

CHANGE OF ROLE FOR SUSAN PRENTICE

George Miller

After working 28 years in the ANU Library developing and managing the East Asian collection, Susan Prentice, immediate Past Chairperson of EALRGA, has decided to make a significant career change. Susan played a vital role in ensuring that East Asian teaching and research at the ANU was supported by an appropriately rich collection and a specialised service. She will now broaden her field of endeavour and make available her skills and experience by operating in the private sector.

The legacy she leaves as Senior Librarian, East Asian Studies is considerable: the finest university library collection on East Asia in Australia, and in particular subject areas, the finest East Asian collection in the country and possibly the world outside of China itself. The importance of the work of Susan and her colleagues is of course being recognised now, particularly as Australia becomes more closely engaged with countries of the region and the need for background information about these countries becomes critical. Susan and her colleagues had the prescience and vision to realise this long before it was espoused by politicians and the media.

Some of the specific highlights of her achievements recognised by EALRGA colleagues and researchers alike are the following:

- With YS Chan, she was largely responsible for building the ANU's unique collection of Chinese serials, through the establishment of the particular acquisitions and processing procedures they set up for this very fugitive (i.e. "restricted") material.
- She was the first non-Chinese librarian to be invited to work in a Chinese library since the closing of China to the West in 1949. She is also one of the few Westerners to have worked in the same Library that Mao Tse-tung once worked in, the Peking University Library.
- She, together with Enid Bishop and YS Chan, successfully negotiated the political minefield of organising the first international meeting on Chinese Bibliographical Automation which brought together for the first time librarians from both the Mainland and Taiwan.
- She successfully managed from 1981 an exchange program of training and work experience in Australia for about fifteen librarians from the National Library of China and university libraries throughout China.

- And, to show that she has not stagnated in a world of only printed material, she managed and developed the Chinese Serials Database Project in cooperation with the National Library of China and, with support from the Australia-China Council, has initiated and implemented a network among libraries in China and the Sino-Australian Electronic Information Centre in the National Library of China. She was also an important contributor to the Technical Committee of the National CJK Project.

Susan has written and spoken about many of these projects both in EALRGA and other forums. From the time of its foundation, Susan has been a staunch supporter and active member of EALRGA. She has contributed to its conferences, played an active role on its Committee in a number of positions, not least of which was that of Chairperson, and she has been at times a passionate contributor to the debates about the nature and direction of EALRGA itself. Her contribution to the profession was recognised last year in a Merit Award presented for her services to East-Asian Libraries and Librarianship by the Australian Library and Information Association. Fortunately, despite her altered professional position, she intends to remain an active member of our Association.

Susan will also continue to be active at the ANU in her capacity as a Divisional Associate in the Division of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

Susan is now Director of a knowledge management company specialising in the provision of information services on and from Asian countries. She may be contacted at Asia in Australia Pty. Ltd., PO Box 10, O'Connor, ACT 2602, tel/fax: +61 6 2572162, email: susan.prentice@coombs.anu.edu.au

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