

**SINO-AMERICAN BOOK EXCHANGE:
EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE NATIONAL CENTRAL LIBRARY
AND U.S. INSTITUTIONS***

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ABSTRACT

The National Central Library emphasizes exchange, a tradition which began in the Ch'ing Dynasty in 1697. The author discusses the history of exchange with the United States, which began in 1868. Developments are traced from the birth of the Republic of China in 1911 through the Twenties and Thirties, the Sino-Japanese War, the move to Taiwan in 1949, and the years up to the present, with a brief look at the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Exchange is an invaluable mode of library acquisitions. It not only provides a mutually beneficial avenue for participating institutions to develop their collections but also facilitates the acquisition of materials which might be unobtainable any other way, in addition to offering a forum for exchange and development between different cultures. Consequently, the National Central Library (NCL) places great emphasis on exchange activities, which have been a part of the Library's operations since it was founded.

In particular, the NCL has for a long time been closely involved in the exchange of books and publications between China and the United States, continuing a tradition of exchange which began in the Ch'ing Dynasty. After the founding of the Republic of China, the establishment of the Bureau of International Exchange of Publications (BIEP) inaugurated a formal avenue for NCL involvement in library exchange in 1925. Since then, library exchange between the NCL and U.S. institutions has grown and developed in a wide range of areas, as statistics for the past thirty-five years show.

CHINA'S EARLIEST BOOK EXCHANGES

China's earliest recorded exchange of books was in 1697, when officials of the Ch'ing Dynasty sent some 149 works to France in return for a shipment of books the French had sent to China for exchange three years earlier. This was seventy-nine years before the founding of the United States of America.

Exchange programs between China and the United States began in 1868 when the U.S. Government, acting on the initiative of the Smithsonian Institution,¹ presented the Chinese Government with books and plant seeds along with a proposal that the two governments exchange publications. The U.S. Government specifically expressed interest in obtaining "publications relating to the census and revenue of China."² In 1869 the Chinese Government sent in return not only the

census records, but also a selection of ten titles comprising 947 volumes of Chinese books. These were deposited in the Library of Congress and constituted the beginning of the L.C.'s Chinese collection.³

After this first exchange, there was a lapse of some years before the Smithsonian Institution in 1904 suggested that the United States Government propose a publication-exchange agreement with China. The proposal received a positive reply from the Chinese Government and an exchange of documents, books, and maps was carried out during 1908 and 1909. The documents from China were added to the Library of Congress collection, and those from the United States were sent to the American-Chinese Publication Exchange Department under the Shanghai Bureau of Foreign Affairs. Until 1931, books received by China through book-exchange arrangements were deposited at the National Peking Library. After that date, the collection of exchange materials was handed over to the Bureau of International Exchange of Publications in Shanghai, which later became part of the NCL in Nanking.⁴

THE NATIONAL CENTRAL LIBRARY

In the months following the founding of the Republic of China in 1911, the Chinese Central Government announced its intention to establish a national central library.⁵ In 1916 the government passed a law requiring that all books published in China be registered with the Ministry of Education and one copy of each book be deposited in the National Peking Library, which had been established in the last years of the Ch'ing Dynasty. Because of the unstable conditions prevailing in China in the early years of the Republic, the National Central Library was not formally inaugurated until 1940, although its preparatory committee was set up in 1933.

When the Preparatory Committee began assembling the NCL collection in 1933, Dr. Hu Shih recommended to Chiang Fu-ts'ung, a member of the committee and chairman of the Preparatory Office of the NCL, that foreign books be acquired through exchange of government documents.⁶

THE BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF PUBLICATIONS

The importance of book exchange to China may be demonstrated by the fact that the Republic of China had a Bureau of International Exchange of Publications even before the NCL was founded. Preparations for the establishment of the BIEP began as early as 1921,⁷ and were finally completed in November 1925.⁸ This was in accordance with the Brussels Convention of 1886, ratified by China in 1926, that required each ratifying country to establish a bureau for international book exchange. From 1928 to 1933, the BIEP was affiliated with the Academia Sinica, and in 1934 it became part of the NCL Preparatory Committee under the Ministry of Education. Through its BIEP, the NCL played an important coordinating role in the book aid programs which helped China's libraries during the later part of the Sino-Japanese War, and it has since served as the focus of book-exchange activities in the Republic of China.

THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR

With the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Nanking became the target of Japanese bombing and the "National Central Library in embryo"--as Dr. Yuan T'ung-lee described the reading room of the NCL Preparatory Committee⁹--had to prepare for flight to a safer locale. In the months and years that followed, libraries saved what materials they could by moving them to the interior of the mainland. As a result, chaos prevailed among many of the refugee universities and libraries at that time, and they were very much in need of books. The Library Association of China, led by Dr. Yuan T'ung-lee, appealed to libraries and other institutions abroad for books to help replenish the war-ravaged collections. This appeal set in motion the Books For China program of the American Library Association, under which books were sent to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington for forwarding to Asia. Out of the tremendous response, the few books that did arrive in China despite the wartime transportation difficulties were handled by the NCL and BIEP, then located in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

After the war some exchange of government documents took place, with the NCL acting as the official agency for exchange. More normal exchange did not resume, however, until 1954, several years after the NCL moved to the island province of Taiwan in 1949.

EXCHANGES AFTER 1954

As soon as the National Central Library was reestablished in 1954, it sent letters proposing book exchange to libraries around the world. The response was enthusiastic. Within a short time, the United States Library of Congress sent a full set of U.S. Government documents to the NCL in addition to a number of other materials. In the years from 1955 to 1990, the NCL has received over 536,000 volumes from institutions in the United States, this figure being approximately seventy-one percent of the total number of volumes received from institutions in all countries.¹⁰

In addition to exchange relationships, the R.O.C. benefitted from generous gifts of science-related materials especially in 1968, upon the one-hundredth anniversary of the first U.S.-China book exchange. Books and journals in many fields were sent by the Library of Congress (Physics), and by several universities with substantial Chinese-Studies collections, namely California-Los Angeles (Biology and Medicine), Chicago (Chemistry), Columbia (General Science), Harvard (Astronomy), Illinois (Physics), Kansas (General Sciences), Michigan (Engineering), Minnesota (Math and Biology), Pittsburgh (Philosophy), Princeton (Engineering and Mathematics), Stanford (General Sciences), and Yale (Biology and Geology).¹¹ According to Priscilla Yu of the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, the book-exchange activities of the NCL after 1954 functioned both to help maintain good foreign relations and to increase the collections of local libraries. Yu postulates that as Taiwan's economy entered a period of strong development in the 1960's, book exchange was increasingly motivated by the need to acquire technical information.¹² It is also true that book exchange in the humanities as well as in the sciences has continued to be regarded as important.

In 1970-71, the United States Information Service had a program for the donation of materials in various fields to be sent to the R.O.C. via the NCL.

Table 1
Book donations received from the United States

| Institution | Titles | Volumes |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| USIS | 797 | 25,333 |
| Rotary International | 1,839 | 3,280 |
| Total | 2,636 | 28,613 |

Source: NCL Bureau of International Exchange of Publications Records

RECENT EXCHANGE

In recent years, exchanges have been carried out between the NCL and foreign institutions on a continuing basis. Out of all the NCL's book exchanges, approximately seventy percent of the books received are from the United States, and about thirty-three percent of the exchange agreements are with U.S. institutions. Table 2 shows the numbers of countries and institutions with which the NCL has exchange programs throughout the world. The NCL's exchanges with the Library of Congress are worthy of note. Table 3 shows the figures for materials sent to the Library of Congress by the NCL for the years from 1977 to 1989.

Exchange at the NCL is carried out on a title-for-title basis, with a very rough equivalency of value for exchanged materials being assumed. In addition to books, serials, and documents, the NCL also receives other types of materials as enumerated in Table 4, including non-book materials. Table 5 shows the materials available from the NCL by type of item.

Table 2
NCL international exchange of publications

| World Region | Countries | Territories | Units |
|--|-----------|-------------|-------|
| Asian Pacific | 25 | 2 | 348 |
| North & South America | 27 | | 476 |
| Europe | 20 | | 192 |
| Africa | 12 | | 24 |
| UN Organizations and other international organizations | | | 22 |
| Total | 84 | 2 | 1,062 |

Source: NCL Bureau of International Exchange of Publications Records

Table 3
Annual statistics for exchange publications sent to the Library of Congress by the NCL

| Year | Task Force | | Exchange | |
|-------|------------|---------|----------|---------|
| | Titles | Volumes | Titles | Volumes |
| 1977 | 74 | 153 | 615 | 3,251 |
| 1978 | 1,697 | 2,782 | 273 | 1,873 |
| 1979 | 1,448 | 2,090 | 205 | 2,041 |
| 1980 | 1,358 | 2,126 | 569 | 2,718 |
| 1981 | 1,259 | 1,828 | 707 | 2,258 |
| 1982 | 670 | 1,008 | 634 | 1,650 |
| 1983 | 783 | 1,111 | 599 | 1,886 |
| 1984 | 1,128 | 1,632 | 526 | 1,655 |
| 1985 | 2,058 | 2,973 | 462 | 1,777 |
| 1986 | 1,686 | 2,570 | 324 | 1,367 |
| 1987 | 1,491 | 2,289 | 480 | 1,887 |
| 1988 | 1,471 | 2,012 | 608 | 2,053 |
| 1989 | 1,248 | 1,986 | 522 | 1,561 |
| Total | 16,371 | 24,560 | 6,524 | 26,067 |

Source: NCL Bureau of International Exchange of Publications Records

Table 4
Materials received by the NCL from institutions in the
United States, 1986-1989

| Type of Material | Number of Items Received |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Periodicals | 306 titles |
| Books | 13,426 volumes |
| Microfiche | 107,943 sheets |
| Leaflets | 845 items |
| Film | 5 reels |
| Total | 122,527 items |

Source: NCL Bureau of International Exchange of Publications Records

Table 5
Materials available for exchange from the NCL, May 1990

| Category | Type of Item | Titles |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Official publications: | Gazetteers | 27 |
| | Periodicals | 144 |
| | Annual Reports | 103 |
| | Monographs | 396 |
| General publications: | Periodicals | 297 |
| | Books | 1,042 |
| Total titles: | | 2,009 |
| Microfilms: | Chinese Rare Books | 13,000 (reels) |
| | Newspaper | 438 (reels) |
| | Total reels | 13,438 |

Source: NCL Bureau of International Exchange of Publications Records

Because the NCL acts as the coordinating agency for book exchange in the R.O.C., many of the books it receives from abroad are actually forwarded to smaller libraries throughout Taiwan Province.

This service is managed by the BIEP. Table 6 shows the numbers of institutions to which the NCL forwarded materials it received from the Asia Foundation.

Table 6
Books received through
Asia Foundation Book Donation Program

| Year | Volumes | Number of Institutions receiving |
|-------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 1986 | 2,434 | 95 |
| 1987 | 3,215 | 69 |
| 1988 | 1,436 | 27 |
| 1989 | 3,416 | 96 |
| 1990 | 8,648 | 78 |
| Total | 19,149 | 365 |

Source: NCL Bureau of International Exchange of Publications Records

BOOK EXHIBITIONS

Book exhibitions are an important way in which representatives of foreign institutions may quickly gain familiarity with the huge spectrum of materials published in Taiwan. As one can see from publishing statistics for the past seven years, materials available in the R.O.C. for exchange are becoming even more plentiful (Table 7). The quantity of available titles exceeds by far the number that could realistically be exhibited. Out of this vast quantity, the NCL selects the best and most representative titles for its frequent exhibitions. These provide an ideal opportunity to promote a greater awareness of Chinese culture and things Chinese, and also familiarize potential exchange partners with the range of available publications.

The NCL has participated in forty-eight book exhibitions in the United States alone since 1957. The NCL donated the exhibited materials to various U.S. institutions. Donation of these materials

supports the efforts of the NCL to maintain and promote knowledge of Chinese culture. By promoting access to materials that help us understand each other, book exchanges and exhibitions play an important role in both countries. With the recent increase in interest in Chinese culture in the United States, and with the growing importance of international relations, book exchange between the United States and the R.O.C. will undoubtedly continue to develop in the future.

Table 7
Publishing statistics for the Taiwan area
during the period from 1981 to 1988

| Year | Titles |
|-------|--------|
| 1981 | 8,865 |
| 1982 | 8,776 |
| 1983 | 9,008 |
| 1984 | 9,256 |
| 1985 | 8,822 |
| 1986 | 10,255 |
| 1987 | 12,010 |
| 1988 | 11,982 |
| Total | 78,974 |

Source: NCL Bureau of International Exchange of Publications Records

OTHER EXCHANGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

The NCL has received many benefits from its book exchanges with U.S. institutions. At the same time, the NCL also welcomes opportunities to engage in other kinds of exchange activities with these same institutions. For example, from time to time, Ohio University Library has received representatives from the NCL for a three-month library internship. Certain United States institutions have also sent staff to the NCL for specific library-development projects. In 1990, we have had the honor and pleasure to play host to Mrs. Barbara G. Kile, Head of Government Publications and Special Resources Librarian at the

Fondren Library at Rice University in Houston, Texas. Mrs. Kile was sent by the United States Information Agency to help out in our Government Documents Section. While book exchange provides the basis of our relationships with U.S. institutions, we hope to have further cooperation of this sort.

CONCLUSION

The wide range of benefits reaped over the past century has clearly proven the immense value of exchange to NCL operations. We earnestly intend to continue international exchange--particularly with U.S. institutions--in the future. We hope also to explore avenues for the further expansion and development of exchange activities, not only in the area of publication exchanges and book exhibitions, but also in areas such as the exchange of personnel and library technology. In this way the NCL will not only improve its own collection and operations, but will also be able to contribute further to the worldwide advancement of knowledge and sharing of culture.

NOTES

1. Sh-chao Hu, "The Development of the Chinese Collection in the Library of Congress" (diss., Florida State University, 1977), 261.
2. J. Ross Browne, U.S. Minister to China, Enclosure A of letter to Prince Kung, March 25, 1869, BIEP file in the NCL.
3. Hu, 261.
4. Ibid., 261-262.
5. Margaret Chang Fung, "The Evolving Social Mission of the National Central Library in China, 1928-1960" (diss., Indiana University, 1983), 48-49.
6. Fu-ts'ung Chiang, "A Historical Sketch of Chinese Libraries," *Philobiblon: A Quarterly Review of Chinese Publications*, no. 2 (March 1948): 4.
7. Fung, 66.

8. "The International Book Exchange Service in the Republic of China," pamphlet (Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.: National Central Library, 1978).
9. T'ung-lee Yuan, "The National Central Library: A Record," *Philobiblon: A Quarterly Review of Chinese Publications*, no. 4 (March 1947), 3l. Fung (p.68) lists the date of establishment as 1928; however, she cites a source dated December 31, 1927.
10. Yuan, 28.
11. BIEP records, May 1990, and Peng-yuan Chang, "Sino-American Scholarly Relations as Seen From Taiwan, 1949-1979," *The American Asian Review* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1983): 74.
12. Pamphlet (Note 8 above), 10-11.
13. Priscilla C.Yu, "Taiwan's International Exchange Program: A Study in Cultural Diplomacy," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 23-45.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

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- Danton, Periam J. "Books for China." *Library Journal* 63 (October 1938): 714.
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