

**THE KOREAN COLLECTION AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA:
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

The National Library of Australia (NLA) has by far the largest Korean language collection in Australia. It is currently the only substantial actively growing Korean collection in the country, with some 17,000 volumes of monographs, over 1,200 serial titles and 39 newspaper titles, as well as microfilms and audio-visual aids.

It is interesting to compare the NLA Korean collection with those in other national libraries. The British Library in 1988 had a more modest collection with holdings of 31 manuscripts, about 4,000 monographs, 243 periodicals and 2 current newspapers (1). It was closely co-operating with the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, which acquires considerable amounts of material in Korean. At that time the British Library did not have a full-time member of staff for Korean. In contrast, the Korean collection of the Library of Congress (LC) had grown from a few hundred items in 1950 to more than 76,000 monographs and 2,500 serial titles by 1986 (2). LC employs specialist staff for their Korean collection.

Under the National Library of Australia's new Collection Development Policy (CDP) Korean language materials are assigned a research 4G level, the highest category except for Australiana, which is collected comprehensively (level 5). The CDP accords a high geographic priority to East Asia as a whole, with publications from or about China, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong also being collected at the research 4G level. This includes both vernacular and Western language materials. In the words of the CDP "a very few countries of major significance in Australia's development - past, present and particularly future, have been assigned the research 4G level" (3).

The strengths of the Korean language collection lie in the subject fields of the social sciences, especially economics, statistics, politics and government, foreign relations and law; Korean history, biography and archaeology; language and literature; philosophy and religion.

Another great strength of the Korean collection is in Government publications received regularly on exchange. Major exchange programmes have been established with the

Central National Library in Seoul, with which publication exchanges began in 1967 and the National Assembly Library, also in Seoul, with which relations began in 1965. The Library has a further 29 exchange partners in South Korea, including the Korean Studies Library in Songnam. Gifts from individuals and institutions have also been received from time to time. For example, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Canberra has been generous in donating Korean publications to the Library, as well as other materials, including a donation of 40 films about Korea. Another major recent gift was a 72 volume collection of contemporary Korean literature from Mr Michael Kent of the NLA Council.

The National Library has also maintained exchange relations with the Grand People's Study House of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (formerly the State Central Library of D.P.R.K.) in Pyongyang since 1973. This exchange is almost the only source of North Korean publications obtained by the Library, apart from some materials purchased via Hong Kong.

Since 1979 Eulyoo Publishing Company in Seoul has been the main supplier of purchased Korean materials. Prior to 1979 another company acted as supplier. Eulyoo select books from their catalogues according to guidelines laid down by the Library, and then subject to additions or deletions by the Library, forward the titles required. Serials are acquired, both by subscription with 3 agencies in Seoul: Eulyoo Publishing Company; Korean Publications Trading Company and Panmun Book Company, and also by exchange.

The McLaren-Human Collection, received as a gift in 1984, has significantly strengthened the National Library's Korean holdings. Originally collected by an Australian, Mrs Jessie McLaren, who lived in Korea between 1911 and 1941, the 82 titles in 150 volumes of Korean books include a number of rare and valuable works, particularly in the fields of literature and history. 15 titles are from before 1900, including 4 from 1544, 1599, 1672 and 1680 respectively. The earliest publication, Samgang haengsilto (The Three Principles of Human Relations) is believed to date from 1490. A complete listing of the McLaren-Human Collection, which also includes some material in Japanese and Chinese, is available on request from the Asian Collections Section.

During September 1989, Jung-hee Fry of the Korean Unit was in Seoul, where she called on the Library's major exchange partners, the National Assembly Library and the Central

National Library, as well as major book suppliers, Panmun Books Company, Eulyoo Publishing Company and Korean Publications Trading Company. At the National Assembly Library she met the Director, Mr Joobong Kim, and was shown around by the head of the Reference Services Department, Mr Pil-jae Lee. Her discussions at the Central National Library were with the Director of Research and Cooperation, Mr Jae-ho Lee and his staff. Such visits are most useful for maintaining and developing exchanges with Korean libraries.

On 20-21 November 1989 the inaugural Australia-Korea Forum was held in Canberra, as a result of an initiative by the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, and the President of Korea, Mr Roh Tae-woo. The aim of the Forum was for delegations of prominent people from each country such as academics, businessmen and writers to discuss and identify new areas for cooperation between Australia and Korea. Two representatives of the National Library, Andrew Gosling, Chief Librarian, East Asia, and Jung-hee Fry, Korean Unit, attended the Forum as observers and were able to distribute an information sheet about the Library's Korean collection, and to discuss the collection and services with delegates and other Korean and Australian observers.

During January to April 1990 a project was completed for the inclusion of the National Library's Korean language serial collection on the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN). Holdings have been added for 1209 records. A very good hit-rate was achieved against the ABN database with 874 full records found, being 72.2 per cent of the total. Interim records were added for the remaining 335 titles. The current intake of Korean language monographs is already being added to ABN.

The staffing of the Korean Unit has recently been increased from one to two officers. During the project for the adding of Korean serials to ABN undertaken in the first part of 1990, an extra temporary position has been assigned to the Unit, and this will now become permanent.

Use of the Korean collection has been gradually increasing over recent years, both in terms of direct use by readers visiting the Library and inter-library loans. Major user groups are academics and students, government departments, the local Korean community, diplomats and the ethnic media. Greatest subject use is made of statistics, economics and trade, politics and government, sociology, literature,

history and fine arts. Recent reference queries have covered topics ranging from Korean economic statistics, business administration, urban transport, electronics companies, the cattle industry and financial statements analysis, to traditional musical instruments, artists, North Korean history, and political developments in the North and South. Use is expected to continue to rise with the growing interest in Korea by the government, business and academic sectors.

The Korean Unit is continuing to produce Current Awareness Bulletins from time to time, listing significant new acquisitions. These bulletins are available to individuals or institutions free on request, and are a major source of direct and inter-library loan requests.

Housing of the Korean collection was greatly improved during 1989, when all the monographs and serials were transferred to the third floor stack, close to the Asian Collections Reading Room, where readers may obtain a stack pass in order to browse.

In summary, the National Library's Korean collection and services are being actively developed and are expected to become increasingly significant during the 1990s.

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