

Bridges to China: Developing Partnerships Between Serials Librarians in the United States and China

Allan Scherlen, Xiaorong Shao and Elizabeth Cramer, Contributors

Allan Scherlen, Column Editor

Available online 21 March 2009

University librarians in China face many of the same challenges related to serials management that confront librarians in the United States. The authors discuss the importance for librarians in the United States, especially those working with serials, to establish and build ties with librarians in other countries, such as China. Benefits of an exchange could include sharing information about best practices, exchange of serial materials, and working together on mutually advantageous projects. Acknowledging the growing interest in international library exchange programs, the authors relate their own institution's efforts to build international ties with Fudan University in Shanghai, China, and Shaanxi Normal University in Xi'an, China. In establishing these ties, the authors have traveled to China and interviewed librarians about serials acquisition, processing, and management. *Serials Review* 2009; 35:75–79.

© 2009 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Librarian exchange programs; Educational exchanges; Academic libraries; Serials librarians; Intellectual cooperation; China; United States

Introduction

This "The Balance Point" column discusses the importance for librarians in the United States, particularly those working with serials, to build bridges of communication and information exchange with librarians in China. As China expands tourism and economic investment, the time is ripe for Chinese and US academic libraries to establish and develop mutually beneficial relationships. In the commercial sector these bridges have been established and continued to develop between publishers, vendors, and libraries. Internationalization means much more than facilitated access to materials; it involves sharing information, exploring cultures, and working together. Personal interactions between librarians from different countries, especially two global participants, such as the United States and China, offer numerous benefits.

At the commercial level with regard to serials, many periodical databases are delivering Western serial publications to Chinese universities. At Fudan University in Shanghai, for example,

students and faculty have ready access to major library databases, such as the Thomson Reuters Scientific ISI Web of Knowledgesm suite, Wiley InterScience, SpringerLink, ProQuest databases, and Elsevier's ScienceDirect, to name a few from their exhaustive list.¹ They also, of course, have ready access to the growing collection of open access scholarship available worldwide through mechanisms such as Google Scholar and institutional repositories.

While Chinese scholars are gaining access to journals from outside China, Chinese publications are progressively finding their way to readers in the West, as exemplified by Chinese journal titles available through the *Directory of Open Access Journals*² and through initiatives such as that begun in 1996 by Elsevier, which provides access to over thirty English-language journals from China through its online database Science Direct.³ But access to the body of serials in China is still poor in relation to publications from other countries. According to a 2005 study by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the country of China ranks 124th in the number of times papers are cited by other researchers.⁴

As publishers and database vendors continue to internationalize access to serials, the authors advocate that academic librarians globalize their profession by seeking liaisons with libraries and librarians abroad. The first challenge would be to identify a partner institution which matches enthusiasm and goals for the project. Many libraries foresee the potential benefits of international partnerships and are ready to engage with appropriate collaborators. Benefits include sharing our best practices in order to improve procedures for the acquisition, processing, managing, and archiving of serials. Partner institutions can discuss concerns about particular issues, such as staffing, the cost of serials, and selection procedures. Such discussion can present alternative solutions or

Scherlen is Collection Management Librarian, Appalachian State University Library, Boone, NC 28608, USA; scherlnag@appstate.edu.

Shao is Information Literacy Librarian, Appalachian State University Library, Boone, NC 28608, USA; shaox@appstate.edu.

Cramer is Cataloging Librarian, Appalachian State University Library, Boone, NC 28608, USA; crameree@appstate.edu.

Editor's Note: This is Allan Scherlen's final column as co-editor. I would like to thank him for his astute and diverse contributions to "The Balance Point" for the past five years. I wish him well in new endeavors and value the insight and ideas he has brought to the readers.

0098-7913/\$ – see front matter © 2009 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1016/j.serrev.2009.02.002

prompt needed reform of long-standing procedures or beliefs. As the librarians from the two regions learn more about the success and challenges of the other, more ambitious projects can ensue, such as joint, comparative research. Parties may discuss sharing library resources, especially local publications. Certainly a key challenge down the road is for Chinese and Western librarians to mutually seek ways to open the access to journal literature both within and between the regions.

Traveling internationally to work in the partner library can help to assure success in cooperative projects, dissolving the immense distance that divides two nations. Professional exchanges that physically position librarians in partner libraries can improve everyone's understanding of the shared and divergent issues facing their libraries. Librarians can share professional expertise, language skills, or specialized subject knowledge. Through living abroad or hosting an international colleague, librarians gain an understanding of each other's cultures and support their institution's internationalization efforts. User services for international students, particularly students from China or the United States, can only benefit from such relationships.

An increasing number of academic libraries in the United States, China, and elsewhere are engaging in international partnerships. Librarians have shared their concerns for the need for international cooperation, their own experiences in global exchanges, and the important steps and considerations which ensure success in such ventures. The authors share their personal experiences of a cooperative effort to forge ties with serial librarians at Fudan University Library in Shanghai and at Shaanxi Normal University Library in Xi'an, China, from initial interviews with librarians and administrators involved with serials at Chinese institutions as Appalachian State University (Boone, NC) formally commit to an international exchange agreement with the library at Fudan.

Growing International Awareness among Librarians and the Establishment of Exchange and Cooperative Programs

Academic librarians around the world are realizing the importance of developing a broader awareness of other cultures. Globalization in the form of international media, education, and business, as well as expanding world travel and student exchanges, is all too evident to librarians who are seeking ways to engage this emerging international environment. Librarians also see they can play an important role as information agents to assist their library constituencies in better accessing global culture and information.

Librarians in China also see the need to become members of the global community and have taken major steps over recent years to bring in Western journal literature, engage in scholarly communication with library organizations outside China, and to develop exchange agreements with institutions abroad.⁵ As early as 1996 at an IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) conference, He Qin and Ma Jin from Peking University in Beijing argued that Chinese librarian education should be reformed to include international cooperation.⁶ In 1996 Peking University started a joint venture with OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) and opened the OCLC Chinese Service Center in the Library.⁷

Interest in librarian and library student exchange programs between institutions in China and the United States has been steadily growing. A number of university libraries in the United States have long-standing exchange programs with institutions in China that go back to the 1980s. For example, Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan has exchange and cooperative programs with the State Archives Administration of China going back to 1989.⁸ McGill University developed an exchange program in library education with China Medical Library in 1986.⁹ And Ohio

University has offered internships for librarians from Asia through a program begun in 1979.¹⁰

Since 2005 the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) has had Chinese librarians enrolled in graduate library school courses.¹¹ In 2008, the federally funded Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has approved a partnership program between the UIUC Libraries and the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA) with Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Grant totaling nearly a half-million dollars. The funding will allow UIUC to provide training institutes for library administrators from China to be held in the US, as well as training seminars for Chinese librarians by CALA members in China.¹²

Despite these and other international developments between libraries in our two nations, higher education in the United States has traditionally done little to encourage international understanding and scholarly exchange for librarians and other professional staff.¹³ Likewise, librarian education has not generally included training to work in an expanding global environment. In recent years, however, an increasing number of librarians have recognized the need to develop their own knowledge and sensitivity to international issues.

Advancements in technology over the last fifteen years have helped librarians gain international perspective and enabled libraries to enter a new era of partnership, serving users anywhere in the world and sharing resources globally. A greater flow of information and materials is now possible with the widespread use of new technologies, including Web-based educational systems, online teaching, virtual reality classrooms, and electronic resource sharing. The development of technologies has also allowed libraries to become part of a global community with a more virtual approach in providing information and a more proactive and comprehensive model in offering their services.¹⁴

A review of library literature has revealed a number of suggestions and recommendations regarding planning and implementing a library international program. Though such recommendations may need to be revised as the international library community evolves, they can still be helpful guides in considering plans for developing an international exchange program or international cooperative project. For example, in 1994 Tony Kidd and Karen Roughton recommended that to launch a successful international exchange, senior people at both the receiving and the dispatching libraries must be imbued with the true spirit of internationalism.¹⁵ They argued, furthermore, that administrators must perceive themselves as world citizens and possess a strong faith that they are supporting a worthwhile endeavor with both long-term and short-term benefits.

According to Kidd and Roughton, the need for communication, institutional support, and advance preparation is critical to a successful exchange. Preparation for an exchange, they argued, should include a clear statement of participants' duties and the duration of the visit necessary to complete tasks and/or training.¹⁶ Kidd and Roughton also observed that few exchanges up to the time of their study took place under the auspices of official university programs. Most originated from personal contact and some through various organizations in the field. They determined that library exchanges and collaborations had, at that time, been seen by many North American librarians involved in international exchanges as a path for general career development and as a means to enhance their library's image both nationally and internationally.¹⁷ Kidd and Roughton were writing prior to the Internet explosion and the broadening of international awareness among librarians in the world. Certainly today the goals and objectives of international exchange activities among librarians involve a wider range of motivations. For example, Carolyn Mann sees a successful international partnership coming from a mutual understanding of each other's culture and library system.¹⁸ In the column "What Works" in *School Library Journal*, she described how

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1100221>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1100221>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)