

POSITION AND ROLE OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CHINA IN THE
LIBRARY SERVICES OF CHINA

Tan Xiang Jin

This paper discusses the position and role of the National Library of China in the library services of China, under the following headings:

- 1 Collection centre
- 2 Bibliographical centre
- 3 Library science research centre
- 4 Automation centre
- 5 International exchange centre

and the plans of the National Library of China to erect a new building.

Three nation-wide library systems are operating in China:

- a the public library system
- b the special and research library system
- c the university and school library system

All systems are supervised by their own authorities. The National Library of China (originally named National Library of Peking) is the only national library and is the largest library in China. It plays a central and pivotal role in the library services of the country.

1. COLLECTION CENTRE

China is a country with an ancient civilization and a long history and has accumulated a wealth of ancient books and records. The National Library of China's collection was begun 700 years ago, and has inherited part of the Imperial Library of the Southern Song Dynasty - Ji Xi Dian, and the Imperial Library of the Ming Dynasty - Wen Yuan Ge. After 1910, it also took over the collection of the Cabinet Grant Library, the Imperial Academy, and the Southern School of the Imperial College at the Qing Dynasty as well as private collections. It has gradually acquired such precious wood-block-printed and hand written copies as the Wen Jin Ge Si Ku Quan Shu (Complete Collection of Four Categories of Literature) and the Dunhuang Caves manuscript. In 1949 it was decreed by the State that all publishing houses must send three free copies of every title published to the National Library of China, and this has been the case ever since.

China is a multi-national state, and the National Library of China houses books in the different national languages including Mongolian, Tibetan, Uighur, Zhuang, etc. Altogether

there are more than 60,000 volumes in 24 different national languages.

The National Library of China has built up a sizeable selection of foreign publications in 115 languages, mostly in English, Russian, Japanese, French and German.

At the end of 1981, the National Library of China had over 11,000,000 books, magazines and other items - 60% in Chinese and 40% in foreign languages.

Through the joint efforts among the different types of libraries, there has gradually formed a well-developed system of interlibrary loan service in China. The NLC, as the largest library in China, is playing a more and more significant role in the interlibrary loan service, and has functioned as the biggest centre for interlibrary loan service in China. It serves all libraries in the country.

The NLC caters mainly for the central leading organizations of the Party, the Government and the Army, scientific research institutions and key production projects; at the same time, it serves the broad masses of the people.

The Acquisition Department of the NLC has worked out rules and regulations concerning the collection-building policies for the purpose of guiding book selection, but these have not yet been published formally.

Its collecting policies are determined in the light of the specific requirements of China's 'four modernizations'. The Library's collections are mainly augmented through the channels indicated below:

- 1 sample copies from the publishers within the country;
- 2 selection and purchase of both old and new local publications;
- 3 donations and collections from local and foreign institutions and individuals;
- 4 selection and ordering of foreign publications;
- 5 international exchange of publications;
- 6 collection of material printed and issued by the United Nations;
- 7 photo-duplication of publications; and
- 8 collection of dissertations and theses for PhD.

2. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CENTRE

In order to make its collection known and accessible, the Library provides readers with three kinds of card catalogue: author, title, and subject, and it compiles special topic bibliographies and indexes to make the relevant institutions,

and the public, aware of the Library's collections.

The National Library of China is responsible for providing centralized cataloguing cards for new books to libraries all over China. At present over 5,800 institutions have ordered these cards and over 21,000,000 were issued in 1981. It is likely that the centralized card service of the NLC will eventually become a central MARC record service like AMRS. Of course, it will take a considerable time and great effort to attain such a goal.

The Library also compiles various union catalogues in cooperation with other libraries. The union lists are available to libraries out of China. As far as I know, they are only available to libraries in other countries in book-form for the time being, but I am certain they will be available in microform in the near future. These lists will form an important part of the national bibliographical data bases. In recent years, it has compiled, or is at present compiling, large bibliographies. These are as follows:

Cumulative union catalogue cards for Chinese materials distributed between 1974 and 1978;

Union catalogue of Chinese periodicals published between 1833 and 1945;

Bibliography of Chinese books published between 1911 and 1949;

Union list of rare Chinese books in China;

Union list of western scientific and technical journals in Chinese libraries, etc.

3. LIBRARY SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTRE

There is a department of Library Science Research and a section for Library Science Materials in the National Library of China, which research the theory and practice of Library Science. The Library Science Research Department is an independent unit under the direction of the library authority. Special funds are allocated for research purposes on an annual basis and the professional staff are replenished with the development of the research. The Library accommodates librarians from different parts of the country, and practical problems of library work are discussed. Sometimes special seminars are conducted. The present priorities in library science research are placed mainly on the following subjects:

basic theory of Chinese librarianship;
bibliography;

the theory and practice of library classification schemes;
 readers' service;
 library staff in-service training;
 scientific management of library work; and
 modernization of library service.

The National Library of China devotes itself to the construction of basic library service for China. The Library promotes standardization and modernization of library service for the country, e.g. it has initiated and organized the compilation of:

"A classification scheme for Chinese libraries"
 "A thesaurus of Chinese subject terms and phrases"
 (social science)
 "Uniform cataloguing rules for Chinese books" etc.

The China Society of Library Science was formally established in July 1979. The National Library of China played an important role in its establishment, and the secretariat has its office in the Library.

The National Library of China has established its own publishing house, called "Bibliographies and Historical Records Publishing House". It is the only publisher of professional library publications in China.

4. AUTOMATION CENTRE

The National Library of China will become the centre of library automation in China and eventually also the managing authority of a nation-wide bibliographic network. Up to the present time, the NLC has not started building a national machine-readable data base, but it is hoped that, with the close cooperation of other libraries in China, the NLC will develop step-by-step a nation-wide machinereadable data base in the future.

5. INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE CENTRE

The National Library of China often receives friends and colleagues from foreign libraries and cultural circles, enabling hosts and guests to learn from each other's experience. Chinese delegations have also been sent out on investigation trips and visits to foreign libraries, and positive joint international activities, e.g. IFLA, ISO, in recent years.

Soon after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the National Library of China began exchanging publications with foreign libraries and research institutions. The NLC has no specific policy on the types of material it seeks on exchange. The NLC likes to receive all sorts of publications which are

useful and beneficial to China's 'four modernizations'. By the end of 1981 it had exchange arrangements with 1,894 institutions in 120 countries and territories. This not only enriched the collections of all libraries concerned, but also cultural exchange and friendship among peoples of different countries.

The National Library of China also loans books to certain libraries abroad. To aid researchers, books and periodicals are loaned and borrowed, and duplicates of sections of publications are mutually supplied. As intercourse between different countries increases, the National Library of China is bound to have more frequent contact with foreign libraries.

Apart from exchange of publications, the National Library of China would be pleased to favour exchanges of staff with overseas institutions, but, as I estimate, this kind of exchange can only be realized after the new building is completed.

The new building is planned to house 20,000,000 volumes, have 3,000 seats, and a staff of 2,500. The area of the building will be 140,000 sq. metres, and it will have modern facilities. The building is to reflect the Chinese characteristics of a very large population, a long history with many ancient books and records. Architectural designs are now complete, and construction is expected to begin in the near future. When the new building is complete, the National Library of China will have an even greater effect on library services in China, and make positive contributions to the modernization of China.



樹
園
十
竹
齋
印