

# EAST ASIAN ART MATERIALS: TOWARD SOLVING PROBLEMS OF COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

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The purpose of this paper is to report the patterns of collection development and management responsibilities for East Asian art materials in North American university libraries with East Asian collections. An understanding of these patterns is necessary for identifying an effective method of collection building and management.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the essential functions of collection development and management is collection evaluation. Before collection planning can begin, one must have an accurate assessment and understanding not only of the nature of the collection itself, but also of its adequacy and quality.

In early 1984, I conducted a survey of East Asian art collections at eight U.S. research universities, seven of which have major East Asian collections, one of which has a medium-sized collection.<sup>1</sup> The survey brought to light significant problems in the collection practices of two overlapping areas—general art collections and East Asian art collections. Collecting and managing vernacular East Asian art materials are often burdensome for art librarians, even at those libraries or museums with either East Asian art specialists or East Asian librarians on their staffs. These collections are particularly expensive to build, maintain, and keep up-to-date. The fact that these materials are often heavy, bulky, oddly shaped, and peculiarly bound makes the situation worse.

Thus, it should not have been surprising to find a discernable level of dissatisfaction concerning East Asian art collection and development. I listened to the complaints, and also sensed the frustrations, of both art librarians and East Asian librarians at virtually every surveyed institution about the lack of good communication and coordination in collection development. At some institutions, art librarians felt they had to collect "everything" published on East Asian art, while at others the art librarians limited themselves to original works and left secondary sources, particularly those in the vernacular, to the East Asian libraries. However, in many cases, both libraries at a single institution were found to own duplicate copies of rather expensive works, generally because of dual faculty requests and poor intra-library planning. This may not have been a problem 20 years ago, when plentiful funds caused the number of East Asian collections in the United States to increase from 20 to 71. With dwindling resources today, however, such duplication can cause severe problems for the units involved.

These findings provided the impetus for the present surveys, also conducted in 1984. The first survey described here was intended to determine the patterns of responsibility for collection development and management of East Asian art materials at North American universities listed in the CEAL Directory of East Asian Collections. The second, a follow-up survey of 18 (seven large and 11 medium-sized) East Asian collections, was designed to see if patterns of acquisition differ when budgets are divided by country of publication or by subject country. Based on survey results, recommendations are made to minimize duplication and maximize limited funding resources.

## METHODOLOGY

In 1984, a questionnaire was sent to 43 North American academic libraries with East Asian collections. (The questionnaire is reproduced in the Appendix.) The first section of the questionnaire was designed to acquire background information about the instructional needs of each institution. It included questions about the East Asian art courses offered by each institution, including the type of courses, the number of instructors involved, and the enrollment in each course. The second section was designed to find out the division of responsibilities between the East Asian library and the art library for collecting East Asian art materials. The third section concerned collection development and management.

## RESULTS

Thirty-five of the 43 institutions (81.4 percent) returned the questionnaire, of which 30 have art libraries. These 30 institutions, including the ones with very little vernacular material, all offer some East Asian art courses, including art history, calligraphy, ceramics, dance, drama, flower arrangement, music and tea ceremony. Four institutions reported that no East Asian art course is offered. The number of faculty involved in these courses ranged from one to more than three. Enrollment figures, which were not supplied by 13 respondents, varied from just a few to several hundred.

As shown in Table I, East Asian art materials are most likely to be collected by both the art library and the East Asian library. More than three-quarters reported some kind of agreement about the division of collection development responsibilities between the art library and the East Asian library. However, only two institutions supplied a written collection development policy; the others did not seem to have any written policy at the time of my survey.

TABLE I. WHO COLLECTS EAST ASIAN ART MATERIALS

	Numbers	Percentages
Art Library only	3	8.6
East Asian Library only	7	20.0
Both of the above	23	65.7
Other	2	5.7

The division of work in most cases is by languages, type of materials, and price. Other divisions include place of publication, subject, and purchase by special consultation. Generally, art libraries collect Western-language materials and East Asian libraries collect vernacular materials. When asked if their system was working well, 90 percent said yes. There was only one who said "no," with the following comment: "The art library will say 'yes,' but from the viewpoint of the East Asian Library, the East Asian art collection is too small and lacks direction, in my opinion." At this person's institution, collection responsibility for East Asian art materials lies solely with the art library. The breakdown is shown in Table II.

**TABLE II. MANAGEMENT OF VERNACULAR EAST ASIAN MATERIALS**

	Numbers	Percentages
East Asian Library only	15	42.9
Art Library only	5	14.3
Both	13	37.1
General Library	2	5.7

Management responsibilities alone, however, do not reflect the collection's visibility to an institution's scholarly community. When the institutions' cataloging procedures were surveyed, several dismaying findings came to light. Although East Asian language materials are represented in the general library catalogs in three-quarters of the institutions surveyed, nearly one in six libraries relegate these materials only to East Asian library catalogs. Even when East Asian materials are represented in the general library catalog, entries are often under the added English titles, rather than in the vernacular languages, particularly at the institutions with centralized cataloging. This practice can cause duplication of materials when the East Asian librarian expecting to find the vernacular titles is not aware that the item has been entered under the added English titles.

As shown in Table III, nearly half the art librarians report responsibility for selecting Western-language materials, while East Asian librarians are responsible for choosing vernacular materials at nearly three-quarters of the institutions. Interestingly, faculty play a significant role in choosing vernacular materials, but not Western-language materials. The same pattern of responsibility prevails in the budget responsibilities for Western-language and vernacular materials, as shown in Table IV.

**TABLE III. SELECTION RESPONSIBILITIES**

	Western Languages		Vernacular	
	Numbers	Percentages	Numbers	Percentages
Art Librarian	15	42.9	2	5.7
East Asian Librarian	5	14.3	26	74.3
Faculty Recommendations	9	25.7	17	48.6
Combination of the Above				
Three	13	37.1	7	20.0
Other			1	2.9

**TABLE IV. UNIT RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYMENT FOR THE EAST ASIAN ART MATERIALS**

	Western Languages		Vernacular	
	Numbers	Percentages	Numbers	Percentages
Art Library	19	54.3	3	8.6
East Asian Library	3	8.6	21	60.0
Both	6	17.1	7	20.0
Other	6	17.1	4	11.4

Of the 35 institutions surveyed, 11 divide the funds according to country of publication and 13 by country as subject; eight make no distinctions and three institutions did not answer the question. Questions were also asked about each library's budget. The total book budgets for East Asian materials varied from \$20,000 to over 2.5 million dollars which obviously quoted the whole general library budget. (Some institutions did not answer on grounds of confidentiality, and a few of them did not give any figure.) The proportion of the budget reported for East Asian art materials varied from "no

answer" to 33 percent of the East Asian collection's budget. The budgets of the large East Asian collections seem to be between \$150,000 to \$250,000, and the medium and small East Asian collections varied between \$20,000 to \$100,000 with the median being \$50,000.

In terms of collection management, the survey showed a wide disparity in policies. For instance, of the 35 institutions responding, 37 percent have the art librarian and East Asian librarian sharing management responsibilities; the East Asian librarian alone manages the collection at 43 percent, the art librarian at 14 percent, the general library at six percent.

Of the 35 libraries responding, 37 percent circulate their books, 11 percent do not, and 52 percent answered "depends." When the latter were asked if they have special accommodations for the use of these materials, 12 noted that researchers may use the materials in restricted areas, locked rooms, occasionally in reading rooms, or on short-term loan; in other words, treating the materials as reference materials.

Access, however, even at institutions with non-circulation policies, apparently is open to anyone. In fact, although each library has unique security problems, most of the libraries surveyed are fairly generous about direct access to these expensive materials. In only one of four is special permission required. Most institutions also stated it was not difficult to obtain special permission for access to non-circulating or restricted collections, even when this involved permission from the head of the art and/or East Asian library. Only one institution charges an access fee.

Collection management problems, however, seem to plague one-third of the respondents. Surprisingly, only one reported acquisition and cataloging as problems. Others reported frequent vandalism, including mutilation, as well as security of loose-leaf plates in the stacks, insufficient budget, irregular and over-size or odd formats, and the problem of having the materials in two separate locations (e.g., art library and East Asian library). Some reported difficulty in handling reference questions concerning East Asian art when most of the materials needed to answer the questions were not at hand.

A follow-up survey of 18 medium-sized East Asian art collections, as noted in the Introduction, was occasioned by earlier findings that East Asian art acquisitions were declining. Particularly noticeable had been the fact that books published in Japan on Chinese or Korean art were not being purchased as frequently as in previous years. Therefore, the second survey sought information on purchases of nineteen important, and very expensive, titles recently published in Japan (ten on Chinese art, nine on Japanese art). The information then was compared to the holding rates of all large East Asian art collections. Table V shows the findings of this supplementary survey.

As Table V shows, there was a big discrepancy in the percentages of holdings between large and medium-sized collections. None of the items were held by all medium-sized libraries, and the holding rates for these nineteen important works were nearly half that of the large collections. Thirty-three percent of the materials on Japan and 20 percent on China surveyed were owned by all of the large East Asian art collections. Interestingly, there was no obvious correlation between the way the book budget was divided and the rate of acquisition of Japanese-published books on Chinese art.

**TABLE V. AVERAGE HOLDING RATE OF RECENT EXPENSIVE ITEMS PUBLISHED IN JAPAN**

	Large East Asian Collections Percentages	Medium East Asian Collections Percentages
Materials on Japan	76.2	40.4
Materials on China	64.3	37.3

## CONCLUSION

East Asian art materials usually are collected by both the art library and the East Asian library. More than three-quarter-

ters (76.7 percent) of the institutions with both art libraries and East Asian libraries have some agreement about collection development and management responsibilities, although it is not known how closely these agreements or collection development policies are followed. One out of four had no agreement. Still, many libraries either lack, or fail to enforce, effective collection development programs that could correct the problems and reduce the weaknesses discovered by this survey. The continued rise in the cost of these often expensive materials, combined with declining financial resources, makes the need greater than ever to have a close working relationship between art librarians and East Asian librarians or specialists.

The survey also revealed that some institutions with very few vernacular materials offer courses in East Asian art. Three-quarters of the institutions surveyed offer graduate-level courses. Western-language materials might suffice for the needs of undergraduate students, but not for the needs of graduate students and faculty members. However, there are only a few institutions in the United States and Canada currently able to accommodate their need for vernacular material on East Asian art. Not surprisingly, institutions with medium- or small-sized collections are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain even their present collection size with increasingly scarce funding. Even among institutions with large collections, seven percent fared poorly in the supplemental survey of nineteen items. The implications of these findings are obvious, and bode ill for continued high-quality scholarship in East Asian art.

On a more optimistic note, East Asian collections finally are acquiring "citizenship" and are being included in the mainstream as automation takes hold at various libraries. Online data bases, such as RLIN CJK (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) and OCLC CJK have literally changed the way of life for many East Asian librarians as they are introduced for cataloging and interlibrary loans. A CJK Conspectus is being discussed and a committee was formed to solicit ideas and opinions among RLIN CJK subscribers to pass the information to RLIN Conspectus, which will be very helpful for shared collection development once the CJK Conspectus becomes available online.

To maintain the quality of the collections, however, and to maintain a realistic collection level, will necessitate periodic qualitative evaluations of East Asian art materials. Such evaluations must take into account the instructional and research needs of the institution, and will require close communication between the art and East Asian librarians.

NOTES

This qualitative survey dealt with large East Asian art collections in the United States. Collections surveyed were: University of California, Berkeley, University of Chicago, Columbia University, Harvard University, University of Michigan, Princeton University, Yale University, all of them representing large East Asian collections, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as representing the typical medium-sized East Asian collection. The survey was done between 1983 and 1984.

APPENDIX

SURVEY OF EAST ASIAN ART COLLECTIONS IN THE U.S.

Section I.	Background Information	
1.	Does your university offer East Asian Art courses?	
	Yes 30 No 5	
	If the answer to this question is no please skip to Section II.	
2.	What type of courses?	
a.	Art History	
	a-1 East Asia in general	26
	a-2 China only	13
	a-3 Japan only	12
	a-4 Korea only	1
	a-5 Other (South Asia)	1
b.	Performing arts	
	b-1 Tea ceremony	7
	b-2 Flower arrangement	2
	b-3 Dance	5
	b-4 Calligraphy	16
	b-5 Drama	10
	b-6 Other	Ceramics 2, Music 1

3.	How many faculty members in East Asian art field does your university have?			
	none	One	Two	Three
		11	7	10
				More than three
				7
4.	What is the average number of enrollment?			
	4-1 Art history			5-100
	4-2 Tea ceremony			30-100
	4-3 Flower arrangement			100
	4-4 Dance			10
	4-5 Calligraphy			10-50
	4-6 Drama			10-30
	4-7 Other			not known 4
Section II.	Collection of East Asian art materials.			
1.	Does your university have art library?			
	Yes 30 No 5			
2.	Who collects East Asian art materials?			
	2-1 Art library only			3
	2-2 East Asian library only			7
	2-3 Both of the above			23
	2-4 Other (general library)			2
3.	Do you have agreement (or division of responsibility) for collecting the materials between the East Asian library and art library?			
	Yes 23 No 7			
4.	If the answer to the above is yes, what kind of division of work?			
	4-1 By language			17
	4-2 By type of material (please specify)			5
	4-3 By date of publication			0
	4-4 By price (please specify)			4
	4-5 Other			3
5.	Do you think your system is working well?			
	Yes 27 No 1 Don't know 1			
6.	Who manages East Asian art collection?			
	6-1 East Asian library only			15
	6-2 Art library only			5
	6-3 Both			13
	6-4 General library			2
7.	Is your East Asian art collection represented in:			
	7-1 General library catalog			26
	7-2 East Asian library catalog only			6
	7-3 Art library catalog			12
	7-4 Other			3
8.	Who selects East Asian Art materials?			
a.	Western-language materials			
	a-1 Art librarians			15
	a-2 East Asian librarians			5
	a-3 Faculty recommendation			9
	a-4 Combination of above three			13
	a-5 Other			
b.	Vernacular materials			
	b-1 Art librarians			2
	b-2 East Asian librarians			26
	b-3 Faculty recommendation			17
	b-4 Combination of above three			7
	b-5 Other			1
9.	Who pays for East Asian art materials?			
a.	Western-language materials			
	a-1 Art library			19
	a-2 East Asian library			3
	a-3 Both			6
	a-4 Other			6
b.	Vernacular-language materials			
	b-1 Art library			3
	b-2 East Asian library			21
	b-3 Both			4
10.	What is your total book budget for fiscal year 1983/1984?			
11.	What would be the rough estimate of your expenditure from your book budget for East Asian art materials?			
		Amount		Percentage
				3-30%
	Total:			
	Chinese:			
	Japanese:			
	Korean:			
	Asia in general:			
12.	Is your budget divided by the country of publication or by the subject (country)?			
	By country of publication	11	Not divided	8
	By subject country	13		

Section III.	Collection management	
1.	Do you circulate your art collection?	
	Yes	13
	No	4
	Depends on each materials	18
	Other	
2.	If your art collection does not circulate, do you have special accommodations for users?	
	Yes 12 No 8	
3.	If the answer to the above question is yes, what kind?	
4.	Who has access to the noncirculating art collection?	
	Anyone	18
	Special permission	8
5.	If you need special permission, how difficult to get one? (please specify)	
6.	Do you encounter any problems about the management of art collection?	
	Yes 12 No 18 Don't know 2	
	Additional Comments:	