

Survey on East Asian vernacular electronic and audio-visual resources held by Australian libraries

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Background

Shortly before the Chinese Studies Association of Australia Conference in July 2003, we discussed the possibility of conducting a survey of Chinese electronic resources in Australia, an idea that was later expanded to include Japanese and Korean resources, as well as audio-visual material. The aim of such a survey was to discover the extent of, and commitment to, collections of non-book resources in East Asian vernacular languages in Australian libraries. It was also decided to limit the survey to vernacular materials, and exclude electronic resources on Asia in non-CJK languages.

A draft questionnaire was prepared and distributed for comment via email and also at the library session at the CSAA Conference. In October, the final version of the questionnaire was put online at the National Library's website (<http://www.nla.gov.au/survey/asianelec.html>) and emails were sent out to all National CJK Service members, including full and 'search & holdings only' members, inviting them to participate in the survey. Two libraries in New Zealand were also invited although both declined to take part.

The survey was divided into 6 separate parts to cover the different formats and languages. Responses received to each part of the survey are as follows:

Chinese electronic resources: 7

Japanese electronic resources: 4

Korean electronic resources: 1

Chinese audio-visual resources: 8

Japanese audio-visual resources: 5

Korean audio-visual resources: 2

A list of participating libraries in each part of the survey is provided in the appendix. It should be noted that not many academic libraries with East Asian language collections have taken part. Some libraries commented that since there is not a separate East Asian collection in their libraries it is extremely difficult to extract the information. Whereas for some other libraries the lack of an East Asian librarian on the library staff made it hard to coordinate a response.

The result of the survey is presented below. All currencies are in Australian dollars.

1. Chinese electronic resources

Type

Standalone CD-ROMs dominate the collections of Chinese electronic resources in the country and account for 433 out of a total of 622 titles (70%).¹ Networked CD-ROMs account for 183 titles and online databases 6. Of the 568 purchased titles 330 are full text journals and newspapers (58.1%), followed by digitized print resources, such as the electronic version of *Si ku quan shu*, with 203 titles (35.8%). The rest are made up of 20 periodical abstracts and indexes (3.5%) and 15 reference tools (such as dictionaries) (2.6%). This proportion reflects the kind of material available on the market.

Access

All but one of the 7 responding libraries catalogued their electronic resources on the Australian National CJK system, thus enhancing resource discovery. Three libraries also contribute catalogue records to Kinetica, and three libraries provide information on their electronic resources on their libraries' websites. In terms of access, four libraries allow access to all onsite users and three libraries restrict access to members of their own institutions.

Budget

The *Chinese Academic Journals* (CAJ) database is the most expensive subscription for two libraries, and cancellation of print equivalents covered only 30-40% of the subscription cost. Other expensive items include full text newspapers and periodical abstract services, but for these titles the cancellation of the print equivalents proved adequate to support the subscription. The two libraries subscribing to CAJ specified '\$15,001 or above' as their total annual expenditure on electronic products. Two libraries spent under \$1,000 and one library spent between '\$5,001-\$10,000'.

In terms of one-off purchases three libraries reported spending less than \$1,000 in the last financial year. All but one library used their own recurrent budget as the funding source for acquiring Chinese electronic resources. Bequest funds, special donations and library support programs are all listed as other sources.

Future Acquisitions

As for factors influencing future acquisitions, 3 of 6 libraries ranked the '*availability of budgets/funds*' as the most important factor. '*Demand by academics/postgraduates*' and '*own library's collection development policy*' are also ranked high. One academic library made the comment that consortial arrangement for acquisition or subscription of Chinese

¹ The total figures given throughout the paper are gross totals, not unique titles.

language electronic resources, in similar fashion as the CAUL arrangements for English languages electronic resources, would be very useful to Australian libraries. Assuming the current level of funding remains unchanged, 5 libraries indicated they would continue subscribing to online databases and standalone CD-ROMs. Only one library opted for networked CD-ROMs.

IT Support

Most libraries use standard Windows operating systems with add-on language softwares such as RichWin and NJStar. One library found it necessary to maintain additional workstations running older versions of Windows for CD-ROMs acquired in the mid-to late 1990s. Two libraries have enabled all their public terminals to access Chinese-language electronic resources, while three libraries offer only a small number of dedicated workstations for access.

User Response and Training

By and large, users have expressed satisfaction with the electronic collection and favour further such purchases. Two libraries reported receiving some negative feedback from academics who prefer print materials. One library commented that inadequate or sub-standard computers can have a negative affect on user receptiveness to electronic resources.

CAJ was nominated as the most used resource by the two subscribing libraries. Other heavily used titles include periodical abstracts and indexes, full text journals and the electronic *Si ku quan shu*, and most responding libraries concurred in this.

The amount of training on usage of electronic resources provided in semester 2, 2003 was surveyed. Responses from the 7 libraries show that 'academics and postgraduates' received the most training i.e. 17 and 18 days respectively, while 'research assistants and undergraduates' trailed behind with 7 and 5 days respectively. While these figures are to some extent determined by the training programs and strategies offered by individual libraries, they also indicate that researchers are the main users for these resources.

2. Japanese electronic resources

Type

A total of 13 online databases are subscribed to by 2 libraries, both in Canberra, while a total of 45 standalone CD-ROMs can be found among the 4 responding libraries. There are no networked CD-ROMs. The majority of these resources are reference tools (17 out of 58, or 29%), with 12 titles being digitized print resources, 7 periodical abstracts/indexes and 5 full text journals and newspapers. Judging from the titles listed as most expensive or most used, there is quite an overlap in the database titles subscribed to among the libraries.

Access

In terms of awareness of these resources, 3 out of 4 libraries catalogue their resources onto the NCJK system while 2 provide database information on their library website. Three out of the four libraries offer access to all onsite users while one library limits access to members of their institution.

Budget

Online databases were the most expensive items with 3 of the 4 libraries spending between \$1,000-\$5,000 in the last financial year on all subscriptions. The fourth library spent under \$1,000. Print resources were not cancelled in order to fund the online subscriptions. In terms of expenditure on one-off purchases in the last financial year, one library reported spending between \$5,001-\$10,000, another between \$1,000-\$5,000, and 2 libraries under \$1,000. Recurrent library budgets provided most of the funding. One library received funding from the Library Support Program of the Japan Foundation that allowed them to acquire an index to *Asahi Shimbun* on CD-ROM.

Future Acquisitions

The factors cited most often as influencing future acquisitions were *'own library's collection development policy'* and *'available budget/funding'*, followed by *'demand by academics/postgraduates'* and *'availability/adequacy of campus IT support'*. The academic library that commented on the desirability of consortial arrangements for Chinese language electronic resources, made the same comment for Japanese resources. All libraries indicated a continued commitment to online databases subscriptions and the acquisition of standalone CD-ROMs with only one library also venturing for networked CD-ROMs.

IT Support

Different libraries use different IT environments for their Japanese resources. Of the three libraries responding to this question, one library uses a standard Windows 2000 environment which enables it to offer access to their web-based databases from 1,200 public computer throughout the library network. Of the other two libraries, one uses a Japanese Windows 95 standalone workstation for all their Japanese resources while the other operates a 486 PC to support its one CDROM subscription.

User Response and Training

One academic library was not able to provide details on the usage of the resources. The other three libraries remarked that their users are all very positive towards the resources, and generally want the libraries to increase such purchases. However, two libraries also reported their users' wish for the library to continue with print subscriptions in addition to electronic resources.

Unlike user training for Chinese resources, the various groups of users who received training are more even. Postgraduates receive 13 days of training among 2 libraries which responded, undergraduates 10, academics 8 and research assistants 6. While there is no dominant user group here, the interest shown by undergraduates is quite remarkable.

3. Korean electronic resources

Information on Korean electronic resources comes from one library only [the National Library], indicating that this is an area not actively collected by East Asian libraries around the country. One academic library explained that they have not purchased any Korean electronic resources because teaching staff in their university has not requested such material.

The National Library has 27 standalone CD-ROMs in the Korean collection, acquired through Gift & Exchange.

4. Chinese audio-visual resources

The 8 responding libraries have a total of 2,124 Chinese audio-visual resource items in their collections. 1,860 items, or 87.6%, are cultural materials such as movies or music, with the remaining 264 items (or 12.4%) relating to language learning. In terms of format, the vast collection of 744 music CDs in one public library has contributed to making this format the most numerous, with a total of 799 in total. Cassette tapes number second with 503 items, followed by 443 DVDs/VCDs, 365 video recordings and 14 non-music CDs.

In the last financial year 5 out of the 8 libraries spent under \$1,000 on their Chinese audio-visual collection. Two libraries spent between \$1,000-\$5,000 and one library expended between \$5,001-\$10,000 to build their collection.

'Demand by academics/postgraduates' is the most important factor influencing future acquisitions, closely followed by *'available budget/funding'* and *'own library's collection development policy'*. *'Demand by undergraduates'* is ranked below these, while *'usage level of existing resources'* is only marked as important to one library. Generally the *'availability of similar resources in a nearby library'* is ranked lowest. *'Demand by academics/postgraduates'* relates mostly to universities offering courses on cultural studies. One such library indicated that they will acquire more Chinese movies on DVDs to support courses on Chinese film and cinema. Another academic library indicated that the demand from their teaching faculty is mainly for print materials.

5. Japanese audio-visual resources

The 5 academic libraries responding to this part of the survey hold, between them, a total of 570 titles in their Japanese audio-visual collections. Video recordings make up the lion's share with 383 items (67%), while cassette tapes number 127, DVDs/VCDs 43 and CDs 17. The materials are purchased as cultural materials (406, or 71%) and the rest of 130 items are bought to support language learning.

In terms of budget commitments in the last financial year one library reported spending \$5,001-\$10,000 on the acquisition of Japanese audio-visual resources, another library between \$1,000-\$5,000, while the three other libraries spent under \$1,000. If budget remains unchanged all 5 libraries say they will continue to purchase DVDs/VCDs, with 4 libraries opting also for video recordings. Three libraries will continue to acquire cassette tapes and 2 libraries will also acquire non-music CDs.

Among the 6 factors influencing future acquisitions decisions, *'available budget/funding'*, *'demand by academics/postgraduates'* and *'own library's collection development policy'* ranked top for 3 libraries, with *'demand by undergraduates'* following closely. One academic library commented that the commencement of new courses on Japanese theatre and media is the driving factor for the acquisition of Japanese audio-visual resources in recent years. *'Usage level of existing resources'* and *'availability of similar resources in a nearby library'* were of less importance.

6. Korean audio-visual resources

Two libraries responded to this part of the survey. One public library recently purchased 50 DVDs as cultural materials and not for language learning. The other respondent, an academic library, purchased a total of 20 items (1 DVD, 17 video tapes and 2 cassette tapes), mostly as cultural materials and 2 for language learning. During the past financial year both libraries spent under \$1,000 on these resources, with the public library commenting that they are ready to expand the collection if budget allows.

Conclusion

In terms of both collection size and budget commitments Chinese resources received the most attention, with two libraries committing over \$15,000 in the last financial year towards subscriptions to online databases. Japanese resources come second while Korean resources development is still at a very early stage. The gap between each of these three language areas is quite marked. As for the types of resources, online databases and standalone CD-ROMs are the main categories of materials for electronic resources, and DVDs/VCDs is the dominating category in audio-visual materials.

Recurrent library funds are the primary source of funding for electronic resources. University libraries also use bequest funds and other library support programs to supplement basic funding. As can be expected, print equivalents were cancelled to support expensive acquisitions. One library commented twice on the benefit of having a CAUL type consortia arrangement for joint acquisitions. Judging from the duplication of Chinese and Japanese online database titles and CD-ROM products, consortia arrangement will have the potential to bring the cost down, enable libraries to purchase or subscribe to more titles, and ultimately bring much wider access to electronic resources to all CJK researchers in the country.

User response is generally very positive. Demand by users, academics and postgraduates or public library users, is on the whole the most important driving factor behind the acquisition of vernacular non-book materials. University libraries have reported that some academics still prefer print materials, or are unwilling to give up print totally in favour of electronic.

For audio-visual resources, the traditional role of supporting language learning activities has given way to supporting cultural pursuits and courses on media in the public library or in university classrooms. The demand for vernacular audio-visual materials also reflects the multicultural nature of our society.

It is hoped that in the future similar surveys can be conducted to monitor the development of non-book collections in the East Asian languages.

Please contact Wan Wong (wwong@nla.gov.au) for more information on the survey.

Appendix: List of respondents to the survey:

Chinese electronic resources

Australian National University Library
Deakin University Library
Macquarie University Library
National Library of Australia
University of Melbourne Library
University of Sydney Library
University of Technology, Sydney Library

Chinese audio-visual resources

Australian National University Library
City of Sydney Library
Deakin University Library
Macquarie University Library
National Library of Australia
University of Newcastle Library
University of Sydney Library
University of Technology, Sydney Library

Japanese electronic resources

Australian National University Library
Macquarie University Library
National Library of Australia
University of Sydney Library

Japanese audio-visual resources

Australian National University Library
Macquarie University Library
University of Newcastle Library
University of Sydney Library
University of Technology, Sydney Library

Korean electronic resources

National Library of Australia

Korean audio-visual resources

City of Sydney Library
University of Sydney Library