

# An Evaluation of East Asian Collections in Selected Academic Art Libraries in the United States

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**ABSTRACT.** There is currently no qualitative survey of East Asian collections in the United States. One objective of this article is to explore a methodology for collection evaluation for East Asian studies. The method of qualitative collection evaluation used in this pilot study could be applied to other subject areas and other area studies.

## INTRODUCTION

Collection evaluation is one of the essential functions of collection development and management. Successful collection planning depends on an accurate assessment and understanding of the collection and knowledge of its adequacy and quality. Although quantitative surveys of the status of East Asian collections in the United States have been conducted every five years or so since 1951,<sup>1</sup> they usually are not divided by subject area. That situation changed with publication of Naomi Fukuda's 1979-1980 quantitative survey of Japanese collections, in which she suggested that the time had come for qualitative evaluations in order to define policies for collection building.<sup>2</sup>

Following Fukuda's suggestion, a survey was conducted in 1982

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of the East Asian collection of the Asian Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to determine the percentage of materials in the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language areas. Information collected included call number, date of publication, type of materials, language of the text, publisher, and last circulation date.

What this purely quantitative survey failed to provide, was a good measure of the quality of the collection. Although quantity may have some relationship to quality, as Downs, Lancaster and others suggest,<sup>3</sup> there can be no guarantee that collections of equal size are of equal quality. This is especially true in the United States, where collections often include a considerable amount of material obtained through gifts, blanket orders, and recommendations by faculty with different research interests. None of these methods assure systematic or balanced collection development.

Compounding the problem is the fact that the East Asian collections, because of their responsibility for collecting vernacular materials mostly in both the humanities and social sciences, also are often the recipients of other libraries' residue. For instance, a biology librarian, who once bought many back issues of Japanese journals on butterflies, realizes he or she no longer has room for them and demands that the East Asian library house the journals because they are in Japanese. Or the mathematics librarian may do the same, and the East Asian library finds itself in possession of a few scholastic journals on trigonometry. Such acquisitions certainly build quantity, but they may do little for the collection's overall quality.

In order to determine the collection's quality, therefore, a qualitative methodology for evaluating a specific collection area was developed and tested.

Following Fukuda's example of concentrating on subjects, East Asian art was chosen as the subject for the current survey. This choice was made because many universities and colleges in this country with Asian studies programs offer various East Asian art courses, including courses on art history, calligraphy, dancing, painting, ceramics, theater, flower arrangement, and the tea ceremony. Thus, the collection must satisfy two sets of needs—the instructional needs of undergraduate and graduate courses, and the research needs of faculty members and graduate students.



## METHODOLOGY

After careful examination of the various methodologies, a citation-count method was chosen that was similar to the one used by Robert P. Coale in his "Evaluation of a Research Library Collection: Latin-American Colonial History at the Newberry."<sup>4</sup> Coale checked bibliographies actually used by recognized scholars, and it was decided to follow a similar scheme here. As Ifidon has pointed out, analysis of citation counts is fast gaining ground because it is a useful method of undertaking objective qualitative and quantitative evaluation of library collections.

An East Asian art specialist was consulted, and a citation list was compiled from five standard English scholastic works in the area of East Asian art.<sup>6</sup> Only Chinese and Japanese items were included.

Papers on collection evaluation methods almost unanimously conclude that no single method can stand alone. Thus, to overcome the shortcomings of a single checklist method, two additional checklists were prepared.

The checklists were derived as follows. (1) A purely random sample of 100 monographs and serials in Chinese and Japanese in the field of East Asian art were drawn from the holdings of the East Asian art collection of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to function as a control group. There was no screening for quality. To carry out the systematic random sampling, the entire shelflist for East Asian art was measured and divided by 100; samples at equal intervals were collected and copied.

(2) A list of important titles was selected from standard vernacular and English works, from special reference works in the field, and from good antiquarian dealer's catalogs.<sup>7</sup>

These checklists, it was felt, were extensive enough to give a reasonably complete picture of the collection. The lists included both books and serials, and were checked against both the public catalogs and uncataloged materials, whenever possible.

Any process of collection evaluation should keep in mind the characteristics and goals of each institution; thus, comparable and compatible research university libraries were chosen for examination in this survey. The checklist titles, then, were checked against the holdings of seven outstanding East Asian collections: those of



the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Michigan, Princeton University, and Yale University. An eighth collection, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, was included to represent the medium-sized East Asian collections that mushroomed during the 1960s, when federal funds were abundantly given to establish area-study collections.

## RESULTS

As tables 1 through 7 show, there is a high degree of duplication in the holdings of these major East Asian collections. Only eight percent of the Chinese and five percent of the Japanese materials from the citation survey were not found in any of these collections in the study. On the other hand, based on the random-sample checklist, 50 to 70 percent of the same materials are held by all institutions.

TABLE 1. SIZE OF COLLECTION

INSTITUTIONS*	A	B	C	D
Size of Collection Total	467,798	371,324	357,774	590,167
Chinese	228,994	182,880	236,064	357,621
Japanese	199,573	151,528	94,185	172,280
Art (Japanese only)	2,620	1,879	1,758	4,066
Rank	2	4	5	1
	E	F	G	H
Size of Collection Total	330,870	411,081	327,936	125,793
Chinese	202,082	212,082	238,748	76,134
Japanese	119,568	161,441	70,442	40,402
Art (Japanese only)	1,714	2,817	797	693
Rank	6	3	7	8

\* Letters are used to identify institutions in order to preserve anonymity.

TABLE 2. HOLDING RATE OF IMPORTANT ITEMS ARRANGED BY INSTITUTION (n=650)

Institution	All Institutions	A	B	C	D	E*	F	G	H
Numbers	405.9	599	415	399	442	276	410	296	410
Percentages	62.4	92.2	63.8	61.4	68.0	42.5	63.1	45.5	63.1

\*Books appearing only in the Art Library catalog were not included.

TABLE 3. TITLES FOUND OF CITED MATERIALS ARRANGED BY INSTITUTION

Institutions	All Institutions	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Chinese	/106 %	98 92.5	71 67.0	63 59.4	64 60.4	67 63.2	53 50.0	71 67.0	47 44.3
Japanese	/288 %	260 90.3	170 59.0	142 49.3	196 68.1	107 37.2	165 57.2	144 50.0	81 28.1

TABLE 4. RANDOM SAMPLE SURVEY (n=100)

Institutions	All Institutions	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Chinese	%	60.0	80.0	68.0	70.0	74.0	56.0	56.0
Japanese	%	62.0	66.0	58.0	66.0	42.0	60.0	52.0



TABLE 5. HOLDING RATE OF JAPANESE BOOKS ON CHINESE ART SEPARATED BY INSTITUTION AND DATE OF PUBLICATION (n=228)

Institutions	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
Date of Publication									
-1900	Numbers								1
	Percentages								100.0
1901-10	Numbers	8	4	4	2	4	2	2	10
	Percentages	80.0	40.0	40.0	20.0	40.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
1911-20	Numbers	14	6	8	5	4	7	7	17
	Percentages	82.4	35.3	47.1	29.4	23.5	41.1	41.1	41.1
1921-30	Numbers	17	7	10	5	5	6	9	25
	Percentages	68.0	28.0	40.0	20.0	20.0	24.0	36.0	36.0
1931-40	Numbers	29	20	26	12	16	17	17	29
	Percentages	100.0	68.9	89.7	41.4	55.2	58.6	58.6	58.6
1941-50	Numbers	20	14	20	7	15	9	20	20
	Percentages	100.0	70.0	100.0	35.0	75.0	45.0	100.0	100.0
1951-60	Numbers	34	21	20	11	14	12	13	36
	Percentages	94.4	58.3	55.6	30.6	38.9	33.3	43.3	43.3
1961-70	Numbers	36	29	28	20	29	28	29	40
	Percentages	90.0	72.5	70.0	50.0	72.5	70.0	72.5	72.5
1971-80	Numbers	19	11	12	15	11	18	5	36
	Percentages	52.8	30.6	33.3	41.7	30.6	50.0	27.8	27.8
1981-	Numbers	5	5	4	4	2	8	5	14
	Percentages	35.7	35.7	14.3	28.6	14.3	57.1	35.7	35.7
TOTAL	Numbers	187	117	141	81	100	107	110	228
	Percentages	82.0	51.3	61.8	35.5	43.9	46.9	48.2	48.2

TABLE 6. IMPORTANT TITLES, RANDOM SAMPLE SURVEY ITEMS AND JAPANESE BOOKS ON CHINESE ART ARRANGED BY DATE OF PUBLICATION

	Important Titles		Random Sample Survey		Japanese Books on Chinese Art	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
-1900	3	0.5			1	0.4
1901-10	8	1.2			10	4.4
1911-20	14	2.1	3	3.0	17	7.5
1921-30	29	4.4	6	6.0	25	11.0
1931-40	57	8.7	10	10.0	29	12.7
1941-50	59	9.0	5	5.0	20	8.8
1951-60	67	10.3	13	13.0	36	15.8
1961-70	196	30.0	28	28.0	40	17.5
1971-80	148	22.7	28	28.0	36	15.8
1981-	28	4.3	2	2.0	14	6.1
No date	1	0.2	2	2.0		
Journals	40	6.1	3	3.0		
TOTAL	650	100.0	100	100.0	228	100.0

TABLE 7. NUMBERS OF HOLDING INSTITUTIONS FOR CITED MATERIALS AND RANDOM SAMPLE ITEMS

Numbers of Holding Institutions	Cited Materials		Random Samples	
	Chinese	Japanese	Chinese	Japanese
0				
1	8	15	1	4
2	8	5	2	8
3	6	23	8	2
4	6	8	16	4
5	4	26	3	8
6	4	9	6	16
7	11	43	2	6
8	10	15	4	12
	9	30	5	7
	8	10	10	14
	13	60	3	8
	12	21	6	16
	17	34	14	8
	16	12	28	16
	21	32	14	7
	20	11	14	14
	17	25	28	14
	16	9		
TOTAL	106	288	50	50



The survey also shows a bulge in the number of materials held that were published in the 1960s, when funds were plentiful; the numbers drop significantly after that.

### CONCLUSIONS

The survey results provide an interesting comment on the quantity versus quality question. Although most items in the sample survey were held by all institutions, the same cannot be said for items on the citation checklist, that is, for the items that scholars apparently found most important to their research. With only 16 percent of the Chinese and nine percent of the Japanese materials held by all institutions, it becomes apparent that quantity indeed has little bearing on quality.

In addition, there has been a decrease in the rate of holdings of Japanese books on Chinese and other East Asian art. Because the level of Japanese scholarship in these areas is very high, a corresponding drop in scholarly quality of materials may be inferred. It is likely the decrease in purchases has occurred because, in the face of declining funds, East Asian librarians feel compelled to focus more on Japanese materials on Japan.

The declining budgets at all institutions also highlight another aspect of the quantity versus quality issue — rate of growth. As Lancaster argues, rate of growth of collection size may be a better indicator of collection quality than sheer quantity.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps future research should be pursued to substantiate this aspect of East Asian art collection development.

### NOTES

1. Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, "East Asian Collections in America," in *Area Studies and the Library: The Thirtieth Annual Conference of the Graduate Library School May 20-22, 1965*, edited by Tsuen-hsuei Tsien and Howard W. Winger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c. 1966), p. 58-80.

2. Naomi Fukuda, *Survey of Japanese Collections in the United States, 1979-1980* (Michigan Papers in Japanese Studies, no. 4) (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, c. 1981).

3. Robert B. Downs, "Doctoral Programs and Library Resources," *College and Research Libraries* 27:123-129 (March, 1966).

"Standards for University Libraries," *College and Research Libraries* 31:28-35. (January, 1970).

Verner W. Clapp and Robert T. Jordan, "Quantitative Criteria for Adequacy of Academic Library Collections," *College and Research Libraries* 26:371-380. (September, 1965).

F.W. Lancaster with the assistance of M.T. Jonich, *Measurement and Evaluation of Library Services* (Washington, DC: Information Resources Press, c.1977), p. 165-172.

4. Robert Peering Coale, "Evaluation of a Research Library Collection: Latin-American Colonial History at the Newberry," *Library Quarterly* 35:173-184 (July, 1965).

5. Sam E. Ifidon, "Qualitative/Quantitative Evaluation of Academic Library Collections: A Literature Survey," *International Library Review* 8:299-308 (1976).

6. Francis James Cahill, *A History of Later Chinese Painting, 1279-1950*. (New York: Weatherhill, 1976-1982, v. 1-3) Sherman E. Lee, *A History of Far Eastern Art* (New York: H. A. Abrams, 4th ed., 1982) Seiroku Noma, *The Arts of Japan* (Palo Alto, CA: Kodansha International, 1967-68, 2v.) Robert Paine, *The Art and Architecture of Japan* (Harmondsworth, Eng: 3rd ed., 1981) Osvald Siren, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (New York: Ronald Press, c. 1956-1958, 7 v.).

7. Besides the standard works in 6, various Japanese antiquarian and art dealer's catalogs along with reference works such as *Nihon Bijutsu Shojiten* (Dictionary of Japanese Art, Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1977) were used.

8. F.W. Lancaster with the assistance of M.T. Jonich, *Measurement and Evaluation of Library Services* (Washington, DC: Information Resources Press, c. 1977), p. 168-172.