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# Academic libraries in the People's Republic of China

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## *Recent developments in Chinese librarianship.*

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**D**ozens of articles about libraries in China have been published in the United States in the last several years. Most of them, written by visiting American librarians, are from observers' points of view. In a recent article on problems faced by Chinese university libraries, Henrietta Lo provided a vivid description of the obstacles to modernizing China's university libraries.<sup>1</sup> The incidents Lo encountered can be found in many college and university libraries in China.

Despite the obstacles observed by Lo and many others, great progress was made in the development of college and university libraries after the National Conference of College and University Libraries in China in 1981. At that time, the former Ministry of Education developed the "Regulations for College and University Library Services." Steering committees of college and university libraries were set up at national, provincial, and municipal levels throughout the country, and college and university library services began to be stressed.

In December 1982 a second all-member session of the National Steering Committee of College and University Libraries was held in Beijing to present its report and its "Provisions for the Work and Duty

of College and University Library and Information Workers." In April 1984 the Steering Committee called another national conference in Xian to share working experiences, especially with regard to library reforms.

The steering committees of various academic libraries have done a large amount of work in recent years in organization, management, inspection, evaluation, staff training, cooperation and coordination, and professional guidance. With active support from all levels, library services have kept in step with developments in higher education. Statistics for 670 college and university libraries existed at the end of 1980; and by 1986 data for 913 institutions had been collected (Table 1). The quality and efficiency of library service has also improved. Academic libraries are now actively serving the teaching and research programs of their parent institutions.

Specific efforts have been made to improve the quality of collections, to assess the composition of collections, to weed out obsolete books and periodicals, to reduce the number of copies per title, to re-adjust the work system, to meet the information processing standards stipulated by the government, to improve work quality and efficiency, to formulate and improve various policies and procedures, and to promote staff development. College and university libraries have generally adopted open stacks for over 20% of their books and period-

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<sup>1</sup>Henrietta Lo, "The Obstacles to Reform: China Modernizes Its University Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 48 (November 1987):504-12.

**TABLE 1**  
**College and University Libraries in China**

	1980	1986	<i>Annual Increase*</i>
Number of libraries	670	913	22.71 %
Library staff	17,297	32,779	31.58 %
Floor Space (Sq. Mtr.)	1,320,000	2,900,000	36.62 %
Funds for Purchasing			
Books per annum (Yuan)	5,216,000	14,708,000	47.00 %

\*This is the average annual increase for these 6 years.

icals. Open hours have been increased to an average of 70 hour per week. Many new programs have been developed, such as selecting reference materials in accordance with the curriculum, providing media services, compiling reference books and indexes, and providing reference materials to graduate students working on a thesis. Academic libraries also frequently hold seminars, book evaluations, exhibitions, and art appreciation workshops.

### **Bibliographic instruction**

Since 1983, college and university libraries have developed an "Information Retrieval and Utilization" course which has been added to the curriculum. According to the requirements of the State Educational Commission, all qualified schools may offer it as a compulsory course, and those without adequate qualification may offer it as a selective course or as a special lecture. All postgraduate students are required to take this course, which allows undergraduate and postgraduate students to understand the concept of information, and to master the skills of finding and utilizing reference materials so that they can become independent library researchers.

The length of the course is generally from 20 to 40 hours. The contents of the course usually include:

- 1) The fundamentals of information structure and information retrieval.
- 2) The structure of major retrieval tools, and methods of locating information.
- 3) The contents and function of major reference works, and methodologies for using them.
- 4) Methods and skills for increasing the volume of reading, for sorting and summarizing documentation, for studying and analyzing information, and for writing a thesis. Many schools have also added online bibliographic databases.

Most colleges and universities use their libraries as teaching bases and coordinating centers. The library can set up a teaching section to organize teaching and research. The former Ministry of Education and now the State Education Commission has designated the National Steering Committee of College and University Libraries to be responsible for the planning, organization and coordination of

this course. According to the 1986 statistics, 532 schools have offered this course, involving more than 1,600 faculty and 230,000 students. The consensus of opinion among teachers, librarians, and students has been favorable. In 1986 the State Science Commission awarded a third prize to this course for organizing and promoting scientific and technical information. A clearinghouse committee for compiling and editing teaching material has been organized, and has published a set of teaching materials for different subjects.

### **Reference services**

University and college libraries have abundant resources for documentation and information. More than half of the colleges and universities in the country have established reference departments, usually in the library. Depending on the collection, circulation and photocopying capabilities of the library, the reference departments answer inquiries, find research topics, provide SDI and other special services for research projects, and translate and edit materials in foreign languages. They also offer information services outside the academic community, such as the investigation and study of local construction projects, technical consultation, and information searches for scientific research projects. For the first time in 1986 college and university libraries were eligible for awards in the field of scientific and technical information, with four prizes awarded and six professionals commended.

In addition to the libraries, university and colleges in the country have more than 5,000 reference and information centers. These units undertake the functions of both documentation and information. Under the guidance and coordination of the library, academic information committees are being established to form a unified documentation and information network which emphasizes cooperation and resource sharing among different units in an extensive scale.

### **Equipment and facilities**

New techniques are being used by college and university libraries to elevate work quality and efficiency. In the 1950s only a few universities and col-

leges had copy machines and other office equipment. Now there are nearly 500 microcomputers in college and university libraries. Copy machines are common and other new equipment is in use.

Attention is also focused on audiovisual materials. Many academic libraries have set up media centers and microform reading rooms. A number of universities and colleges are experimenting with the use of computers in management and administration, online information retrieval, and database construction. For example, the Computer Compiled Union Catalog of Books in Western Languages developed by Peking University, the Database of the Academic Publication Abstracts of Chinese Colleges and Universities developed by Qing Hua University, Book Circulation Management Systems developed by Shanghai Jiaotong University, Nanjing University, and the microcomputer networks developed by some academic libraries, have brought library automation to daily operation. According to the 1985 statistics, university and college libraries in China have introduced and developed 77 databases and 131 software programs. Some have established international online computer retrieval terminals.

In order to provide a good environment for research and study, and to add new technology to library services, college and university libraries in China have been vigorously planning new library buildings. According to incomplete statistics, at least 200 new library buildings have been constructed in recent years with a total floor space of about 1,500,000 square meters. This exceeds the total floor space of all college and university libraries before 1980.

At present a large number of libraries are under construction. In May 1986 the Secretariat of the National Steering Committee of College and University Libraries called a conference in Shenyang to discuss library building planning and construction. This meeting analyzed the condition of library buildings and proposed guidelines for colleges and universities to follow.

### Staff

In recent years, colleges and universities in China have recruited over 3,000 of their own graduates and a number of teachers to augment the library staff. In 1980 only 38.5% of the library staff were college graduates, but the figure reached 53.6% in 1985. This raised the educational level of the staff in general.

In order to adapt college graduates majoring in areas other than library and information sciences to work in the libraries and information centers, the Secretariat of the National Steering Committee of College and University Libraries has encouraged them to attend training classes. Eight universities and colleges have set up programs which have trained more than 1,500 people for a period from six months to one year. These trainees have now be-

come an important part of the profession. The Secretariat has also arranged for three universities to offer six-month training classes for 200 library directors. In addition, academic library steering committees across the country have organized short-term continuing education classes of various types. In recent years more than 10,000 library staff have undergone special training for at least one month.

There are now over 40,000 staff members working in China's academic libraries and information departments. Their mission is to amplify their training and elevate the quality of their work.

### Interlibrary cooperation

As mentioned earlier, academic library steering committees were set up at all levels after the National Conference of College and University Libraries in 1981. Over 10 ministries and commissions also set up library steering committees or library associations in the universities and colleges under their jurisdiction. Under the leadership and with the support of educational departments, library steering committees and associations have done a good deal of work on interlibrary organization, management and coordination. Their activities have included initiating operation plans and proposals; organizing inspections, appraisals, and comparisons; commending library achievements, staff innovations, and staff with 30 years' experience; organizing interlibrary cooperation; coordinating the acquisition of books and periodicals; studying the use of computers; editing and compiling union catalogs; promoting resource sharing; issuing interlibrary loan cards; developing academic research; and training leaders and exchange experience. All these activities have helped the development of library and information services in academic libraries.

### Research in librarianship

In addition to its other activities, the National Steering Committee of College and University Libraries and the committees at the provincial level have published many studies on such special topics as library reforms, collection development, leadership and training, professional team building, organization of research methods courses, library building planning and construction, library automation, and strategic planning for libraries and information centers. These studies have made considerable progress and have promoted the development of library services.

The official publication of the National Steering Committee, the *Bulletin of College and University Libraries*, has been published regularly since 1983 to exchange information about academic library reforms and to report on research and development in academic libraries. The committee also publishes five kinds of reference materials on library and information services, essays on special topics,

*Available in September, 1988*

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and conference notes. Provincial and local steering committees have also issued publications of their own to enliven the scholastic atmosphere, to share information of local interest, and to exchange work experiences.

Both the Department of Library and Information Sciences of Northeast Normal University and that of East China Normal University have set up library research centers. Together with the School of Library and Information Sciences in Wuhan University and the library school of Peking University, they share the work of studying the development of college and university libraries in Japan, the United States, the Soviet Union, and other European countries. Preliminary research results have been obtained. The government has been sending graduate students to some developed countries to study library and information sciences since 1979. Many colleges and universities have also sent students or library staff to study library and information science abroad. It is estimated that in recent years, over 100 Chinese students and visiting scholars have studied, or are studying library and information science in the United States alone.

### The future

After several years of development, college and university libraries have begun to change from primarily collecting printed materials to providing information and services in various forms and media. Instead of supplying books passively, they have actively entered the teaching circle. They have turned from merely supplying bibliographic information to finding original documents, translating foreign language materials, and providing services that have traditionally been considered the user's responsibility. They have converted from traditional manual operations to modern technology. They have served not only research and teaching needs on campuses, but have also contributed to economic construction and social development. They have evolved from comparatively isolated institutions to multi-functional information centers.

The past few years are unprecedented in the annals of China's college and university libraries. However, the original foundation of these libraries is weak and their development unbalanced. They are hardly able to cope with the needs of a new situation. In order to strengthen the leadership of college and university library and information services, the State Education Commission set up an administrative office for textbooks, library and information services in 1986. In June 1987 a National Conference of College and University Libraries was held. The conference summed up achievements, exchanged experiences, revised the "Regulations of Services," developed the "Rules and Regulations of College and University Libraries," and reorganized the National Steering Committee of College and University Libraries as the National Library and Information Committee for College and Universities.

The significance of the conference is that it emphasized the need to strengthen the teaching and information functions of college and university libraries, and to display the multi-faceted efficiency of college and university libraries, reference rooms and information offices. The conference proposed to set up 30 information centers focusing on particular disciplines among colleges and universities as a safeguard for the information resources of college and university libraries. These centers should serve as depositories for information collection and utilization for the whole country. To speed up the modernization of college and university libraries, these centers will give guidance and assistance to local libraries and play leading roles in the application of modern technology.

All this is only the beginning. A wide application of modern technology in Chinese college and university libraries will come into its own in the 1990s.

*Editor's Note: The author was assisted in the editing of this article by Tian-zhu Li, a graduate student in education at the University of Washington, Seattle.* ■ ■

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## CLIP Note #10 now out

*Annual Reports for College Libraries*, number 10 in the CLIP (College Library Information Packet) Notes series published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), is now available from the American Library Association (ALA) Order Department.

CLIP Note #10 reports the results of a survey of small college and university libraries designed to collect basic data about how academic libraries prepare and use annual reports. Preparation, structure, production, distribution and value of annual reports are some of the topics covered. Five complete annual reports as well as selected annual

report data-gathering forms and graphics are also included.

*Annual Reports for College Libraries* (ISBN 0-8389-7219-5) was compiled by Kenneth J. Oberembt, director of the Alumni Memorial Library, University of Scranton, Pennsylvania, under the auspices of the ACRL College Libraries Section's CLIP Notes Committee. Copies may be ordered from the ALA Order Department, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; (800) 545-2433. The 135-page paperback sells for \$20 (\$17 to ACRL members). ALA members receive a 10% discount off the list price. ■ ■

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## Two new thesauri for special collections

*Binding Terms* and *Provenance Evidence* are the latest additions to the series of thesauri for use in rare book and special collections cataloging published by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

Developed by the ACRL Rare Books and Manuscripts Section's Standards Committee for use in USMARC field 755 (a new field authorized for all MARC formats in January 1984), these monographs provide standard terms for description of physical characteristics of various production methods and publishing or bookselling practices. The standardized application of these terms allows retrieval of books by their physical features rather than intellectual content.

Special collections librarians concerned with the study of the book may want to use MARC field 755 to locate, for example, all of their holdings with imposition errors, signing irregularities or false imprint date. The use of such terms in cataloging records will assist researchers interested in studying the techniques and styles of book production and distribution.

*Binding Terms* describes the physical properties of the book's binding. *Provenance Evidence* considers provenance in its broadest sense to refer not only to former owners in the legal sense, but also to any who may have had temporary custody of the material (such as auction houses or library borrowers) and have left their mark on it in some way.

*Binding Terms: Thesaurus for Use in Rare Book and Special Collections Cataloging*, a 37-page paperback (ISBN 0-8389-7210-1), sells for \$10 (\$8.50 to ACRL members). *Provenance Evidence: Thesaurus for Use in Rare Book and Special Collections Cataloging*, a 24-page paperback (ISBN 0-8389-7239-X), sells for \$9 (\$7 to ACRL members). Both books are available from the ALA Order Department, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; (800) 545-2433. ALA members receive a 10% discount off the list price.

The first title in the series, *Printing and Publishing Evidence* (ISBN 0-8389-7108-3), is still available from the ALA Order Department for \$7.50 (\$5.50 to ACRL members). ■■

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## Academic Status: Statements and Resources available

*Academic Status: Statements and Resources*, a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), is now available from the American Library Association (ALA) Order Department.

Developed by ACRL's Academic Status Committee, this compilation brings together information that supports the idea of faculty status and provides a defense of the concept. The publication includes all of the ACRL standards and guidelines that apply to faculty status for academic librarians

as well as a review of faculty status surveys and a selective bibliography.

*Academic Status: Statements and Resources* (ISBN 0-8389-7233-0) is available from the ALA Order Department, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; (800) 545-2433; in Illinois, (800) 545-2444; in Canada, (800) 545-2455. The 58-page paperback sells for \$8 (\$6.50 to ACRL members). ALA members receive a 10% discount off the list price. ■■

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## ACRL executive summary

Conference time has always been the most active season of the year. Activities that have been brewing for months ripen; dispersed pieces of work are combined into a synergistic whole. 1988 is no different. A summary of the actions of the ACRL Board of Directors appears on pp. 493-95. Here are some other important happenings.

### *Professional development*

The local presentation of one continuing education course and several preconference courses at

ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans involved more than 180 people. The Bibliographic Instruction Section's third preconference was highly successful, drawing 193 participants to sessions on new methods for user instruction. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section offered its 29th preconference, "Libraries and Museums: Leaves from Each Others' Books," to more than 240 attendees.

Discussions began for a second CD-ROM teleconference, possibly featuring the transmission of a continuing education course via satellite.

Plans for the ACRL National Conference in Cincinnati are on schedule. Some 14,000 brochures were mailed, poster sessions are planned, many more programs were submitted than can be accepted, and the number of "intents to submit papers" exceeds the number received for the last conference in Baltimore.

Plans are also moving along for the RBMS Conference in Cambridge, England, September 4-8, 1989, on "The Antiquarian Book Trade."

#### *Improving service capability*

The Planning Committee for the Historically Black College and University Libraries project will carry out a statistical survey of these institutions to update earlier studies by Casper Jordan and Jessie Carney Smith. The Committee will also offer a preconference on preparing for accreditation at ALA Annual Conference in Dallas next year.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Performance Measures received a good progress report from consultant Nancy Van House on the output measures manual project. Phase One is nearly complete and the drafting of the manual is about to begin. ALA Publishing has indicated an interest in publishing the manual.

The Librarians as Instructors Task Force will be conducting a survey to raise the consciousness of administrators and gather information about the extent of librarians' instructional activity. Their term has been extended to allow completion of the study.

Hearings were held on the "Standards for University Libraries" and on the "Academic Status Statement." Both of the committees revising these documents are using the results to modify their work.

#### *Liaison and advocacy*

Executive Director JoAn Segal attended the American Association on Higher Education Assessment Forum in Chicago in June to advocate a role

### **Segal now certified**

JoAn S. Segal, ACRL executive director, has recently been awarded certification by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). She may now use the designation C.A.E. (Certified Association Executive). A combination of points awarded for professional experience and the scores on a competitive national examination form the basis for awarding the designation, which is held by about 1,500 association executives.

Official recognition of the achievement was given at the ASAE annual conference in Toronto on August 15. Recertification must be applied for every five years and is conditional upon continuing professional activity.

for academic libraries in higher education assessment.

#### *Research and publications*

See descriptions of our new publications on pp.490-91.

#### *Strategic management directions*

*Planning.* The Planning Committee and Board of Directors received final revisions of the 1989 Operating Plan. A third draft of the Financial Plan was reviewed by the Budget and Finance Committee. There will be open hearings on this plan before it is adopted. The Board accepted as its priorities for 1990 and 1991 an emphasis on advocacy and liaison work (especially making ACRL and academic librarianship more visible among administrators) and recruitment to the profession of academic librarianship.

*Personnel.* The assistant editor of *C&RL News*, Gus Friedlander, has left us to attend graduate school in history. Cheryl Robinson-Smith will be the voice you hear on the phone when you place a classified ad or inquire about *C&RL News* columns, section newsletters, or the *Fast Job Listing Service*.

### **1989 President's Program**

The first part of the ACRL President's Program for the Dallas Conference will examine the major changes expected to occur in higher education in the next twenty years. Following that presentation, an attempt will be made to look at the more significant and radical changes which will occur in the manner in which we provide public services in our libraries.

Immediately preceding the Cincinnati Conference in April 1989 a Think Tank will be held in which the participants will focus on public services in the first decade of the 21st century. The product of that meeting will be the basis for the second half of the Dallas program.

At this time, the Program Planning Committee is beginning the process of identifying librarians to participate in the Think Tank. The committee is trying to identify individuals who have expressed an interest in looking at the future of public services in academic and research libraries. The help of members of the association is sought in this effort.

Librarians are invited to nominate others or to volunteer for participation in the Think Tank. In submitting a name, please include a brief explanation of why that particular individual would be a valuable participant in the project. In order for the committee to meet its deadline, nominations must be received no later than October 31, 1988.

Please address your correspondence to: James G. Neal, E505 Pattee Library, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802.

*Membership.* The Membership Committee staffed a highly successful booth at Annual Conference in New Orleans. They distributed materials, presented a video of Cincinnati, and held a drawing for a video prepared by the Arizona State University Libraries.

*Support elected and appointed leaders.* Our second annual orientation meeting for new committee chairs and section heads was successful. Information was offered by ACRL leaders and staff, guides were handed out, and there was time for some discussion.

The ACRL Annual Report appeared in a beautiful new format. We hope that it will encourage units to submit reports for inclusion next year.

*Cooperate with other ALA units.* Staff and key leaders are preparing for three important events this fall: the third annual divisional leadership program, where the presidents-elect of all 11 divisions convene to learn about ALA, meet one another, and work with the divisional staffs; the first joint meeting of divisional executive committees, where common issues, such as the revision of the Operating Agreement can be discussed, as well as individual agenda items; and an "Operating Agreement Summit," where each division will have one representative as negotiator with members of the ALA COPES Committee in drafting a new set of policies for ALA in relation to the divisions.—*JoAn S. Segal, ACRL Executive Director.* ■■

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## ACRL actions, July 1988

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### *Highlights of the Annual Conference meetings of the ACRL Board of Directors.*

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**T**he Board of Directors of the Association of College and Research Libraries met twice during the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans: on July 9, 1988, and July 12, 1988.

#### **Bibliographic instruction**

The Board approved a "Model Statement of Objectives for Academic Bibliographic Instruction" developed by a Bibliographic Instruction Section task force, with the provision that the authors clarify some language in a section dealing with unrecorded information sources (see draft in *C&RL News*, May 1987). The revised statement will appear in a future issue of *C&RL News*.

#### **Budget and finance**

The Board approved a schedule for the development of the ACRL Financial Plan. There will be an open hearing on the plan next Midwinter, and a final version will be approved by the Board at Annual Conference in Dallas in 1989.

The Board also approved two revisions to the

ACRL Fiscal Policy Manual—one on travel funds and the other on conference expenses.

The Board approved the 1989 ACRL budget with revenues of \$1,111,875 and expenses of \$1,111,080.

#### **Bylaws**

The Board approved a change in the ACRL Bylaws that would allow sections to designate their representatives to the Activity Sections Council. The representatives would be two of the three following officers: chair, vice-chair/chair-elect, or past chair.

The Board approved sample bylaws for use by ACRL sections in need of information on the writing or revision of section bylaws.

#### **Discussion groups**

The board approved petitions for the creation of two new discussion groups: the Journal Costs in Academic Libraries Discussion Group and the Popular Culture and Libraries Discussion Group.