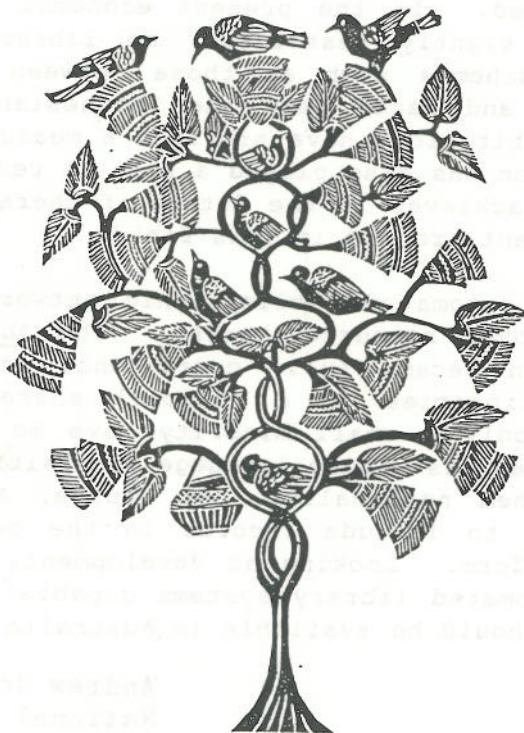
This brief examination of some co-operative measures taken by Australian libraries in building Asian collections shows the need for a more co-ordinated national approach to acquisitions, despite the many difficulties involved. In the present economic climate, with budgets and staff numbers tightly restricted, no library can hope to go it alone. Existing schemes such as those between the National Library and ANU for China and Japan, and the Indonesian Acquisitions Project linking several institutions have provided a measure of rationalization. Informal co-operation has also played a role in reducing wasteful duplication. Much more could be achieved in the future if there were a truly national collection development program in this field.

In the long term, automated bibliographic networks offer the greatest potential for improved resource-sharing. The Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN) which became fully operational in 1981 now links most major Australian libraries in a national shared cataloguing system. At the same time only a small minority have so far created automated records for their new East Asian language acquisitions, thereby providing ready access to them nationally. Of course, ABN is limited by not having the ability to include records in the original Asian scripts, only in romanized form. Looking at developments in the United States, I believe that automated library systems capable of handling East Asian character records should be available in Australia before too long.

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REFERENCES

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2. Shiraiwa Kazuhiko, Report on a survey of the Japanese collection at the Australian National University, February-March 1984, p.3-4 (draft).
3. Ibid, p.12.
4. See Appendix III to this paper.
5. Shiraiwa, p.15.
6. Maurice F. Tauber, Resources of Australian libraries : summary report of a survey conducted in 1961 for the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services, Canberra, AACOBS, 1963, p.30.
7. Figures from Survey of East Asian language collections in Australia 1984 (unpublished).
8. Ibid.
9. Stanley Sutton, South and Southeast Asia : a policy for the National Library of Australia, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1974. p.30.
10. Ibid, p.29.



Appendix I

Agreement for Japanese Materials

1955

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1) Classics )               |  |
| 2) Philosophy and Ethics )  | The Australian National University     |
| 3) Religion )               | and the Canberra University College    |
| 4) Archaeology and) )       | The Canberra University College and    |
| Anthropology )              | the Australian National University.    |
| 5) Genealogy and Biography  | The Canberra University College and    |
|                             | the Australian National University.    |
| 6) History -                |  |
| a) Prior to 1868            | Australian National University and     |
|                             | the Canberra University College.       |
| b) After 1868               | The National Library.                  |
| 7) Geography and Local      | The Australian National University     |
| History                     | and the Canberra University College.   |
| 8) Social Science           | The National Library.                  |
| 9) Language and Linguistics | The Canberra University College.       |
| 10) Literature              | The Australian National University and |
|                             | the Canberra University College.       |
| 11) Fine and Creative Arts) |  |
| 12) Mathematics )           | The National Library.                  |
| 13) Military Sciences )     |  |
| 14) Generalia and           |  |
| Bibliography -              |  |
| a) General Series) )        | The Australian National University     |
| or Collections) )           | and the Canberra University College    |
| (Sosho) )                   |  |
| b) Periodicals, )           |  |
| Newspapers and )            | The National Library                   |
| learned journals )          |  |
| c) Bibliographies)          |  |
| and Reference )             | All three libraries                    |
| Works )                     |  |

Appendix II

Agreement for Chinese Materials

1955

- |                                |   |                                  |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1) Classics                    | ) |                                  |
| 2) Philosophy and Ethics       | ) | Australian National University   |
| 3) Religion                    | ) |                                  |
| 4) Archaeology                 | ) | Australian National University   |
| 5) Anthropology                | ) | and National Library             |
| 6) Genealogy and Biography     | ) | Australian National University   |
| 7) General History -           | ) | Australian National University   |
| (a) Prior to 1912              | ) | and National Library             |
| (b) After 1912                 | ) |                                  |
| 8) Geography and Local History | ) | Both libraries with consultation |
|                                | ) | to avoid duplication             |
| 9) Social Science              | ) | National Library                 |
| 10) Language                   | ) | Australian National University   |
| 11) Literature                 | ) |                                  |
| 12) Fine and Creative Arts     | ) |                                  |
| 13) Mathematics                | ) | National Library                 |
| 14) Military Sciences          | ) |                                  |
| 15) General and Bibliography   | ) |                                  |
| (a) General series or          | ) | Australian National University   |
| collections (ts'ung-shu)       | ) |                                  |
| (b) Periodicals and newspapers | ) | National Library                 |
| (c) Bibliographies and general | ) | Both libraries                   |
| Reference Works                | ) |                                  |

Appendix III

Agreement for Chinese Materials

1973

National Library of Australia  
Australian National University Library

Rationalization Scheme for Cooperative Acquisitions of Chinese Materials  
As agreed at a conference between representatives of the Australian National University and the National Library of Australia on 12 September, 1973.

- 1) This Rationalization Scheme for the acquisition of Chinese material shall replace the Rationalization Scheme for the Cooperative Acquisition of Chinese and Japanese Materials agreed to by representatives of the Canberra University College, the Australian National University, and the Commonwealth National Library on 18 October, 1955, with regard to the acquisition of Chinese language material.
- 2) Both the National Library of Australia and the Australian National University Library will continue to acquire materials to serve the present and future needs of their own clientele according to the scale of priorities which they judge to be appropriate, regardless of any other agreements or arrangements which may be arrived at for various reasons.
- 3) With this principle in mind, it is agreed that responsibility for comprehensive collecting in the following fields will be assumed by the institutions indicated :

I. BY SUBJECT

History (all periods)	Australian National University Library
Language and Literature (all periods)	Australian National University Library
Archaeology	National Library of Australia
Fine Arts	National Library of Australia

II. BY TYPES OF MATERIAL

Newspapers	National Library of Australia
Government publications	National Library of Australia
Political parties' publications	National Library of Australia
Reprint projects for General Series (ts'ung shu)	National Library of Australia
Audio visual materials	National Library of Australia