

## Monash Library Transformation 2021 and Its Impact on Asian Collections

*Rheny Pulungan, Monash University Library*

Monash, like many universities, had to change some aspects of the way it operates, due to a shortfall in revenue caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of borders in 2020 has prevented the enrolment in Australia of many international students who would normally be on campuses. In September 2020, the University started the Voluntary Separation Packages (VSPs). A significant number of staff, mostly professional staff took the packages and left the University in late 2020.

The loss of staff and the plan to respond to challenges like those experienced during COVID-19 lockdowns in a more efficient way prompted Monash Library senior leaders to send out a proposal of changes document in April 2021 to their Library staff. One of the significant changes proposed in the document was to establish the Academic Services Division which would group library branches into two teams: HASS and STEMM library teams. Consequently, the then Arts Library team which consisted of different discipline areas including the Asian Studies was merged with Education and MADA (Monash Art, Design and Architecture). The proposal also specified that there were no Asian Studies librarian roles in the new Library structure and all subject librarians were to be called liaison librarians.

The consultation period was scheduled for two weeks, giving opportunities to all Library staff to give their feedback. During this consultation period, Asian studies librarians sought clarification for the disbandment of their roles and the rationale behind the decision. The Library management responded by maintaining their position that the new structure would enable the Library to be more efficient in supporting the University's academic endeavour in a budget-constrained environment. In July 2021, all subject librarians received individual transfer letters which outlined their new roles.

The following are the changes that have been made in relation to the Asian Collections librarians:

- Jung-Sim Kim (Korean Studies Subject Librarian) is now a liaison librarian in the Engineering-IT-Science (EITS) team.
- Rheny Pulungan (Indonesian Studies Subject Librarian) is now a liaison librarian in the Law-BusEco team.
- Ayako Rankins (Japanese Studies Subject Librarian) is now a liaison librarian in the Engineering-IT-Science (EITS) team.

The only other librarian who stays in her current role is Xiaojun Liu (Chinese Studies) but this is because of a special arrangement between Monash and Melbourne University. However, this arrangement will be reviewed in early 2022 to reflect the changes at Monash Library in relation to the Asian Collection librarians.

All queries or questions regarding the Asian Collections at Monash should now be directed to Anita Dewi who remains as the Liaison Coordinator in the Arts, Education and MADA Library team ([anita.dewi@monash.edu](mailto:anita.dewi@monash.edu)).

COVID has forced many libraries to change, not just operationally but also structurally. This has been a big loss of expertise for the Asian collections at Monash University and Australia wide. The library seniors confirmed that that they would keep the collections and continue to purchase Asian studies books and serials. Continuing the acquisition without the help of any subject and language experts would be a challenge and it seems that it would be done by the centralised collections team in the Library through blanket order, approval plan or any other types of special arrangements. Time will tell whether the Asian collections under the new structure will continue to grow, and whether the teaching and research needs coming from Asian Studies at Monash will still be supported by the Library.