Chinese Cataloging in the United States

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Cataloging Chinese materials in Asian libraries in the United States in bygone days was strictly a matter of transferring the information from the books to the catalog cards without following any standards other than the traditional format as practiced by the libraries in China. The bibliographical relationship of one work to another or of an earlier edition to a later one was generally ignored.

Practically all Asian libraries in the United States in the past were maintained by a skeleton staff whose functions were varied. Since cataloging was only one of the functions, it was impossible to catalog Chinese materials as carefully as Western publications, particularly when no standard cataloging rules were being followed.

Before the LC Far Eastern Cataloging Section was established in the latter part of 1957, the Library of Congress was no exception. In earlier days, the Chinese Section of the Orientalia Division consisted of only four Chinese members whose functions were to answer telephone references, both congressional and public, translate documents for members of Congress, render circulation service, maintain the catalog files, and catalog incoming materials. The cataloging part was especially slow because the recording in characters had to be done by hand.

At the end of World War II, Chinese became one of the critical foreign languages whose study was encouraged in the

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United States. With generous government grants, many universities and colleges had set up Asian studies programs. Consequently, Chinese collections had been added or enlarged accordingly. To maintain such growing collections there was a demand for Chinese librarians. Among the urgent needs in Asian libraries was cataloging the materials in order to make them available to readers.

In 1949, a Card Reproduction Program for Chinese materials was started. The participating libraries were the Library of Congress and the university libraries of California at Los Angeles, Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, Hoover (Stanford), Michigan, and Washington of Seattle. The Library of Congress provided a free service by printing cards for these libraries. The libraries that undertook to provide cataloging copy for reproduction followed no prescribed standard rules. The function of the editor at the Library of Congress was not to act as a control to insure that the cards printed under the program had over-all consistency, but merely to add the card numbers on the cards as they were received and to send them to the LC Government Printing Office for reproduction. Progress was very smooth and the libraries received the printed cards within a short time.

The program ended in 1957 with the establishment of the Far Eastern Languages Section, Descriptive Cataloging Division. Incidentally, the name of the Section has been changed recently to Chinese/Korean Languages Section as a result of the transfer of our former Japanese Unit to the Japanese Section, Shared Cataloging Division. Under the Card Reproduction Program, cards for approximately 40,000 titles were reproduced. However, due to the diversity in cataloging methods employed by the participating libraries, a large number of duplicates had been found. One of the good features of this program was the adding of romanization using the Wade-Giles system for both author and title on the cards so that libraries could file the catalog cards either in alphabetical or in stroke order.

Prior to the establishment of the Far Eastern Languages

When we started cataloging Chinese, Japanese, and Korean materials under the ALA rules, progress was very slow. This was due to several factors. Applying ALA rules for the first time on Far Eastern materials was especially difficult for those catalogers who had no previous experience in cataloging Western materials. Even those with this experience had encountered problems not previously anticipated by the two working committees.

In Western publications in the Library of Congress, there were more Chinese corporate entries than either Japanese or Korean ones which were established in the English form. In the course of cataloging the Chinese materials we needed to change the Chinese headings from the English form into romanized Chinese form. It was rather time-consuming to make such changes, especially when a change involved the reprinting of many cards. Oftentimes, the change of one heading would complicate a second one, which, in turn, would involve a third. By the time the cataloger resolved the first heading he needed for the Chinese work, the chain reaction would require him to follow up all the related problems until he successfully completed the orbit.

In the meantime, a Cooperative Cataloging Project for Far Eastern materials was also formed. Unlike the earlier Card Reproduction Program, the catalog copy sent by each coopera-
ting library had to be carefully edited according to the new rules. A considerable time was spent sending the cooperative copy back and forth before the final cards were produced.

The printing of the Far Eastern cards required a rather complicated procedure. First the printer made a skeleton card, printing everything except the characters. The photocomposer in our Section photographed the characters from a photocomposing machine into a film. After the film had been developed, the photocomposer cut up the reproduced copy from the film into strips and pasted them on the skeleton card, from which the printer would produce printed cards. The various steps of the process were very tedious. Now the entire process is being done in Tokyo with better results.

The general procedure of cataloging Far Eastern materials in LC is first to type on a preliminary card all the bibliographical information in romanization. This preliminary card will be used throughout the various stages as the information card until the printed card is out. The descriptive cataloger records the heading and title in romanization on a 5 × 6 stock card (which we call a "manuscript card") and copies onto it by hand in characters the title and authorship statement, edition statement, and imprint statement. Then he types the collation, adds a series statement in characters, and makes various types of notes that are needed, as well as the added entry tracings. After the book has been cataloged, the manuscript card together with the book is sent to the Subject Cataloging Division for assigning subject headings and the call number. Then the manuscript card is returned to us to assign the card number before sending it to Tokyo to make the master card.

Since 1958 nearly 100,000 Chinese titles have been cataloged and a corresponding number of cards have been printed or are in the process of being printed. The cataloging rules since March 1967 have been changed from ALA to AACR (Anglo-American Cataloging Rules).

During the last ten years, the Chinese publications put out in Taiwan and Hongkong have been giving the Chinese cata-
logers real headaches. Most of these publications have been reprints of one type or another. Among the reprints there have been many pirated editions with the authors' names and titles changed. Under AACR cataloging rules, it is necessary to identify the original title and author. The Chinese catalogers spent a great deal of time trying to find the original editions of the pirated works in order to catalog them. Worse than that, often the same pirated work is being published under different titles and in the same year. I think it is our responsibility to call the attention of the authorities in Taiwan to this outrage of indiscriminate reprinting. It is a regrettable situation which should be stopped.

In conclusion, let me say that Chinese cataloging in the United States has undergone tremendous changes from following the traditional format to ALA, and later to AACR cataloging rules. Although some cataloging rules are found by many Chinese catalogers to be less desirable and suitable for cataloging Far Eastern materials, the general concept of the rules is intended to include materials in all languages.