



Inside
MAJOR
EAST ASIAN
LIBRARY
COLLECTIONS
in NORTH
AMERICA

Volume 2

PATRICK LO
HERMINA G.B. ANGHELESCU
BRADLEY ALLARD

**Inside Major East Asian Library
Collections in North America, Volume 2**

“This compendium of interviews with East Asian librarians in the U.S. and Canada affords the reader insight on multiple levels into the careers of individual librarians and the commonalities and distinctive aspects of individual East Asian collections, particularly rare items. A valuable introduction to the world of East Asian librarianship, the book provides a variety of perspectives on daily work, career paths, administration, problems facing the field, and fulfillment found in the work. Collectively, the essays are an affirmation of the importance of printed collections and a ringing endorsement of East Asian librarianship.”

— **Gail King (Retired Asian Librarian, Harold B. Lee Library,
Brigham Young University)**

“Someday, when we all realize how special librarians are, we shall find that this book offers a most intimate insight into their lives. With a consistent set of questions, a comparative perspective emerges from this direct methodology – a new dimension to library studies that allow real librarians to speak for themselves.”

— **Prof. Lian-Hee Wee (Department of English Language and
Literature, Hong Kong Baptist University)**

“I am very glad to hear of the publication of this new book introducing some of the major East Asian library collections and their curators. I am sure it will be read with interest not only by professionals in the field but also by anyone concerned with recent developments in area studies.”

— **Charles Aylmer (Head of Chinese Department, Cambridge University Library)**

“*Inside the World’s Major East Asian Library Collections in North America* is a highly informative and much anticipated account of many of the world-renowned Asian book and manuscript collections connecting East and West. Celebrated and supported by their academic institutions locally, the libraries discussed in this comprehensive volume are often unparalleled behemoths of knowledge holding published and archival resources that are at times completely unique and yet accessible regionally, nationally, and internationally. In our globally connected 21st century, these exceptional libraries collect the literary genius and recorded histories of the past and allow present and future scholars to study some of the rarest primary sources to advance our field of study in the decades and centuries to come.”

— **Dr Florian Knothe (Director of the University Museum and
Art Gallery, University of Hong Kong)**

“*Inside the World’s Major East Asian Library Collections in North America* is an important new title to collections experts of Asian materials. At a time when the world is facing tragedies of anti-Asian racism, it is critical to continue to collect and preserve Asian collections for scholars and students for teaching, research, and learning to continue sustaining awareness and understanding of Asian cultures and histories. The editors of this volume have insight and experience in

balancing the languages and areas of academic libraries of North America, focusing not only on CJK, but important ethnic collections from the Okinawan to Cantonese collections. It is an outstanding contribution to the field and serves as a key reference tool for librarians, researchers, and cultural administrators.”

— **Allan Cho (Community Engagement Librarian, Program Services,
Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, University of British Columbia)**

“A profoundly interesting and useful volume of 42 interviews with librarians administering East Asian collections in North America. It is an excellent read for those interested in developing an international library collection, as well as students and researchers in East Asian Studies. Contributors discuss how they entered this branch of librarianship, developed their collections, and share their practices. As a developer and instructor of the course “ILS 450: Global Perspectives in Librarianship,” this is a perfect model embracing trends in international collections, a specialization path in Library Science, and research on how international collections are developed. Overall, it is a well-articulated compendium of interviews that are addictive and hard to stop reading.”

— **Dr Tamara E. Blesh (Adjunct Instructor III, University of Maine at Augusta)**

“The interview-based approach to writing about librarianship is a fascinating choice by editors of this volume. Through conversations with over 40 leading experts in the field, *Inside East Asian Collections in North America* not only charts the history and landscape of the most important East Asian library collections, but it also brings quiet librarianship to life by offering rare insights into the work-related joys, anxieties, and strategic thinking of these key professionals. Their success stories are just as diverse as their backgrounds and career paths. Highly recommended for anyone interested in East Asian studies or area studies librarianship.”

— **Dr Shenxiao Tong (East Asian Studies Librarian,
Edinburgh University Library)**

“The library is an important hub for the exchange of human knowledge and an important organizational form for the exchange of different cultures. For a long time, libraries in North America have collected a lot of valuable literature resources from Asia, especially East Asia and Southeast Asia. These resources have become important in promoting inheritance and mutual learning of Eastern and Western civilizations. Professional librarians who contribute to the collection and service of these resources are the civilized messengers and guardians of this culture. The unique achievements of this book reveal their efforts and ideals for us. It is not only worthy of learning and reference by professionals, but it also enables our wider audience to realize the sublimity of this profession.”

— **Professor Qingshan Zhou (Department of Information
Management, Peking University)**

“The book, being a collection of interviews with North American East Asian librarians, is extremely informative for professional librarians, oral historians,

and enthusiasts for literature and libraries. Furthermore, it is inspiring for East Asian Librarians, and it could enrich their work in terms of building collections and library management. It provides a useful comparison between East Asian collections/libraries in North America – it's quite an accomplishment for the editors.”

— **Katarína Feriančíková (Librarian, Library of Far Eastern Studies,
Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague)**

“The diverse experience of East Asian librarians showcased in this book give readers a kaleidoscopic view of this unique group of experts. As an advocate of Eastern culture in the Western world, they ventured into the field with interest and built a successful career with passion. The stories will inspire anyone who listen to their heart.”

— **Esther Woo (Director of Library Services, The University of
Hong Kong Libraries)**

“Ultimately, the success of any library depends on its ability to connect with its users through its resources. This publication is a very unique overview of some of the major East Asian Library Collections found across North America. The librarians’ reflections included here not only highlight the commitment they have to protecting information that is culturally and historically significant, but they also explore their professional obligation and determination to provide users with academic sources that reflect a truly global community. The items housed in these great libraries are no longer curiosities; they are acclaimed and relevant academic resources that do much more than simply supplement university collections. Now, at last, an extensive publication has been produced to showcase the great variety of libraries, librarians, and institutions aiming to empower students to find resources that will enable them to produce academic works of cultural significance and scholarship.”

— **Andrew J. Stark (Associate Dean and Head of Libraries and Information
Services, The Southport School, Queensland, Australia)**

“This book offers a lively, original, and very instructive introduction to the wealth and diversity of East Asian collections in North America, the largest outside Asia. Focusing on librarians’ perspectives, it underlines the challenges of East Asian librarianship in the context of an ever more globalized and technological world where flexibility, creativity, and cooperation are at the heart of knowledge collecting, sharing, and mediating. As a librarian, I welcome the editors’ approach, which brings to light the passionate efforts of a profession often left in the shadows. These librarians contribute to the essential tasks of advancing knowledge and, even more crucial in these challenging times, helping bridge the gap between cultures. Not only will this book be of special interest for librarians, academics and students in East Asian studies, but it will also prove to be an informative reading for anyone interested in the evolution of area studies librarianship.”

— **Soline Suchet-Lau (Deputy Head of Collection Development Department; Asia Team Leader; Subject Librarian, Taiwan and Chinese Pre-modern Collections, BULAC: University Library for Languages and Civilisations, Paris)**

“Patrick Lo, Hermina Anghelescu, and Bradley Allard introduce the major East Asian and Southeast Asian collection libraries in North America and their librarians to us through a series of interviews they have conducted. This is a grand tour of librarianship and the wealth of knowledge that is well preserved and developed in these major libraries.”

— **Prof. Tai-Lok Lui (Chair Professor of Hong Kong Studies; Director, Academy of Hong Kong Studies; Director, Centre for Greater China Studies, The Education University of Hong Kong)**

“With all of the tensions worldwide, it is important to resolve misunderstandings and build trust. This exploration of East Asian collections in North America, as described by different East Asian Studies librarians, is a doorway to the culture of East Asia.”

— **Kazuyuki Sunaga (Professor of Library and Information Science, Kokugakuin University in Tokyo, Japan)**

“Through this volume, Patrick Lo and his co-authors bring to light what is known by some, but unknown by many: that libraries in North America hold some of the world’s greatest collections of East Asian materials. Across Canada and the United States, the range and depth of these collections is brought to light in this fascinating exploration of these major collections. In addition to these explorations, the editors include introductions to the librarians and curators who build and maintain these collections, as well as the scholars who utilize them to serve the growing global interest in East Asian studies.”

– **Peter E. Sidorko (Senior Consultant and Former University Librarian (2011–2021), The University of Hong Kong)**

“Librarians are the bridge between readers and books. East Asian librarians are the bridge between Eastern culture and Western culture. This book is the bridge between the outside world and the East Asian library. It brings to light the characteristics and management of East Asian library collections from the perspective of the librarians, making the East Asian Library a place with warmth and vitality. Through the introduction of this book, the general public can learn that there are so many distinctive East Asian libraries in the United States and Canada.”

– **Prof. Chao-Chen Chen (Chair Professor of Center for General Education and University Librarian of Chung Yuan Christian University)**

“For so many of us, libraries are a place of sanctuary – a space for contemplation, learning, and inspiration. *Inside the World’s Major East Asian Library Collections in North America* takes us behind the scenes of world-leading East Asian libraries and offers an intriguing and detailed insight into the working practices of librarians, as

well as the challenges and frustrations they face in managing collections both large and small. This two-volume set not only provides a lens through which to understand librarianship today; it also identifies new trends in the field and possibilities for the future. In sum, an inspirational and thought-provoking read.”

— **Amelia Allsop (Research Manager at the Hong Kong Heritage Project, and Co-founder at History Ink)**

The book *Inside the World's Major East Asian Collections in North America* adopts interviews as a unique approach to capture the vigorous development of East Asian librarianship and East Asian collections in the past 30-plus years. It paints a colorful picture of librarians in this field. They come from different cultural and academic backgrounds – many entered the field as their second-career choice, but all have devoted their passion, energies, and various professional training to librarianship. They have experienced the dramatic changes in the field and have grown and contributed so much. They are one of the main reasons that we see the flourishing condition of East Asian libraries and collections in North America today.”

— **Luo Zhou (Librarian for Chinese studies, International & Area Studies Department, Duke University Libraries)**

Inside Major East Asian Library Collections in North America, Volume 2

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Foreword 1

Since day one of my career in the academic library space, I have always been wondering whether my multidisciplinary and bilingual background will be helpful for my roles in the sector. Reading through the interviews in the chapters of this book has reassured me that it actually is. The chapters also strengthen my belief that learning should be and is ongoing – it's never ending. The rich, lifelong experiences that the interviewees have had throughout their careers in the sector have reinforced this thought of mine. I can see myself reflecting on all the chapters, looking back at my initial role as subject librarian and all my other previous roles as learning skills adviser, research and learning coordinator, team leader, and projecting on to my recently secured position as a liaison coordinator.

Another point that I learned from this book is the importance of professional associations and networks in enabling collaborations with colleagues across different institutions. While the chapters are of different individuals, it is clear that regardless of where you are in the library sector, professional networks and relationships that you build are key to your and your library's success. Collaboration clearly works much better.

One key aspect that was revealed in this book is the importance of East and Southeast Asian resources in the library world as they play significant roles in nourishing academic research and interests in Asian studies. Putting on both my academic librarian and president of Asian Library Resources of Australia (ALRA) hats, I admire how both the book authors and interviewees make the importance of Asian resources very explicit and clear. Amidst the waves of changes hitting the sector these days, and financial and human resources constraints in managing and developing collections, East and Southeast Asian resources are definitely not to be dismissed.

The interviews with high-level library leaders that make up the chapters of this book are of questions that are very personal, yet highly professional. This starts with a question on the background of each interviewee, followed by conversations on their career paths, both prior to the interviewees becoming key profile professionals in the library sector and how they end up where they are (or were, as in some cases the interviewees are retirees). Interestingly, none of the interviewees sees themselves as having “a typical day of work.” Every single day is different – mysterious at times, yet always exciting. This shows just how dynamic a work life in the library sector is.

Maintaining its recency, the book also addresses the interviewees' views on the new trends in librarianship, particularly in the contexts of libraries with large collections of special materials. As one would expect, digitization is highlighted across the chapters in the book. These leaders are also pragmatic in sharing their views on new

opportunities and challenges faced by East and Southeast Asian librarians, both in North America, where they are based, and in other parts of the world. They are also very open in expressing what they find most rewarding and most frustrating about their current and past roles in the East and Southeast Asian library space. What I also find amazing is their advice on what and how to see if we are to pursue careers in librarianship overseeing Asian collections. One of the chapters closes with a message:

Become a librarian; you will find it rewarding. You will have opportunities to utilize your training, talent, and natural abilities to their fullest extent. You will enjoy both professional and personal fulfillment interacting with human memory in the form of books, manuscripts, artifacts, and contemporary scholarship. You will be able to serve academia, bridge cultural gaps, and broaden the scope of your knowledge, all the while knowing that you are serving society.

How inspiring!

To me, reading this book is like looking at the mirror of the past, present, and future. A few head nods upon reflecting on my past and present experiences, mirroring them to the interviews that are laid open in this book. And certainly, more head nods going forward. The book has led me to being optimistic about the future of librarianship in the East and Southeast Asian areas. Sure, there has been and will continue to be swings, back and forth, of the strength and existence of Asian collections in libraries across the world. At the end of the day, though, it is up to professionals in the library sector to be creative and make things happen whenever opportunities come our way. Just the message gained from this book make it worth reading, indeed!

Anita Dewi, PhD
Liaison Coordinator, Monash University Library, Australia
President, Asian Library Resources of Australia (ALRA)



Foreword 2

Over the last half a decade, Dr Patrick Lo, Prof. Hermina Anghelescu and Bradley Allard have almost single-handedly created a genre of their own, documenting what makes different practicing librarians, archivists and museum curators across the world tick. And while one of their more recent works includes interviews with academic and research library directors for whom career paths have been available for longer and are more or less established, I detect a definite predilection on their part for subfields and more or less niche fields, in which personal interests relatively play a more prominent role. Orchestra and opera librarians, monastery library directors, Hong Kong heritage managers and archivists. Areas, therefore, where individual personalities matter.

I myself was fortunate to be included in an earlier 2017 work, *Inside the World's Major East Asian Collections*, which cast its net worldwide, concentrating on European collections, although collections in Asian countries, and just a handful of North American institutions were then included (the relevant individuals, incidentally but significantly, all coming from outside that continent – building cultural bridges comes naturally to this field.)

There was clearly room therefore for inviting a much larger contingent from North America, and that is what this book delivers on. For me, looking at the contents of this work is like seeing and hearing so many friends and colleagues who have been and are passionate enough to dedicate their life-time's work to enable understanding between East and Southeast Asia and North America. Friends and colleagues of all ages, because included here are both old-timers, some perhaps already retired, and also a great number of active current leaders and, especially welcome, very promising younger librarians. The book as a whole thus gives a very welcome personal touch to the important history of the infrastructure of cultural exchange, to be read alongside the more impersonal institutional histories as already published in that wonderful seminal 2010 collection *Collecting Asia: East Asian libraries in North America, 1868–2008*. Berkeley's Peter Zhou, who edited that work, himself is interviewed in this current work. The field is changing (as it has always been), and there will always be a next generation. What a wonderful set of interviews this is to leave that to that generation.

Dr Martin Heijdra
Director
The East Asian Library and the Gest Collection
Princeton University



Foreword 3

In his interview in this volume, Joshua Seufert, Chinese Studies Librarian at Princeton's East Asian Library, noted that while North American East Asia collections are seen as core collections, their European counterparts are more often viewed by their parent institutions as curiosities, rather than as integral parts of the collection as a whole. A related volume edited by Dr Lo, *Inside the World's Major East Asian Collections: One Belt, One Road and Beyond* (Elsevier, 2017) concentrated on collections in Europe, Taiwan, and Hong Kong including major collections at the Vatican, the British Library, the Bodleian, Cambridge, and, in the United States, at Berkeley and Princeton. This current book extends the first book by looking at collections in 42 North American institutions. It follows the same successful format of using a structured interview template that allows the reader to compare libraries, librarians, and archivists from different institutions, different countries, and different cultures and it forms a necessary companion volume to the earlier work.

The 42 North American institutions presented here are of a variety of sizes, some small but precious for what they provide and preserve, some extensive, such as the 3.9 million print and digital volumes at the C. V. Starr East Asian Library at Columbia University. There is some institutional overlap with the previous book as Berkeley and Princeton appear in both volumes, but the interviews are complementary since different librarians with different responsibilities and histories speak here, helping to round out the picture of each of those collections and showing the diversity of talents and outlooks that librarians and archivists bring to their work. The small libraries and collections can be the most interesting as they may house special material not found elsewhere, such as the collection of artifacts, documents, and oral history at the Museum of the Chinese in America, or the Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library at the University of Toronto where the focus is on preserving the history of Chinese life in Canada and in Hong Kong, or "The Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War Collection", of 25,000 items preserving the literary interpretations of the war, curated by John Baky, a Vietnam veteran, at La Salle University.

Those interested in library management will find the questions asked here about the origin and purpose of interviewees library, the skills they bring to their work, what their daily routine is like, how they would describe their management style, what management issues they face, and how they handle the challenges of the job to be very informative. Chances of success or failure can often be seen just by looking at an organization chart and see where a department is in the institutional hierarchy and how well or poorly staffed it may be, but only by talking to the librarians and archivists can we really see the story, not only of success or failure but also of the role of individual dedication and professionalism.

The contributions in this volume are fascinating in what they reveal both about the collections and about the individuals who curate them. Because of the consistency of the interview template, it is possible to compare the backgrounds and individual achievements of each of the librarians/archivists, get an overview of their collection, and see their assessments of their distinctive management styles.

Scholars with an interest in East Asia will appreciate being able to have an inside, curator's view, of important East Asian collections. This book provides them with an opportunity to see the inner workings of libraries and archives and the pressures and constraints that the staff work under. This volume will also provide an insight into familiar collections but may also lead to discoveries in collections that they may not have known about, especially of the special collections within the special collections, such as the extensive collection of Chinese and Japanese children's books in the Cotsen Children's Library at Princeton or the collection on the relocation of millions of Chinese youths to the country side during the Cultural Revolution being built by Nien-lin Xie, who was herself relocated, at Dartmouth College.

Both librarians and scholars will find kindred spirits here, meet scholar-librarians from a variety of backgrounds, some Asian, some European. Many came to their positions from other fields, referred to here as "second-career librarian," such as Mark Stephen Mir at the Ricci Institute whose previous experience was in industrial technology but whose skills were instrumental in building and enhancing the collection in its early days or Dr Ann Marie L. Davis, Japanese Studies Librarian at Ohio State, an historian whose research work in libraries and archives led her to accept what she felt to be broader scope as a librarian. Others came to librarianship as young PhDs who found careers in libraries and archives more rewarding than the uncertainties of a career in the teaching faculty. The librarians and archivists in this volume all display a love of what they are doing and can justly take pride in the collections they have preserved and built, and in the services that they provide to their users. Their collections are mostly research level, their clientele primary post-graduates and faculty, but they all engage with their entire community in building and promoting their collections.

Frederick Nesta
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