
An international library exchange in China

By Maureen Pastine

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Academic and research libraries in the PRC.

In August of 1984, a university librarian, Maureen Pastine, was contacted by China-U.S. Scientific Exchanges (now called U.S. Exchanges) to ask if she would be interested in leading a delegation of librarians to the People's Republic of China. The field of library and information science is currently an area of high priority in China. In their effort to cope with profound 20th-century changes, the Chinese government is encouraging all avenues of learning. China-U.S. Scientific Exchanges, a non-profit foundation, serves as a liaison between representatives of many professions and the Chinese Ministries of Science and Technology and Education. Once approval was gained by Dr. Robert Everett, President of U.S. Exchanges, from the appropriate Ministry of China (based on a proposal from the delegation chair), an invitation from the Ministry of Science and Technology was issued in January 1985. Shortly thereafter, selected librarians from academic and public libraries representing areas of the United States from East to West were contacted regarding participation in the exchange. Twenty-four persons were selected and their resumes were then hand-carried to China by Dr. Everett later in the summer of 1985 in order to gain final approval for the exchange, which took place in an 18-day period in October 1985.

The delegation departed from San Francisco to tour five major Chinese cities: Beijing, Nanjing, Wuhan, Changsha, and Guangzhou, ending the trip with three days in Hong Kong. Several major

university libraries and schools or departments of library and information science and large provincial (similar to our public libraries) libraries were visited. These included People's University Library and the International Relations Library College in Beijing; Nanjing University Library, the Information Science Department, and the Nanjing Provincial Library; Wuhan University Library and the Information Science College; Hunan University Library, Yuela Academy, the Library of Science and Technology University, and Hunan Provincial Library in Changsha; Guangzhou University Library and Zhongshan University Library in Guangzhou.

All U.S. librarians were asked to prepare outlines of presentations in advance even though participants were not always asked to give formal lectures. More often than not, the Chinese counterparts preferred informal discussions and question and answer periods to a more formal presentation.

Throughout the tour from Beijing through Guangzhou, the group had a national guide from the China Association of Science and Technology (CAST) and local guides for each city visited. All were eager to discuss education and life in both countries and to practice their English language skills. Many of the librarians that the group interacted with had an excellent command of the English language. Interpreters were provided for the formal presentations but many of the informal dis-

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cussion and question-and-answer sessions were conducted in English without the need for intervention by an interpreter.

It was clear from these sessions that the Cultural Revolution had been devastating to many libraries and to academia and society at large. The libraries visited had all been pillaged or closed for a ten-year period during the Cultural Revolution. Few were able to continue any monographic or serial acquisitions programs during that time period, leaving large gaps in the collections between 1968 and 1978. Several had portions of their collections destroyed and most librarians were sent off to hard labor in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution.

In each of the libraries visited, the group was plied with statistics regarding volume count and volumes added per year, number of staff, budget figures, square meters of space, number of reading rooms, number of readers, student enrollment, reader stations, library hours, etc.

Librarians are paid 50–150 yuan per month (about \$17.50–\$52.50) depending on their length of service and their status, i.e., director, deputy director (second in command), or librarian. In most libraries the director position seemed to be a highly regarded political or public relations position. The deputy director was frequently the person actually responsible for the administration of the library. None of the library directors we met were women, but two of the deputy directors were female. Several of us questioned why so few women were in directorship positions; when the question arose the subject was usually changed abruptly prior to our receiving a straightforward answer. A few of the female library school students acknowledged that there was not much of a career path for women in administrative library positions, especially as director, but more so as deputy director.

Striking differences between U.S. and Chinese libraries are readily apparent. There is little technology in use in any of the libraries, although there was an IBM PC for “experimental use” at the information retrieval (reference) desk at Nanjing University Library and a theft detection gate, not yet operational, in the same library. There were only a very few libraries with photocopy facilities (at 20 fen or 7¢ per copy) for public use. Electric typewriters were not evident in most libraries, but a very few had some listening facilities for musical recordings and language-learning tapes. However, all libraries and schools and departments of library science were very interested in obtaining literature and discussing the use of automation in libraries.

A goal is to modernize libraries through improved technology, particularly through automation. Nowhere was this more readily apparent than in Nanjing University, where we viewed a videocassette program on the University (with American soap opera music in the background). They had a systems librarian, and he and his staff had created a list of the library’s audiovisual holdings in Chinese

characters on the IBM PC. The library science and the computer science departments at Nanjing University have a combined international program with an emphasis on foreign teachers in computer sciences. The campus has a large computer system with interactive mini-systems in departments, to form a campus network. The library school recently received \$300,000 to establish a model simulated automated library for student practice and experimentation. They have been meeting with UTLAS representatives regarding use of these funds for hardware and software.

Even though the Chinese government and Chinese librarians realize that rapid dissemination of information is crucial to the advancement of the country and automation is a desired methodology, there are great obstacles to overcome in providing computer technology in the Chinese language. Characters are not as easy to alphabetize as Roman or numeric entries. A sizeable problem is that OCLC, RLIN, WLN, and MARC records cannot yet be effectively transliterated from English to Chinese characters. They cannot adequately input the information that is required to make the Chinese collections accessible online. Difficulties are compounded because many libraries use their own classification schemes based primarily on two national systems: 1) the Chinese Library System, 1958–1968, and 2) the Chinese Academic Library System, 1969–date. Several also use LC for some foreign material and a number were using Chinese translations of the Dewey decimal system (a 1965–1969 edition of Dewey with Chinese printed on one page and English on the opposite page).

Many library science students we met had a second degree in artificial intelligence. The difficulty with utilizing modern technology was quite apparent to us in every library we visited. Only one library had access to a slide machine, and it was noisy, didn’t focus well, and power surges created a rather frustrating experience for one of our presenters while showing slides of a U.S. university library for our Chinese colleagues in the Hunan Provincial Library.

Members of the exchange delegation were privileged to meet with a number of local professional associations and societies where we learned that the Chinese Society of Library Science is made up of 28 associations from provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, plus two associations (government and research libraries and academic libraries) in Beijing. This society includes approximately 5,000 members at the national level plus many members at the local level only. It publishes the *Bulletin of the Library Association of China* (bi-monthly) and the *Library Science Quarterly*.

Even though there are some 300,000 public libraries in China, in addition to the university libraries, it is difficult for an individual to gain access to libraries. Only one-half of one percent of the Chinese citizens of college or university age are admitted to institutions of higher education. Most of



The old Wuhan University Library.



Students at Nanjing University Library.

VIETNAM: National Security Files, November 1963–June 1965

Vietnam: National Security Files, November 1963–June 1965 is an extraordinarily valuable collection. Most of the accepted picture of American policy in this period derives from The Pentagon Papers. It is therefore the picture seen from one particular part of the Pentagon. This collection gives researchers access to wider and more varied perspectives. It contains material for scores of seminar papers and monographs, which, cumulatively, should give us a quite different understanding of this important period.

—Dr. Ernest R. May
Charles Warren Professor of History
Harvard University

The National Security Council “Country File” for Vietnam is a remarkable record of the early years of America’s longest war. This convenient microfilm edition makes available over 17,000 pages of important NSC briefing materials from November 1963 through June 1965—years in which the future course of American policy in Southeast Asia was debated and determined. Bringing together reports, memoranda, and correspondence from the White House, the State Department, the Defense Department, MACV (Military Assistance Command: Vietnam), the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, among others, the “Country File” for Vietnam offers firsthand documentary testimony on the widening dimensions of American involvement in Southeast Asia.

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Author of *Vietnam: A History*

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the specialized reading rooms in university libraries are closed stacks and only graduate students and faculty have access to specialized subject and foreign language materials. Use is often restricted to the reading room that contains the subject matter of one's specialized field of study.

Provincial library cards are often scarce and doled out by work supervisors who decide which few people will have the honor of obtaining one of these highly coveted cards. But some of the provincial libraries, Guangzhou in particular, is attempting to change with their slogan, "Everything for the People." This library provides public lectures and closed circuit educational television programs to re-educate the populace to a freer, more information-literate society. They provide language tapes and listening facilities to help people teach themselves, and they have scholars available to aid in this process. A few blocks away a children's library is provided to encourage youth to learn about science and technology. Mobile libraries are being sent to reformatories, special preference in obtaining library cards is given to the physically disabled, and books are taken to places where veterans will have access to them. New books and periodicals are on sale in the library. Some libraries provided group borrower cards, e.g., a commune can charge out 25 books at a time in one of the municipal libraries, whereas an individual is allowed only 4 books at once. In some libraries, especially the larger provincial ones, library users are so many, they must reserve a seat in advance while lines of people wait their turn. In all libraries visited, the reading rooms were crowded from opening until closing time with practically every seat filled during all service hours.

A surprising statistic concerned the percentage (about 30–60%) of library materials in foreign languages. A large number of these are serial publications—journals and reference materials. Some of the reference materials were outdated but we noted new editions of Groves and similar tools in several libraries. Some of these reference books were received on an exchange contract through World Bank or with agencies of the U.S. or other foreign governments. Most libraries selected foreign materials from publishers' lists provided by the Chinese Import and Export Book Company. Reference books were from the U.S., France, Germany, England, Russia, and Japan. Most libraries had separate reading rooms for international or foreign materials. Undergraduates were seldom allowed access to these rooms as their library study was often limited to a reserve room of textbook materials. We saw many students laboriously copying from texts as photoduplication facilities are not the norm.

Student and faculty loan periods differed. Students were often confined to in-house use or one-month charge-outs while faculty loan periods might cover six weeks or up to a semester loan period. All library collections we viewed housed a

million or more volumes and most were open about 72–80 hours per week. Two libraries visited were of recent construction, including Wuhan University Library—thus we were their first official foreign delegation after the building dedication. But several libraries were in disrepair in older, decrepit buildings with primitive conditions existing, particularly in regard to maintenance and cleanliness. The library director at one university library was embarrassed to offer a tour of the facilities, and he did not allow a comprehensive look at the entire facility. Climate control often consisted of open or broken windows, although one library had a desktop humidifier and another recently constructed building offered air conditioning. Preservation and conservation, several Chinese librarians jokingly replied, was limited to "bug medications and rat poison—the natural way." Theft was mentioned as a problem but not a major one. There was much more concern expressed for the need of improved space and budgeting, and improved librarian salaries.

Our exchange discussion sessions often focused on the need to establish cooperative acquisitions exchanges, the opportunity to study in the U.S., and requests for more information on automated systems for library operations and current library journal articles on any topic. Subjects raised varied widely from discussions on salaries, costs of books



Guangzhou Municipal Library.

(the average cost for a book in China is 65¢ as opposed to \$30–\$40 for a U.S. book), differences between professional associations and societies, library organization and administration, library cooperation, open versus closed stacks, preservation, budgets, space, director's power and authority within the university, privileges of librarians versus staff, how accreditation is conferred, how public libraries are funded, and how staff performance is evaluated.

There was a grave concern expressed by many Chinese librarians that the term "librarian" is used for anyone who works in a library regardless of whether or not that person has received any professional education. Most large university and provincial libraries were composed of approximately one-third to one-half professionals (many with degrees in physics or chemistry rather than library science) but many smaller libraries have fewer, if any, staff with professional education—often paid at the same rate as the professional—or a higher rate if they have more years of experience. We met several librarians who had not selected their position as librarian and would have chosen another career path but were placed in library schools or given librarian positions by government leaders, based on their scores on competitive examinations.

Wuhan University has a School of Library Science and a School of Information Science. A faculty member in the School of Library Science informed us that there is a distinction between librarians (social scientists) and information scientists (persons with scientific and technological backgrounds). Library science students are encouraged to have a double degree at Wuhan University. Students go to school for one year for a master's degree and two years for a dual degree. Because Wuhan University has the oldest, largest, and still the major library and information science program in China, it graduates the largest number of librarians for placement in jobs throughout China. There is a current shortage of librarians, so their normal 4-year course of study, which requires mastery of two foreign languages, has been supplemented by a two-year library study program and a three-year program to get graduates out sooner. Many of the current four-year graduates become Wuhan University Library Science instructors or instructors in other university library science programs (they prefer these students to have a math or physics background). They would like to have the opportunity to use more U.S. library school faculty on exchange to teach computer and management courses. The once 29 departments of library science in Chinese universities have expanded to 40 programs in the past few years with the major ones at Wuhan, Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai. A number of library science faculty have received supplemental education or training in U.S. and Australian libraries.

The perceptions of the U.S. participants of Chinese libraries and librarians were most interesting.

All were impressed with the enthusiasm and motivation of the young library students we met. Most were somewhat surprised to learn about the similarities in problems and priorities—budget problems, space concerns (although their libraries seemed to have more growth space in shelving, their inadequate seating was a greater problem), support and recognition needed from upper university administration, and need for improved technology and cooperation among libraries.

But the differences were just as interesting. The emphasis on library education, the strong support for modernizing libraries by the government, the emphasis on foreign materials (especially serials), and the marvelous collections of rare and antiquated materials, some dating back to the Ming Dynasty, were differences of note. We were also surprised to discover that reference questions were usually written out and responded to by librarians in written form—the responses taking anywhere from several hours to a week to complete. Few librarians handled many telephone questions and if there were interlibrary loan queries, these were forwarded by mail and items loaned on a very limited and irregular basis. Most of the libraries visited added at least 100,000 volumes to their collections each year, and few libraries' budgets exceeded one million yuan (Chinese dollars). But all the universities seem to be concentrating on developing long range plans, higher educational standards, especially in the sciences, and expectations for faculty are becoming more stringent. Nanjing University library science faculty mentioned that they now are expected to publish, a new requirement for them.

Librarians do have the opportunity to attend professional meetings once or twice a year to discuss common concerns, but if professional meetings are held far from one's local province, funds for travel are a real problem.

The highlight of our tour was a surprise reception and children's musical and dance performance held for us one evening at the Hunan Provincial Library in Changsha. Over 150 librarians, local officials and political leaders, parents and teachers, met us in a colorfully decorated room. Colored Christmas lights, chrysanthemums, and a huge welcome sign greeted us as we entered a large conference room. Young singers, dancers, and musicians from the ages of 4–14 had specially prepared for months prior to our scheduled visit. The event was co-sponsored by CAST and library professional associations and organizations. Each of us received three special gifts from the sponsors.

Our trip was a fascinating voyage into another world—culturally, linguistically, and ideologically. China is a land of great contrasts with ancient temples from the 14th century standing against newly constructed modern high rise buildings with handwashed laundry flying from windows on every floor. A few minutes away from the faster-paced cities one sees hundreds of farm work-

ers toiling barefoot in rice paddies, working alongside the water buffalo.

Against the ancient splendor of dynastic China, a new, more westernized life is developing. With the rapid changes, one can only hope that the culture, the art treasures, and the philosophy of the past will be preserved. China's libraries play a major role in dissemination of information for modernizing the country, but this must be juxtaposed against a more traditional role of preservation. One wonders if the government recognizes the traditional in the race for international development and world recognition. The devastating years of the Cultural Revolution seem unlikely to recur under the present climate, but the emphasis on the

new and modern may mean promotion of technology to the detriment of preservation efforts.

Editor's Note: Contributions to this article were also made by the following participants in the exchange: Jean Aragon, Rudy Aragon, Joyce Ball, Brenda Dingley, Henderson Dudman, Mary Dudman, Jean Geil, Suzanne Griffiths, Donna McCool, Marilyn McDonald, Anne Martel, Morey Polan, Laurence Porter, Margaret Porter, Virginia Quiring, Dorothy Rice, Martha Richardson, John Secor, Judith Sessions, Alex Stecker, Marilyn Wertheimer, Michael Wertheimer, and Betsy Wilson. ■■

Clearinghouses for library instruction

Almost every librarian involved in public services and reference also finds herself involved in library instruction, whether on an informal one-to-one basis at the reference desk or in a formal classroom situation. It can be very easy for librarians trying to teach library skills to feel that they are working in a vacuum with little awareness of what others are doing. To help meet the needs of these librarians, clearinghouses for bibliographic instruction began to be established around the country in the early 1970s.

These clearinghouses were set up to disseminate information about bibliographic instruction as well as to provide a depository collection of BI materials. Probably the best known clearinghouse is LOEX at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti. LOEX is the national clearinghouse with materials and services available to all.

To complement and supplement resources at LOEX, regional and statewide clearinghouses have also been established. Besides sponsoring programs and collecting materials from participating libraries, statewide clearinghouses can provide opportunities for professional contacts and inspiration.

Anyone who is in an area served by a clearinghouse can use the collected materials and take advantage of the expertise of others who are doing similar things. Each clearinghouse has its own policy as to whether materials can be lent or must be used on-site. Materials available can range from bibliographies on various subjects to formal course outlines to scripts for audiovisual programs. It's also important to keep in mind that cooperation and exchange are key elements in the concept of clearinghouses. Clearinghouses will not work unless members contribute samples of their own materials, handouts, etc., on a regular basis.

To help promote BI clearinghouse use, the ACRL Bibliographic Instruction Section's Clearinghouse Committee acts as a vehicle to facilitate

cooperation and exchange among national, regional, and state clearinghouses and BI groups. It also serves as a resource group for those interested in establishing a clearinghouse in their state or region. Recently the Committee has made clearinghouse publicity one of its first priorities.

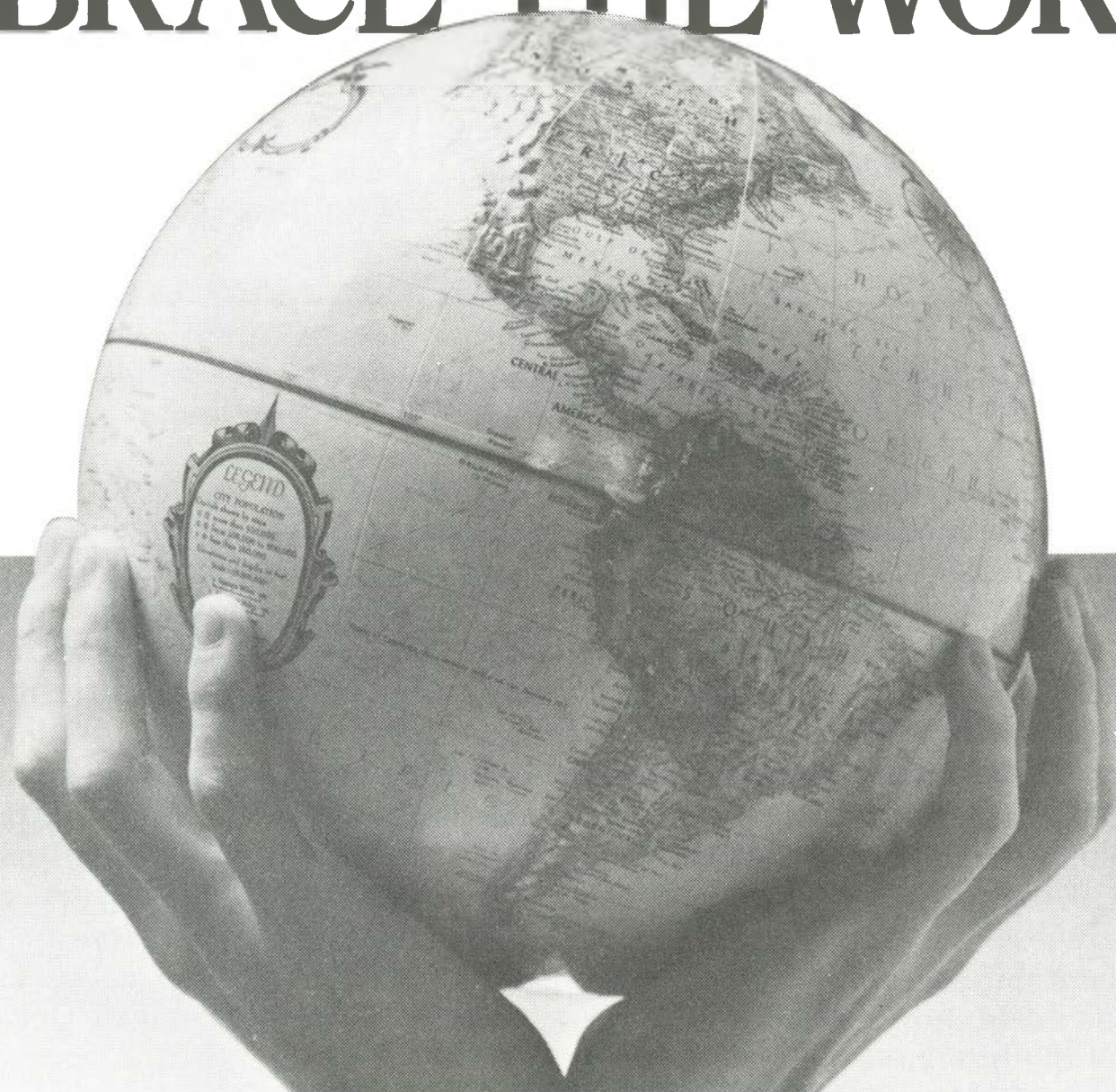
A current directory of *Library Instruction Clearinghouses* is available from the ALA Order Department, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611-2795 (\$6; ACRL members \$5). For further information on clearinghouses, contact either the clearinghouse in your area or LOEX, Carolyn Kirkendall, Director, Center of Educational Resources, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197; (313) 487-0168 (mornings). ■■

Canadian user surveys

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries has selected York and McGill University Libraries to undertake a user services study funded by a grant from Geac Computers International, Markham, Ontario. The York University study will focus on the identification of user needs and the organizational response required to meet those needs. The McGill University study will concentrate on library services to undergraduates and an assessment of its undergraduate library.

The survey instruments and mechanisms developed at York and McGill will be useful to the academic library community at large in monitoring user satisfaction, user needs, and the effects of automation on service to users. Anticipated benefits of the two projects include increased user satisfaction, introduction and integration of technology to improve library services, and better definitions of the user community in terms of informational needs and use patterns.

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