

Newsletter No. 57 (January 2011)

Report on the Thirtieth Annual Conference of the European Association of Sinological Librarians (EASL) in Lyon, France, 8-10 September 2010

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Thanks Bick-Har gives me a very good opportunity to share my recent trip to Lyon attending the annual conference of the European Association of Sinological Librarians (EASL) with Australian colleagues.

History of the EASL is shorter than that of the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) in North America. EASL was started by John T. Ma of the Sinologisch Instituut in Leiden. Mr. Ma convened the first workshop on sinological libraries in 1981. The successful gathering of sinological librarians from various European countries led to the founding of the European Association of Sinological Librarians (EASL). Early topics of discussion included: automation and systems, questions about MARC formats and cataloging rules, and interlibrary loan. EASL now emphasizes more on discussion and exchange of experiences, practical demonstrations on electronic resources, problem solving, forming consortia and resources sharing, through papers presented by members and invited experts. The EASL has fewer members than its North American counterpart, CEAL (The Council on East Asian Libraries).

Like their North America counterparts, EASL libraries are facing serious economic downturn and budgetary constraints. Librarians are acting more proactively and looking for innovative, cost-effective ways to acquire materials and making efficient use of the limited staff resources. Like all other areas of studies, electronic resources have becoming more and more important in research and studies. However, only a few well off East Asian libraries in Europe can afford to acquire electronic databases. EASL librarians complained that vendors' sky high prices were preventing them from making use of the mass of information now available in databases. They suggested forming a task force to evaluate major databases and then establish a cross-country consortium to negotiate with the vendors. I was invited to introduce the free electronic resources on Chinese Studies initiated in Hong Kong. The participants were delighted to learn that they could obtain

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distance access to these free resources.

Another major issue the East Asian librarians of Europe discussed was the trend of moving library materials out of the library building to outside storage. Library materials will be delivered to users upon request. The Libraries will be turned into exhibition and student learning areas. Librarians are thinking that after books are removed from libraries, jobs for librarians may also disappear.

Comparatively speaking, most East Asian libraries in Europe are not as resourceful as their counterparts in Asia and North America. However, they have many unique collections and resources that are not available in other parts of the world. For instance, the collections recording the early missionaries to China that experts brought back during war time are housed in French libraries. Most of the East Asian libraries in Europe are one-man branch libraries and have little or no support from paraprofessionals. Even though they are only a few hours by air or train from each other, owing to the limitation of time and funding, the EASL annual conference is the best opportunity for them to meet, discuss their problems, and give support to each other.

Please visit the Association web site at <http://www.easl.org/> to learn more about our European counterparts and their activities.

Last but not the least, you are most welcome to visit Fung Ping Shan Library and University of Hong Kong Libraries when you visit China. I am not new to Australia. I had my librarianship training at UNSW.

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Welcome Speech by Dr Guy Faure, Director of the Lyon Institute of East Asia Studies



Special welcome reception at the City Hall of Lyon (Hotel de Ville, heart of the UNESCO World Ci

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Heritage "Old Lyon"



Happy faces at the courtyard of the City Hall of Lyon

Photos: Courtesy of Angela Ko