

OCLC AND THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA'S ASIAN COLLECTIONS

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It is now two years since staff in the Asian Collections Section of the National Library of Australia (NLA) first began searching OCLC online to obtain cataloguing copy for its Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai holdings.

The National Library is placing major emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region in its collections and services, in line with its published *Strategic Plan, 1993-1998*. The NLA Asian Collections Section houses Australia's foremost research resource on Asia, with over 500,000 volumes. This includes some 220,000 monograph volumes in Chinese, 90,000 in Japanese, 25,000 in Korean, and 28,000 in Thai. The Section currently has sixteen specialist staff who are responsible for the selection, acquisition, cataloguing, reference and interlibrary loans for these Asian script collections.

The Asian Collections were begun in the 1950s. Their main strength lies contemporary materials, serving the research needs of government, academia and the public with emphasis on modern history and the social sciences. The National Library has developed these holdings in co-operation with the Australian National University Library, which is also an active OCLC user.

Until the 1980s the National Library relied on card catalogues containing both characters and romanisation for its Asian script holdings. With the development of the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN) the Library began to create romanised records for its current Asian intake on ABN and to add holdings to Library of Congress and other Asian records on ABN. Card catalogues with scripts were retained.

Following a visit by Andrew Wang of OCLC, the National Library decided to begin accessing OCLC online to search for records not on ABN which could then be added to the ABN with holdings. In particular, this was aimed at reducing the backlogs of Chinese, Japanese, Korean (CJK) and Thai monographs. Apart from Asian materials, the Library's Cataloguing Section was also interested in using OCLC especially for European language materials, early printed monographs, and printed music. The Cataloguing Section had earlier used OCLC's Microcon Service with good results.

On 14 February 1992 Asian Collections staff first began searching OCLC online using the PRISM Service accessed via CompuServe. They began saving records located for dispatch to the National Library by monthly tape. The first tape from OCLC was received in April that year, since when tapes with Asian and

other records have been arriving regularly every month. These tapes have then been passed to the ABN Office to be converted and added to ABN.

The Asian Collections Section has found this method of obtaining cataloguing records to be most satisfactory. The hit rate has been high, with over 80 percent of CJK and Thai items searched being located on OCLC. The Cataloguing Section has found OCLC to be a valuable source of copy with particularly high hit rates for Cyrillic material and printed music.

Earlier this year, OCLC announced that from 18th April it would begin providing Internet access to the PRISM Service for cataloguing and interlibrary loan on a trial basis for one year. The trial is limited to 500 simultaneous users. As a part of this pilot program, the OCLC CJK Plus System will also be accessible through Internet in October 1994. Asian Collections has indicated to OCLC its interest in participating in the trial.

The National Library is currently a member of the National CJK Project consortium with seven other Australian research libraries. The other participants are the libraries of the Australian National University; Griffith University; Monash University; Murdoch University; the University of Melbourne; the University of Queensland the University of Sydney. The Project aims to choose and implement by late 1994 a national shared system for CJK scripts including cataloguing, OPAC and other facilities. This being carried because ABN does not currently provide Asian and other non-Roman script facilities. It is expected that the use of OCLC records containing CJK script data will be a significant feature of the system.

