

SUPPORTING JAPANESE STUDIES ACADEMIC PROGRAMS: ISSUES IN THE DELIVERY OF A SPECIALIST INFORMATION SERVICE

Mrs Ho Chooi Hon, Associate University Librarian
Monash University Library, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses management and information service issues relating to the support of Japanese studies programmes by Australian academic libraries. It focuses on the challenges faced by the library manager in meeting the needs of researchers that require both English language and vernacular sources of information. Topics include funding, collection development, document delivery services and staffing. The second section provides an insight into the strategies adopted by Monash University Library to support the University's Japanese studies programs.

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA

In the 1990s, academic libraries are constantly challenged by the need to support new academic programmes in an environment of tight financial constraints. It is not surprising that the expansion in Japanese studies courses in the universities in recent years has not been matched with a commensurate increase in library collections for Korean and Vietnamese. This contrasts with the state libraries and the National Library of Australia which placed a higher priority on Chinese and Vietnamese followed by Japanese, Indonesian and Korean.

Whilst there is recognition of the need for Asian-literate librarians, there are still very few language specialist librarians in the country. For example in Australia, there are only a handful of full-time Japanese studies specialist librarians.

Collection development policies

Every library will strive to achieve levels of collection to reflect the needs of its primary clientele. In the present economic climate and with the availability of new information technology, the level of collection development varies with the type and level of the course. A practical approach to support the teaching programmes of the institution is to be self-sufficient for undergraduate courses. In the case of postgraduate and research resources it is clear that there should be a good network established within the country for libraries with cooperative collection development policies. Mechanisms are required to ensure that libraries can base collection decisions on the knowledge of the collection strength and collecting intentions of other libraries.

Towards this common end, there is a need for libraries to work together to obtain a checklist of basic items at the undergraduate collection level to support each of the Asian language curricula offered by its institution, and a list of country specialisation at the postgraduate/research level. However this ideal is fraught with challenges because of the overlapping research interests of the various universities.

Access to resources of other libraries

With the new technology available to libraries, the key to information is accessibility. It is no longer necessary to have the materials within the library's walls, nor can the nation afford to duplicate research collections. Cooperation is necessary to maximise access for staff and students to the widest possible range of materials within the total Australian library system. A rapid document delivery service will become the hallmark of any library information service. This is an area that is rapidly evolving and there are exciting possibilities on the horizon.

The Australian National CJK System

In 1993 a consortium of seven university libraries and the National Library of Australia embarked on a project to establish the Australian National CJK system. The services provided by the NCJK have the following aims: to

- Allow libraries to create catalogue CJK materials they hold in CJK characters;
- Provide a copy cataloguing service from other members' data and data loaded from Library of Congress, OCLC, National Diet Library and other sources;
- Provide a national union catalogue function

The NCJK database went live in July 1996, an achievement that Australia should be proud of, as we are leading the world in having a nationally shared CJK utility with a Pinyin database.

The database has in excess of 300,000 bibliographic records from the National Diet Library covering data from 1993 onwards. It is significant to note that implementation of the National CJK database has enabled users to have access to the Japanese collections within the country.

Resource sharing and cooperation with other libraries

A concerted effort should be made to coordinate the collection development policies of the research collections of the libraries within the state and where practicable within the country.

The Melbourne Asian Research Libraries Consortium was formed in 1993 by the libraries of Monash University and Melbourne University in recognition of the need to share Asian language resources in the Melbourne

region, to cooperate in collection development and to support teaching and research. The objective is to enhance access by researchers to Asian materials in particular Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Malaysian and Thai. Services include:

- reciprocal access to the respective institution's collections
- priority for interlibrary loan requests
- reciprocal access to electronic databases
- cooperative collection development.

Continuing education and professional contact

Librarians responsible for Asian studies often work in isolation. There is a need to consult colleagues working in similar areas and to keep up to date with developments in other institutions. The availability of electronic mail will go a long way towards improving communication. It has been acknowledged that there should be a forum to exchange views and discuss common problems with meetings scheduled at the state level with an annual meeting at the national level.

It is encouraging to note the profession's growing interest with the recent establishment of the Australian Library and Information International Services (ALLIS) and the growing membership of APSIG, the Australian Library and Information Association Asia and Pacific Special Interest Group.

The proposed establishment of the Japanese Librarians Group at this conference is to be applauded.

Monash University Library Support of Academic Programmes

Since its early beginnings in the 1960s Monash University has always had a strong commitment to Asian studies. Over the years, it has built up an enviable reputation for its excellence in Asian studies academic programmes. The establishment of the Asian Studies Research Library in 1996 was a significant development as it provided an infrastructure to deliver an effective library service to support the University's Asian studies initiatives.

At Monash, Library policy in support of academic programmes has always been discipline-based whether it be in the area of staffing or collection-building. Asian studies has traditionally been serviced within the infrastructure of subject disciplines by the appropriate subject librarians, such as the Politics Subject Librarian, Economics Subject Librarian, History Subject Librarian, and so on. The only exception made was in the case of the Southeast Asian Studies Librarian due to the University's strength in Southeast Asian studies.

Up to the 1980s this model worked reasonably well, as materials required to support Asian studies were predominantly in the English language and romanised script. However, in recent years the acceleration of Asian studies

involving languages with non-Roman script, specifically Chinese, Japanese and Korean, brought with it special difficulties and requirements.

The need to acquire collections in vernacular languages necessitated the appointment of staff with language skills. In late 1991, the Associate University Librarian - Information Services assumed special responsibility for coordinating Asian resources and services to ensure that the Library kept pace with the University's priorities in Asian studies development.

It was recognised that to service area studies that required language skills, the Library's subject librarian model would have to be adapted. The model would need to be modified to take into account factors such as the size of the academic programme and the language.

The Resource Librarian Model was adopted as the most appropriate for servicing subject disciplines that required language skills in the major Asian studies areas. In the resource librarian model the language specialist librarian has the same responsibilities as the subject librarian with the addition of cataloguing and other technical services duties. In effect, the resource librarian functions as a special librarian within the framework of the university library system.

In line with the University's increasing emphasis on Asian studies, the Library identified the major Asian studies programmes that required language skills - Japanese, Indonesian, Chinese and Korean. Currently, there are four resource librarian positions to support Asian studies: the Southeast Asian Studies Librarian (Indonesian language), the Chinese Studies Librarian, the Korean Studies Librarian and the Japanese Studies Librarian.

The Library is keen to work with other organisations to develop its collections. The Japan Foundation has been The Library is keen to work with other organisations to develop its collections. The Japan Foundation has been a constant source of support and staffing.

In striving to support the University's mission, library managers have to ask the question what services are required by their primary clientele - the academic staff and students. Apart from the usual information requirements of the researcher that work with English language sources, the Japanese Studies researcher's requirements are complicated by the need for Japanese language materials as well. Ideally, it would be best to have

- a one stop information service for Japanese studies sources - books, journal sources held by other libraries.
- a Japanese language specialist to assist with the retrieval of information in English and Japanese.

ISSUES IN THE PROVISION OF A JAPANESE STUDIES INFORMATION SERVICE

Funding

Library managers are faced with the perennial problem of having to service new academic programs with little or no financial support. Without an adequate budget for collection development, the Library will not be able to meet the demands of the staff and students. There should be a budget allocation for library materials to ensure that the Library is self-sufficient for undergraduate texts and there is access to research materials.

In the case of Japanese studies, management of a limited budget is made more complex by the uncertainties of fluctuating currency rates and inflationary costs.

Staffing

Pivotal to the Library's ability to deliver an effective service is the availability of a librarian with appropriate language skills and technological expertise.

In a survey on staff requirements for libraries and training conducted in late 1995 all university libraries indicated a need for librarians with Japanese language skills (Ho, 1996). An analysis of the responses indicated that:

There is a strong requirement for Asian-literate librarians with specialist knowledge of the regions of Southeast Asia and East Asia.

The main languages required by universities are Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian with a lesser requirement for Korean and Vietnamese constant source of support. A recent initiative is the establishment of the Melbourne Centre for Japanese Language Education Resource Centre which is intended to be the text book resource collection for Japanese Language teachers in the Victoria. This facility is located within the Asian Studies Research Centre.

The objective of the Asian Studies Research Library was to provide the Asian studies researcher with a "one stop shop". The Japanese studies researcher will be able to obtain from the Asian Studies Research Library assistance with access to Japanese language sources within and without the Library and consult the Japanese Studies Librarian on all matters pertaining to their research requirements.

Conclusion

Technological advancements and a realistic appraisal of the current economic climate have brought about the recognition that no library can afford to provide a comprehensive service from its own resources. Libraries will have to cooperate closely to ensure maximum coverage of materials within the total Australian library system and the establishment of an

efficient national system to access Asian information. This sentiment is aptly reflected in the mission statement of the Australian National CJK System:

- To support Australia's closer relationship with Asia by providing Australian libraries and their clients with improved access to the distributed national collection of Chinese, Japanese and Korean library materials.
- Australia is in the unique position of being a technologically advanced nation poised on the doorsteps of Asia. The challenge is to continue to develop strategies that will enable it to be Asia-competent and play a more prominent role in Asia.

REFERENCES

Ho Chooi Hon (editor). *Asian librarianship : education and staffing requirements. Report of the Staffing/Training Subcommittee established by the 3rd National Roundtable on Libraries and Asia.* Melbourne: Monash University, 1996.

Ho Chooi Hon. *Mainstreaming Asian Studies: Managing library resources for an effective information service in Australian tertiary institutions.* Paper presented at the 34th International Congress on Asian and North African Studies, organised by the University Library, University of Hong Kong, 22-28 August 1993.

Miller, George. *Survey of Trends in Asian Studies and Asian Collections in Australia: a Report to a Working Party established by the National Roundtable on Libraries and Asia held in the National Library of Australia, 3 May 1991.* Canberra: Australian National University, 1993.