

REPORTS

VISIT TO BERLIN STATE LIBRARY, WEST GERMANY

At the invitation of the Head of the Oriental Section I visited the Staatsbibliothek (State Library) in Berlin from 7-11 October to discuss acquisition, cataloguing and automation in relation to Asian materials. I had lengthy discussions with Dr H.O. Feistel on Oriental manuscripts and Southeast Asian materials, with Dr Rainer Krempien on Japanese materials and with Dr. J.M. Streffe on Chinese materials.

The Oriental Reading Room services all readers interested in Asia. It contains 20,000 reference volumes including bibliographies, encyclopaedias, serials, dictionaries, grammars, newsletters from Asian associations and, of course, the various parts of the catalogue. The library lends to individuals as well as to other libraries but does not lend the reference collection.

The East Asian Section has published a union catalogue of West Asian serials including those in Western languages. The Library holds 3,000 CJK current serials, both commercial and government. Chiao Lieu has stopped supplying serials so a new agent has to be found.

The supplier in Taiwan is Hua Chai, but they are very expensive and charge three times the price marked in US dollars. The Japanese supplier is Japan Public Trading Co. for current big sets. In Korea Eulyoo or Pan Mon are the main agents with some use of Korea Public Trading Co. The Library also has access to a German Institute in Tokyo for difficult-to-get items. Korean studies are quite advanced in Germany. There are two full professors of Korean and other universities have lecturers as well. The Library has 30,000 volumes of Korean materials and several Korean librarians who can handle Chinese and Japanese as well.

Cards are very important for this collection. They use National Library of China (NLC) cards and copy them on a UBIX card copier. They found that manually catalogued East Asian materials were three times as fast as using OCLC online. They have a printed catalogue of CJK which is 19 volumes published in 1985 by Dr Krempien. More than 50 copies of this have been sold with two supplements. For acquisition from China they use China National Trading Co. and the books come prebound at DM5, i.e., A\$4.50 per book. They are very well bound.

The State Library has decided to use Pinyin romanisation and NLC cards. The OCLC trial was terminated early as the input method was found to be too cumbersome. While they are committed to an automated CJK catalogue they are prepared to wait a little longer. SIEMENS is working on something which may suit them better.

As far as they could see, in the trial only LC records were in the OCLC database. The format was not exactly what was needed as they do not use AACR2, but this was not considered the real problem: Dr Streffe felt that to have both Pinyin and Wade-Giles as standards would result in a complete mess.

In German computers the hyphen connects, so this is used in Pinyin romanisation. They use the 1984 Chinese projected standard with 2 to 3 characters connected as words. OCLC had too many hits in title searches. While OCLC allowed for the creation of new characters it was not clear whether new characters were added to the character set permanently or whether they could even be printed out. There was also a problem because each line had to be sent singly and a whole line could be lost. Most of the data was two years old and half the records were in romanised form only. Dr Streffe wanted a system to convert codes and to transcribe records from one code to another. The biggest problem was to get Chinese characters onto COM fiche. He felt that output of Chinese characters was the real problem. The European Association of Sinological Librarians tried without success to have one mainframe database for Europe. There is already the British List of Chinese Serials and the Scandinavian List, and in five years' time there will be the German List.

The Library receives about 1,000 volumes of Chinese books a month. The OCLC system could not handle this task without three terminals and six staff members. With OCLC the most that can be handled in one day is 30 books, but manually Dr Streffe can handle 80 with handwritten cards. I must mention here that Dr Streffe works a 12 hour day from choice!

On the question of retrieval Dr Streffe said that computer sorting would always have to be done on Roman characters. It was impossible to sort on Chinese characters. It was also a question of deciding whether to search character by character or letter by letter. He favoured the latter with hyphens.

Pauline Haldane
Principal Librarian, Asian Collections
National Library of Australia