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and the *Gest Collection*

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The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University, 1926–1936

SU CHEN AND JUMING ZHAO

The Gest Collection at Princeton University is famous as a major collection of old and rare Chinese materials in North America.¹ The library has attracted much attention since its beginning.² Few, however, know that this collection was initially hosted at McGill University in Montreal from 1926 to 1936. Why did McGill host this library, what happened to the library during those years, why was the library moved to Princeton, New Jersey, and what was the impact on McGill? This article is written to address these questions. It will discuss this unique collection during its years at McGill, the evolution of the Department of Chinese Studies at McGill from 1930 to 1934, and the move to Princeton in 1936–1937. Most of the information presented in this article comes from the McGill University Archives in McLennan Library, McGill University and from the archives of the Gest Collection currently housed in the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.³

A UNIQUE COLLECTION

In 1925 when Guion Moore Gest (1864–1948) deposited his collection at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, McGill named it the Gest Chinese Research Library (Geside huawen cangshuku). (See figure 1.)

By 1937, when it was moved to Princeton, the library had grown to more than one hundred thousand volumes and had become one of the largest collections of old and rare Chinese books in the West.⁴ The Gest Library was famous for its size and even more for its uniqueness. Guion Gest's timely initiative, the exceptional knowledge of ancient rare Chinese books and excellent book-hunting skills of Commander Irvin Van Gorder Gillis (1875-1948), Gest's purchasing agent in China, and the diligence and passion of Nancy Lee Swann (1881-1966), curator of this collection from 1928-1948, all contributed to its uniqueness.⁵

Gest started his collection at just the right time. In 1911, revolution ended China's last imperial dynasty after its 267-year duration, and thereafter followed several decades of civil wars among warlords. In 1928, the Republican leadership changed the seat of its government from Beijing to Nanjing, diminishing the significance of that great city in the north which had served as the capital for over six hundred years during the better part of the Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644), and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.⁶ This upheaval and the shift in location of the political and economic bases of power caused many noble families and imperial institutes to sell their treasures accumulated over generations in order to survive. One of those treasures was books. The first batch of books that I. V. Gillis bought for Guion Gest was a group of eight thousand volumes selected by Chen Baochen (1848-1935), the tutor of Pu Yi (1906-1967), the last Chinese emperor.⁷ During the first several decades of the twentieth century, Chinese traditional learning was progressively replaced by Western learning, and the significance of Chinese traditional learning decreased. In addition, during this tumultuous era, revolutions, rebels, and wars spread throughout China, throwing the nation into chaos. This circumstance created a golden opportunity for book collectors like Gest, as evidenced by this comment in a letter he wrote in 1926, "The unfortunate war situation in China has made many of these purchases possible . . ."⁸

Guion Moore Gest was a construction contractor and engineer who started his own company, Gest Engineering Company, in New York in 1914. He suffered from glaucoma and though he consulted several Western ophthalmologists, none could cure his condition. On a business trip to China in the 1920s, Gest met Gillis, a U.S. naval attaché

in Peking, who suggested that he try traditional Chinese eye medications.⁹ The Chinese medicine did not cure his problem but did give him some relief, which surprised Gest. He decided to leave some money with Gillis for the purchase rare books on Chinese medicine, particularly those about eye diseases and treatments. This unlikely beginning was the start of what became one of the finest groups of Chinese old and rare books outside of China, the Gest collection.

Of the published information and documents about the origin of and the treasures in the Gest collection, the authors have found one of the most reliable sources to be articles by Hu Shih, a well-known Chinese philosopher and historian, who served as the curator of the Gest Oriental Library from 1950 to 1952. The story of Hu Shih's appointment was unusual. In 1950, he was in New York attempting to obtain a professorial position but was unsuccessful. He was, however, informed that Princeton University intended to give him a one-year post-doctoral position. Soon, the president of the university learned of Hu Shih's status and offered him a two-year appointment as curator of the Gest Library with rank of full professor.¹⁰ His task was to "find out what was in the collection and what treasures were among them."¹¹ During those two years, Dr. Hu thoroughly researched the collection and wrote four articles about the Gest Library.¹² (See figure 2 for a photograph of Hu Shih with Shih-kang T'ung, his successor as curator of the Gest Library at Princeton.)

Hu Shih found the tale of Gest's eye troubles quite credible. He further suggested that this story helps explain the rather large number of works on Chinese medicine in the Gest collection, which includes some five hundred titles in two thousand volumes, the largest collection of rare Chinese medical books outside of China and Japan.¹³ Gillis, an avid book collector with wide-ranging tastes, encouraged Gest to extend the range of his collection beyond Chinese medicine to include other subjects such as engineering, Chinese classics and traditional learning, as well as modern studies. This expanded, more comprehensive collection eventually became the Gest Library.

The legacy of I. V. Gillis makes this story especially interesting. Irvin Van Gorder Gillis was born in 1875 in New England. He had been an intelligence expert, specializing in the microscopic analysis of fingerprints



2. Hu Shih (curator 1950–1952), on the right, and James Shih-kang T'ung (curator 1952–1977) examining a volume from the Gest Library, inscribed by Hu Shih on March 1952. Taken at the opening of an exhibit entitled “Eleven Centuries of Chinese Printing,” held at the Princeton University Library from 20 February to 20 April, 1952.

Photograph courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection,
Princeton University.



3. Commander I. V. Gillis, with three of his assistants, supervising the repair of Ming-dynasty Buddhist texts purchased for the Gest Collection, Peiping, May 1930. Photograph courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University.

and typewriting, and later was able to apply his skills successfully to the analysis of the printing of rare books. In the 1910s and 1920s, he served as a naval attaché at the United States legation in Peking. After resigning his commission, he established his home in Peking with his wife, a Manchu princess, and became a professional book dealer searching for old Chinese books. Gillis used his home as his office and for book storage and hired several people to help run his business.¹⁴ (See figure 3.) Gillis had studied Chinese and could speak Peking dialect. Through many years of hard work, he had gained an exceptional knowledge of Chinese old and rare books. In 1946, Wang Zhongmin (1903–1975), a leading expert on Chinese rare books and an advisor to both China's National Library as well as the United States Library of Congress, commented when he visited the Gest Library at Princeton University, "I . . . feel that his [Gillis'] knowledge of Chinese bibliography is exceptionally good. He made almost no mistakes in his *Notes*, . . ." ¹⁵

Into the 1930s, Gillis primarily purchased books for the Gest Library, but also obtained books for several other institutions as well, including the Library of Congress, the Harvard-Yenching Institute at Harvard University, and the New York Public Library.¹⁶ When Japan invaded Peking in 1937, the Japanese military authorities suspected that Gillis was a spy for the United States and arrested him. But at that time, since he was physically too weak to be detained, he was allowed to stay at home. Gillis died there in 1948.¹⁷

Gillis developed a keen sense in hunting for Chinese books. He knew clearly that he was in the right place at the right moment and had caught a never-to-be-repeated opportunity for purchasing highly unusual books. In 1932, he wrote to Gest,

[T]he opportunity that we now have for buying good and old Chinese books will never be repeated,—that's certain—and many of them will never be reprinted in modern editions, either. Also, it is but a question of a short time when prices will begin to go up, for as you must be aware, more and more Chinese libraries are being set up by universities and other such institutions in foreign lands, and the demand for Chinese books of all kinds is becoming greater and greater everyday.¹⁸

This proved to be a very accurate prediction. Gillis was able to increase the size of the Gest collection to more than one hundred thousand volumes by 1932 from the initial eight thousand volumes in 1925.¹⁹ After 1930, when China's political situation was again stabilized, the Chinese government enacted a rare-book embargo policy, which stated that any non-replaceable work should be retained in China. The Chinese Customs confiscated some titles that Gillis had purchased for the Gest Library.²⁰ After 1932, acquisitions for the Gest Library for the most part ceased. Then, after the establishment of the Communist government in 1949, such purchases became completely impossible.

Hu Shih used the following example to demonstrate how Gillis used his skills of microscopic analysis in his book hunting. An important collection in the Gest Library is the Wuyingdian juzhenben congshu (Imperial-Palace Movable-Type Reprint Series). In 1773, the Qianlong

emperor (r. 1736–1795) ordered the reconstruction and publication of rare and long lost works from the *Yongle dadian* (Yongle Encyclopedia), which was first produced in manuscript form between 1403 and 1407.²¹ With the exception of four titles printed using woodblocks in 1773, the Qianlong emperor's eighteenth-century printed series utilized moveable wood-type printing technology.²² Two hundred fifty thousand individual wood type were cut, and 138 titles in 812 volumes were printed. The printing took twenty-one years, from 1773 to 1794, and a total of 320 sets were produced, of which the emperor kept twenty sets for his own use. The remaining three hundred sets were sold over a period of some twenty years. Because the printing extended over such a long period of time and the volumes were sold separately, it was very difficult to compile a complete set of the edition printed in the palace. Beginning in 1776, the emperor requested that local governments reprint this series from newly cut woodblocks modeled on the movable-type palace edition, and eventually nearly all of the 138 original titles were reproduced. These editions were called "local editions" (*difangben*). In the collectors' eyes, however, volumes of the original printed edition were considered much more valuable than the local editions.

In the 1920s, Gillis started to gather sets of the imperial edition of the Imperial-Palace Movable-Type Reprint Series. First he purchased a set of the palace edition from a Chinese bibliophile. He then systematically analyzed all of the printing errors of that edition. He discovered that when an incorrect character had been found in the final post-printing proofreading, the incorrect character had been cut out of each volume and a slip of paper printed with the correct character very carefully pasted into place. However, the local reprinted editions, which in general had been carved from corrected volumes of the palace printed edition, did not have the same pasted in corrections as found in the volumes of the palace. He examined a total of 37,600 pages of the palace edition, detected 2,082 pasted-in corrections, and noted the position of each by line, page, chapter, and volume. With this reference, Gillis used the presence or absence of hand repairs to the pages as indicators by which to distinguish exemplars of the palace edition from exemplars of the local editions. Using this approach, Gillis assembled three complete sets of the original palace edition—one for the Gest Library, one for Harvard

University, and one for the Library of Congress.²³ Only one other complete set was known at that time, and that was the one in China's National Library.²⁴ In other words, Gillis assembled three of the four remaining sets of the palace printed edition known at the time.

To ensure the success of his business, Gillis was very disciplined in keeping his sources secret. The story of his purchase of the *Qisha zangjing* (Qisha Buddhist Tripitaka) well illustrates his mania for secrecy. The Gest Library has a set of the *Qisha Buddhist Tripitaka*, whose printing in approximately five thousand nine hundred volumes spanned nearly one hundred years (1231–1322) and a dynastic change.²⁵ The Gest Collection exemplar of this Buddhist canon consists of a total of 5,348 volumes—697½ volumes printed in the Song dynasty (960–1279), 1632½ in the Yuan, 868 in the Ming, and the rest, replacement manuscript copies made after 1600. It is the most valuable set of books held by the Gest Library.²⁶ Remarkably, only two very large sets of this Buddhist canon are now known to exist, one in China and the one in the Gest Library. Gest Library's set was shipped to Vancouver in 1929, while the other in China was not located until 1931. Thus, at the time Gillis shipped that set to the Gest Library, it was the only set known in the world. Gillis reported that he got the copy from “a remote part of China,” while Hu Shih is reported to have suggested that this copy was from a monastery called Dabei Monastery (Dabeisi) in Peking.²⁷ Hu wrote, “I have not found any document of his [Gillis] describing the location and history of this monastery, but judging from the colophons at the end of a number of the manuscript volumes, I have no doubt that this must be one of the monasteries in the city of Peking,” and “[t]his purchase was probably made in 1926 or 1927.”²⁸ In order to purchase such items, Gillis obviously needed to avoid any exposure whatsoever of information that would damage his book business. In 1931, when Gillis learned that Arthur Currie, the principal of McGill University, was to visit China, he sent a confidential telegram to Gest:

There is one very important matter in connection with Sir Arthur Currie's visit to China. . . . I earnestly urge you to advise and request Sir Arthur to absolutely put a seal upon his lips and refrain from talking about the Library with anybody

whatsoever—whether Chinese or foreigner. He should avoid the subject as he would a dangerous disease. The slightest mention of it may direct the conversation into channels that would prove fatal to all of your plans for the future of your Library. . . . I am extremely worried²⁹

This telegram was immediately transferred to Currie who was in India. Currie, by his own account, carefully “sealed his lips” during his visit in China.³⁰

With his unparalleled skills, Gillis achieved exceptional success in purchasing books. After examining the Gest collection in 1946, Wang Zhongmin commented:

Among all the [Chinese] collections which I have ever examined, I think that the Gest collection is a very important one. I have examined 1,500 items at the Library of Congress and also the 2,700 items which have been on deposit [during the war] in this country by the National Library of Peiping, yet I have found that of Gest's A section (Classics) seventy per cent are not duplicated either in the Library of Congress “Orientalia” section, or in the National Library of Peiping's rare book section. Of the D section (literary writings) I found that fifty per cent are not duplicated. This suffices to prove the value of the Gest collection.³¹

Hu Shih conducted a survey of the rare books in the Gest Library during his time at Princeton University. He suggested that about forty-one thousand one hundred ninety-five volumes (*ce*) in the Gest collection should be considered rare books. (See table 1 for the summary of his findings.)³²

Gillis' contributions to the Gest Library comprised more than the books themselves. In order to retrieve books from this large collection properly, Gillis specially designed an index system for the Gest collection and then assigned accession numbers according to this system. He considered his system to be the best one for ancient Chinese materials, since when he applied his system to 6,738 different titles, he found only 185 duplicate, 9 triplicate, and 1 quadruplicate numbers. The Gillis classification

TABLE I: SUMMARY OF HU SHIH'S TABULATION OF
RARE BOOKS IN THE GEST COLLECTION

CATEGORY OF BOOK	NUMBER OF VOLUMES (CE)
Books printed from wood blocks cut in the years 1232-1272 (Song-dynasty editions)	700
Books printed from wood blocks cut in the years 1297-1322 (Yuan-dynasty editions)	1,700
Books printed in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644)	24,500
Manuscripts (pre-1602: 2,150; others: 850)	3,000
Complete set of the 1726 [1728] edition of the <i>Gujin tushu jicheng</i> (Imperial Encyclopedia, a.k.a. The Chinese Encyclopaedia)	5,020
<i>Wuyingdian juzhenben congshu</i> [Imperial-Palace (wood) Movable- Type Reprint Series, a.k.a. Imperial Collectanea], two sets	1,412
Complete set of the palace wood-block edition of the Twenty-four Dynastic Histories (printed between 1739 and 1784)	754
First editions, rare Palace editions, and rare reprints of Sung, Yuan, and Ming editions, printed from 1644 to 1920	2,000
Mongol translation of the Tibetan Kanjur (1772-1790)	109
Books on medicine and materia medica	2,000
Total	41,195

SOURCE: Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 15.3 (Spring 1954), pp. 120-121.

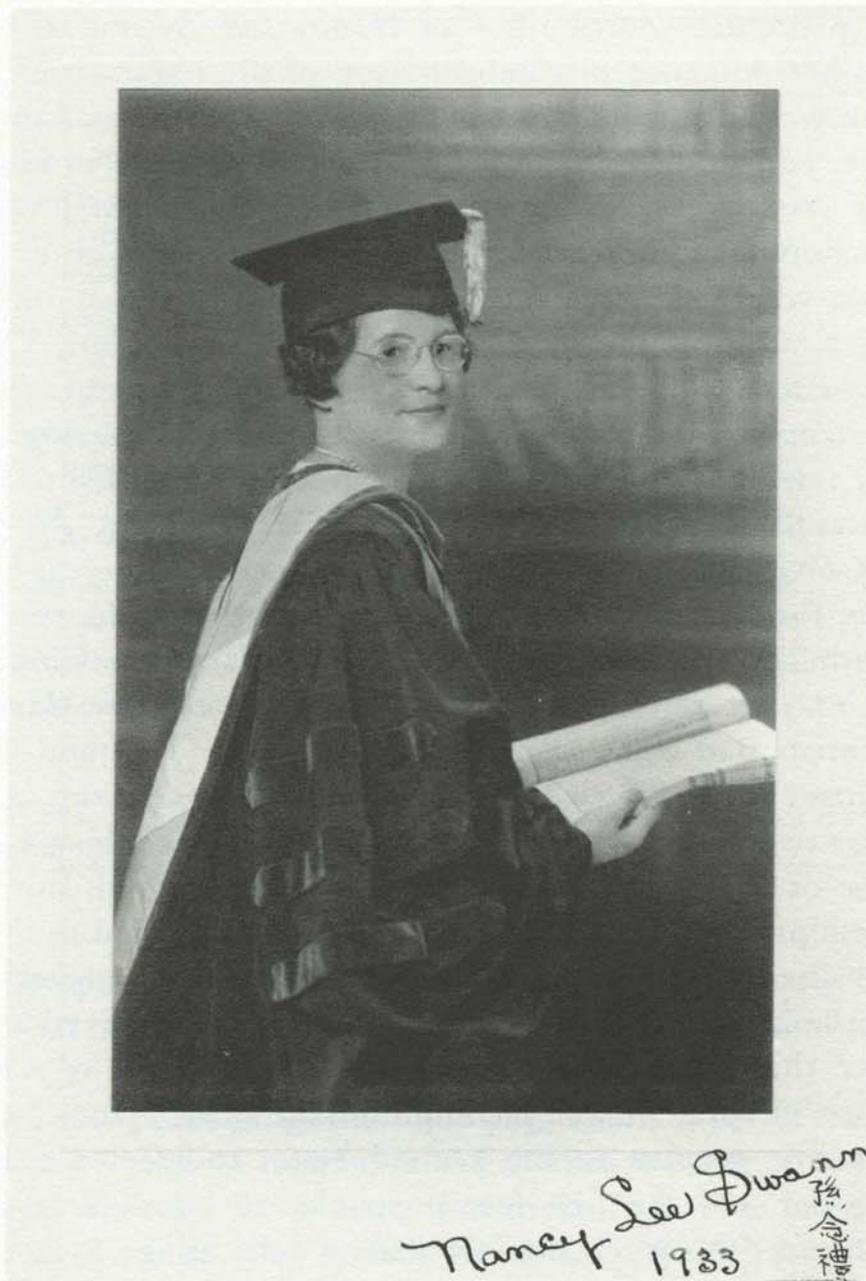
system, first published in 1941, was applied to the Gest collection beginning in 1928 and "has been employed with efficiency and facility ever since."³³

Beyond purchasing and indexing, Gillis and his assistants also examined each page of each book and marked missing or damaged pages with signed slips that today remain in these books. He had many books interleaved, rebound, and boxed. He cataloged and labeled the books and even had the catalogue cards printed, cards which are still preserved in the Gest Collection in the East Asian Library at Princeton. He wrote extensive bibliographic notes for each title. He was so committed to building the Gest collection that he even used ten thousand dollars of his own money to purchase additions to the Gest Library when Gest could not pay him for his work and purchases during the 1930s. The last

shipment Gillis made to the Gest Library was in 1937.³⁴ Gillis died in China a little over a decade later at seventy-three years of age.

The particular contribution of Nancy Lee Swann to the Gest Library was her diligence in administration of the library from 1928 to 1948. Swann was born in 1881 in Tyler, Texas, was educated in a public school there, and studied at the State Teacher's College in Huntsville, Texas from 1898 to 1899.³⁵ After graduation, she taught primary and secondary school for four years and then spent three years at the University of Texas where she received her bachelor's degree in 1906. From 1906 to 1912, she was the local and state secretary of the YWCA in Texas. She went to China in 1912 and stayed until 1919 to do educational work in Kaifeng and Jinan, returning in 1919 to the University of Texas for a master's degree. After earning the degree, she returned to China in 1920 and stayed there for another three years. In 1924, she went to Columbia University in New York City to meet its one-year residence requirement for her doctoral degree in the Department of Chinese, studying with Thomas F. Carter. In 1925, she returned to China for the third time to start research for her dissertation on the Han-dynasty female historian Ban Zhao (Pan Chao) (*ca.* 49–*ca.* 120) and to attend cultural courses at the North China Union Language School in Peking. During those two years, she lived with Chinese girls in a hostel and then in the home of a Chinese family. At the language school, she received two scholarships from the school and, in addition, assisted in the school library and gave some lectures, doing "both very acceptably." She returned to Columbia University in 1927 where she received a doctoral degree. Her thesis *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China* was published first in 1932.³⁶ These accomplishments made Nancy Lee Swann perhaps the first woman in the United States to receive a Ph.D. in Chinese history and the first female scholar to conduct research on Chinese women.³⁷ Nancy L. Swann died in 1966 at age 85.

In 1928 Nancy Lee Swann joined the Gest Library, by that time housed at McGill University, as a librarian assistant. (See figure 4.) Four years later she was promoted to the curatorship of the library and held this position until she retired in 1948. Her colleagues recognized her loyalty and diligence. After visiting the Gest Library in 1931, Charles S. Gardner, member of a subcommittee of the Committee on the Promotion



Nancy Lee Swann
1933

孫念禮



4. Photograph of Nancy Lee Swann, curator of Gest Library, bearing her signature in English and Chinese and an impression of her seal, 1933. Photograph courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University.

of Chinese Studies, a part of the American Council of Learned Societies, wrote the following to Arthur Currie, then principal of McGill, about his impression of Swann:

Closer contact with the staffs of other Chinese libraries in this country has led to the belief that you are fortunate in having retained the services of Miss Swann who is a capable, reliable, and conscientious worker, and who is, moreover, genuinely interested in the library, in the contents of its books and in their accessibility, instead of regarding her position merely as a means to the furtherance of personal research or other extraneous ends. Her knowledge and painstaking work have already done much for the collection, more perhaps, than some of those about her realize. With the ultimate demise of the remarkably faithful, efficient, and energetic—but nonetheless irritating—present curator, I believe that Miss Swann would be in many ways an ideal custodian of the collection.³⁸

THE GEST LIBRARY AT MCGILL, 1926–1936

At the very beginning, Guion M. Gest collected Chinese books as a hobby. As the collection grew, however, storage became a problem. The situation became urgent when Gillis informed Gest that a major shipment of eight thousand volumes would arrive on 17 October 1925. Gest had to find a place to store these books and felt that a university library obviously was a good place. He approached Gerhard R. Lomer, the university librarian at McGill University, for help. Lomer came up with a proposal that Gest would loan his collection to McGill for ten years.³⁹ In addition, Gest was responsible for providing a cataloguer and supervising the administration, while McGill would provide space and adequate facilities for this collection. This collection would be used as a reference library at McGill. Principal Arthur Currie agreed to this arrangement, and the McGill Board of Governors approved it on 4 January 1926.⁴⁰ (See figure 5 for a news article on the opening of the Chinese library at McGill.)

Why did Gest select a Canadian university, rather than an American

McGill Daily, Feb. 13th 1926

Open Chinese Library Here

迎 歡

本校圖書館添設
中國圖書部保藏
中國歷代書籍古今
文苑一萬二千餘卷
並有華文報章雜誌
多種謹於二月十三日舉
行開幕典禮今後對
於華人到此參觀圖書
本館無任歡迎此佈

The two words on the top line read "WELCOME". The remainder of the message states that the McGill University Library has a large collection of Chinese works covering every phase of Chinese History; that the formal opening of the Library takes place to-day, Saturday, February 13th, and that any Chinese who may happen to be in the city are welcome to visit this collection.

The message was prepared by Mr. Fan, a graduate student in the Department of Economics.

5. News article on the opening of the Geste Chinese Research Library at McGill. *McGill Daily*, 13 February 1926, Geste Library Papers, box 238, Newspaper Cuttings, Mudd Library, Princeton University. Photocopy courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Geste Collection, Princeton University.

university, to house his collection, and what did he foresee the future of his library to be? Gest visited Montreal regularly, as he had two pieces of property in that city, and in addition, he was acquainted with a member of McGill's Board of Governors. Perhaps, it was thus convenient for Gest to approach McGill University. On March 1, 1926, he wrote:

I have found but little interest in these books at the various institutions in America, . . . The placing of these books at McGill for the present at least, was after a somewhat careful study of the tendencies of the various Universities. McGill at present seems receptive and I am watching their attitude rather carefully. . . . The University at Williamstown, Mass., appealed to me very strongly, as well as Yale, but my acquaintance at either of the above was very limited. Harvard has not and does not, to my mind, meet the ideals of the average man, possibly as myself. . . . My Library at McGill is properly housed and used by them can do real good in deep research work. . . . I am not sure that the Authorities at McGill will follow my wishes, but I am certainly watching with both eyes wide open.⁴¹

Clearly, Gest considered that McGill was the best place to house his collection at the very beginning. Because his collection was, at that time, small and not well known, he actively sought publicity for the library. However, he was very suspicious of the McGill University administration, possibly an early indication of the sad ending of the Gest Library at McGill.

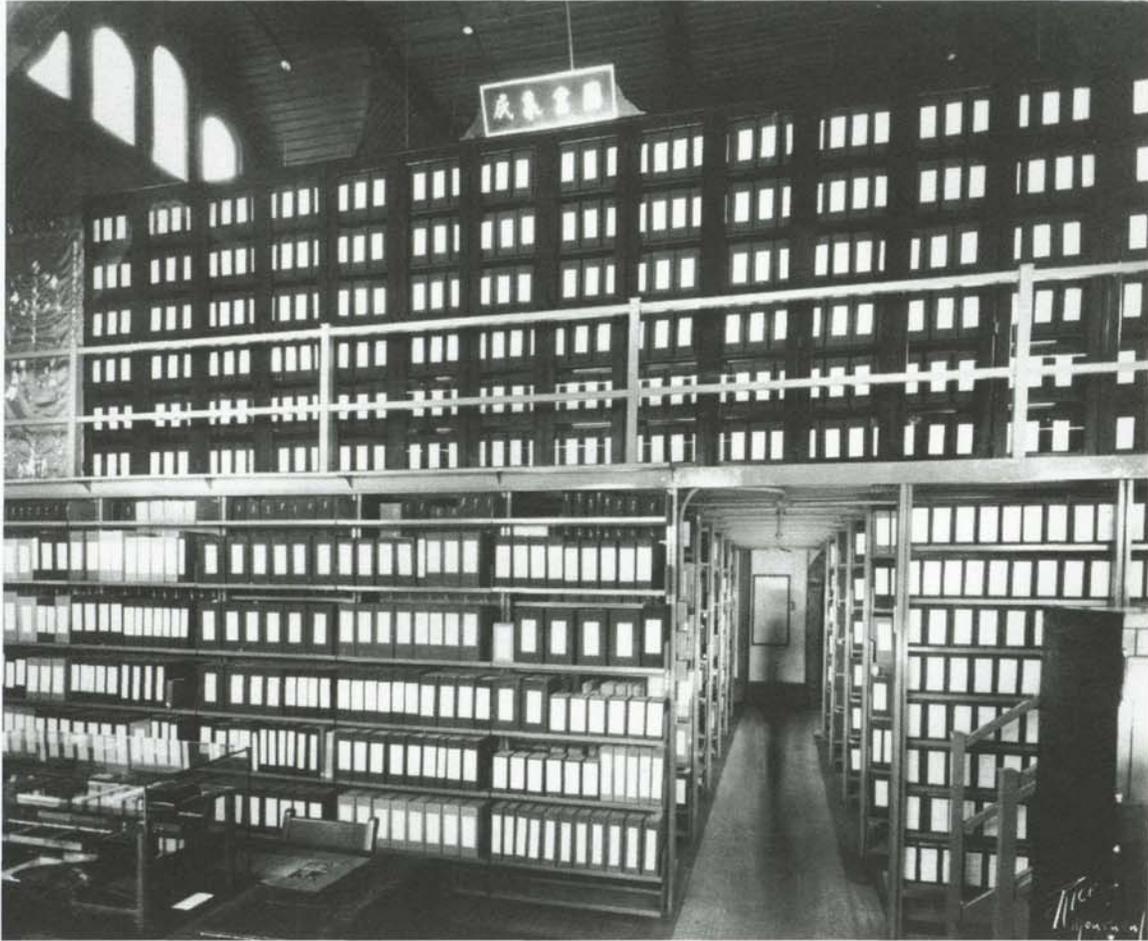
In the autumn of 1925, a shipment of eighteen cases of books arrived in Vancouver. Edward W. Beatty, chancellor of McGill and chairman of the Canadian Pacific Railway, made a special arrangement to ship them from Vancouver to McGill for a flat fee. This arrangement later became the routine for shipping the Gest Library books from China. The newly arrived books were first stored in the basement of the Redpath Library of McGill University, but Gest was not satisfied with their placement there. McGill then moved the library to the second floor of the building, greatly improving the surroundings for Gest's collection. Berthold Laufer, an anthropology professor and the curator of the Field

Museum of Natural History, Chicago, described the library this way when he visited it in 1929:

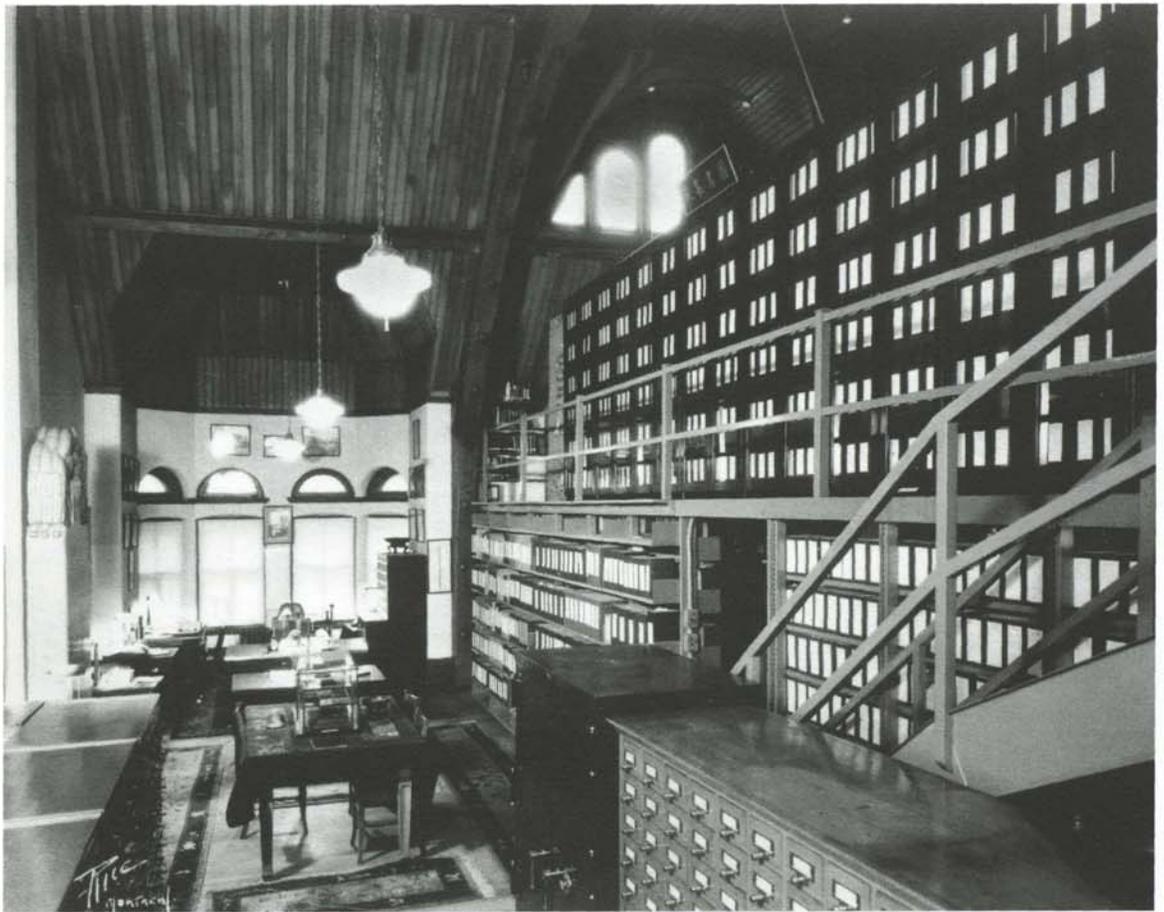
The Gest collection is housed in the attractive library building of McGill University, where it occupies a large room on the second floor. The stacks are of steel, arranged in two stories, the upper one being entirely devoted to the great cyclopedia *Tu shu tsi ch'eng* [*Gujin tushu jicheng*]. The arrangement of the books is so systematic and splendid that any book can be traced at a moment's notice. The reading room is airy and spacious and well equipped. Excellent photographs taken by Mr. Gest himself in the Orient adorn the walls. The floor is laid with Chinese rugs, and Chinese antiquities in a glass cabinet, as well as a reproduction in stone of the famous Nestorian tablet lend the room an intimate atmosphere. The library has a special exhibition room where at the time of my visit a most interesting exhibit of Japanese color-prints and Chinese paintings and manuscripts was shown, including a number of very beautiful Tibetan manuscripts in gold and silver writing from Mr. Gest's collection.⁴² (For views of the setting for Gest's collection at McGill, see figures 6a-c.)

The library was given the name Gest Chinese Research Library and officially opened on 13 February 1926, Chinese New Year's Day. Many guests were invited to a tea in honor of the opening of the library, initiating what later became a tradition for the library. (See figure 7.) For example, in 1928, the library invited more than one hundred scholars, students, university administrators, government officials, and social celebrities to a tea on Chinese New Year's day. This tradition was only broken once, in 1934, out of respect for Arthur Currie, the principal of McGill University and the most enthusiastic supporter of the library, who had died in November 1933.

Cataloging was problematic at the beginning. Although the first curator Robert de Résillac-Roese was regarded as a Sinologist, his Chinese was not adequate to the task. (See figure 8.) He relied on McGill students who knew Chinese to do the cataloging. When Gillis received de Résillac-Roese's catalogue, he was shocked. He wrote:



6A. Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University, 1929, showing the shelving specially built for the collection, including the *Gujin tushu jicheng* (Imperial Encyclopedia). PR042313, Photographic Collection, McGill University Archives. Photograph courtesy of McGill University Archives.



6B. The Geste Chinese Research Library at McGill showing the vaulted ceiling and card catalogue drawers. PR042313, Photographic Collection, McGill University Archives. Photograph courtesy of McGill University Archives. This photograph is also in the holdings of the East Asian Library and the Geste Collection, Princeton University.



6c. Office and Reading Room of the Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill showing the Nestorian tablet, photographs of China, Chinese rugs, and other objects collected by Guion Gest. Photograph courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University.

恭賀新禧

McGILL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

requests the pleasure of the company of

in the

GEST CHINESE RESEARCH LIBRARY,

on the occasion of

The Chinese New Year (O.S.)

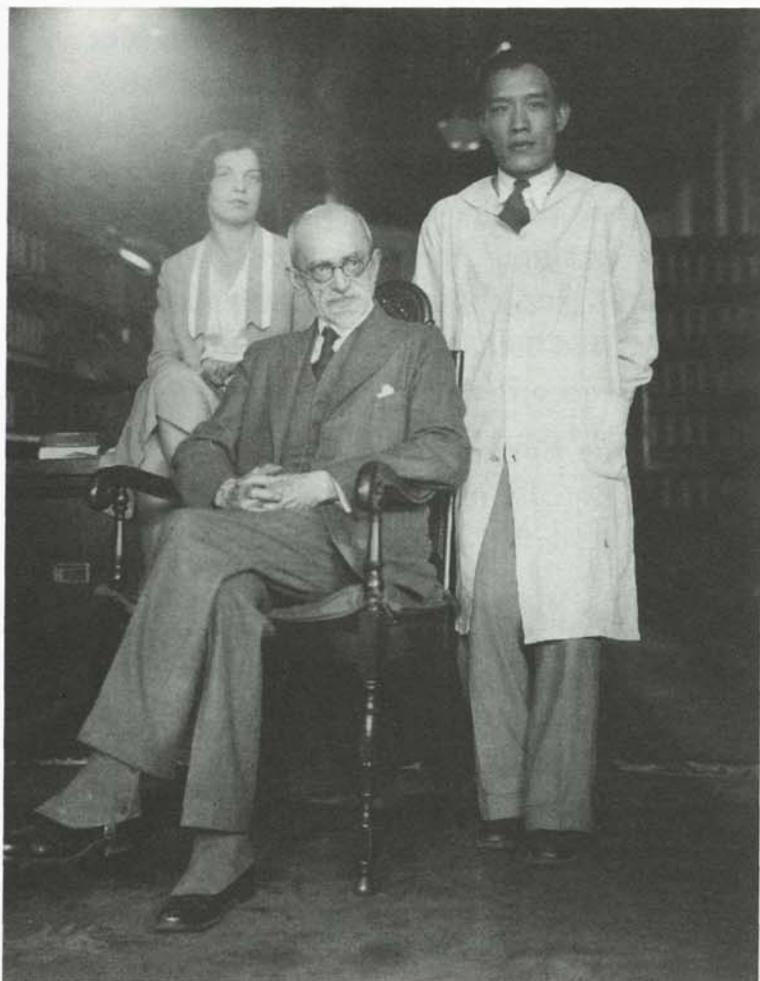
Saturday, February Sixth

at half past four.

R.S.V.P.

TEA

7. Invitation Card for New Year's Tea at McGill, 1932. Gest Library Papers, box 237, Chinese New Year Tea, Mudd Library, Princeton University. Photograph courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University.



8. The first curator of Gest Chinese Research Library, Robert de Résillac-Roese with two assistants, P. Turner, secretary and Sidney D. Quong, research assistant, *ca.* 1931–1933. Gest Library Papers, box 237, Large Photographs from Small, Mudd Library, Princeton University. Photograph courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University.

When THE GEST CHINESE RESEARCH LIBRARY was established and opened at McGill University in the spring of 1926, the then Curator was unacquainted with the Chinese language and therefore entirely dependent upon outsiders and certain Chinese students at McGill University, and the less said of the knowledge of these young gentlemen of their own national literature the better, for it can only be described as “truly pathetic.” It was in such circumstances that the catalogues for the early accessions were prepared. When I received copies of these catalogues I immediately went over them and was aghast at what I found therein, and therefore took upon myself the task of doing what I could to eliminate the worst

of the glaring mistakes, but as the books themselves were not available for check [*sic*], I was of necessity forced to fall back upon information obtained from Chinese catalogues and other sources, unsatisfactory as such a method was and also open to error. Later on I understood to do the entire work of preparing the detailed notes for a catalogue raisonné for all works that passed through my hands, and there are two typescript copies of this catalogues at THE LIBRARY and one in my possession.⁴³

Nancy Lee Swann, who joined the library in 1928, knew Chinese well and was a well trained sinologist. Equally important, she carefully applied the Gillis index system and redid all the cataloging, thus resolving the cataloging crisis.

From 1926 to 1932, the Gest collection grew very quickly, increasing from 10,750 volumes in 1926 to about one hundred thousand in 1932. Of these, twenty-seven thousand had been purchased and stored in Peking because of China's book embargo in 1930 and Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931. These books were held in storage and shipped directly to Princeton, New Jersey in 1937. According to Swann, in 1934, the Gest Library had a total of one hundred thousand volumes in Chinese, three thousand five hundred volumes in Western languages and thirty-five titles of periodicals and newspapers. The library became the second largest Chinese library in North America. Only the one hundred forty thousand volumes in the Library of Congress was greater. Harvard-Yenching Library at Harvard University was the third largest with seventy-nine thousand five hundred volumes.⁴⁴

To promote the library, Arthur Currie invited Berthold Laufer, professor of anthropology and curator of the Field Museum in Chicago to visit the library. Laufer wrote a short pamphlet entitled *The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University*, which McGill published in 1929 with a foreword by Currie, in which Currie expressed his enthusiastic expectations for the Gest Library:

The institution of this remarkable collection coincided with the awakening in Canada of a new interest in China and things Chinese. . . . It is recognized that the influence of

education tends to create mutual understanding between nations. . . . The man who knows something of the history, the environment and the philosophy of another people tends to look upon that people from a friendly point of view, and in the minds of University students, national barriers are breaking down.

It was with these thoughts in mind that we at McGill undertook to develop studies bearing on China; when at the same time we were given the opportunity of adding to our library a collection of Chinese classics, we accepted with enthusiasm, and so in McGill University the books of China have taken their place beside the literature of the western world. We look forward to a time when Chinese as well as western students will make full use of the Gest collection, and we believe that it will prove a real factor in the drawing together of East and West.⁴⁵

The collection soon attracted much attention from the world outside McGill. In the Annual Report of 1929, the curator wrote:

Many inquiries in reference to many subjects were made during the past year from all kinds of sources, not alone from universities, private persons, large business concerns, etc. in Canada and the United States, but also from Europe. To instance, information was requested re Chinese tunnels, the history of spectacles, history of paper, history of paper money, about certain plants, diseases of the eye, prescriptions for sclerosis, etc., etc.⁴⁶

The 1930 Annual Report stated:

Among the visitors to the Library were Prince Tokugawa Iyesato [1863-1940] of Japan, accompanied by his son, the Japanese Minister at Ottawa; Their Royal Highnesses, Prince and Princess Takamatsu of Japan; Mr. Lin Yutang, Chinese Technical Delegate to the League of Nations; Lady [Dorthea Soothill] Hosie, who has written many works on China; Mr. Charles S. Gardner, Director for the Survey of Materials and



9. Distinguished visitors to the Gest Chinese Research Library in 1930. Left to right: McGill University Librarian Gerhard Lomer; Principal Arthur N. Currie; Prince Tokugawa Iyesato; Tokugawa's son Tokugawa Jyemasa (also spelled Iyemasa), the Japanese Minister to Canada; Guion M. Gest, mid-November 1930. Gest Library Papers, box 241, Japanese Legation, Ottawa, Mudd Library, Princeton University.

Photograph courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection,
Princeton University.

Facilities for Chinese Studies; Professor J. J. L. Duyvendak of Leiden University.⁴⁷ (For a photograph of some of the prominent guests visiting the Gest Chinese Research Library in 1930, see figure 9.)

The 1933 Annual Report included this roster of visitors.

Among the visitors to the Library were Professor Seiko Kubota, M.D., a pharmacologist from Mukden, Manchuria; Professor Jean Escarra, Chargé de Cours à l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, Paris, France; Dr. Bernard E. Read, formerly of Peiping Union Medical College; Mr. Langdon

Warner, Curator of Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Mass; Dr. Esson M. Gale, of the University of California; Upton Close (Mr. Josep Washington Hall) of New York City; Lord Irwin, of London, England; Dr. C. Walter Young of Peiping, China.⁴⁸

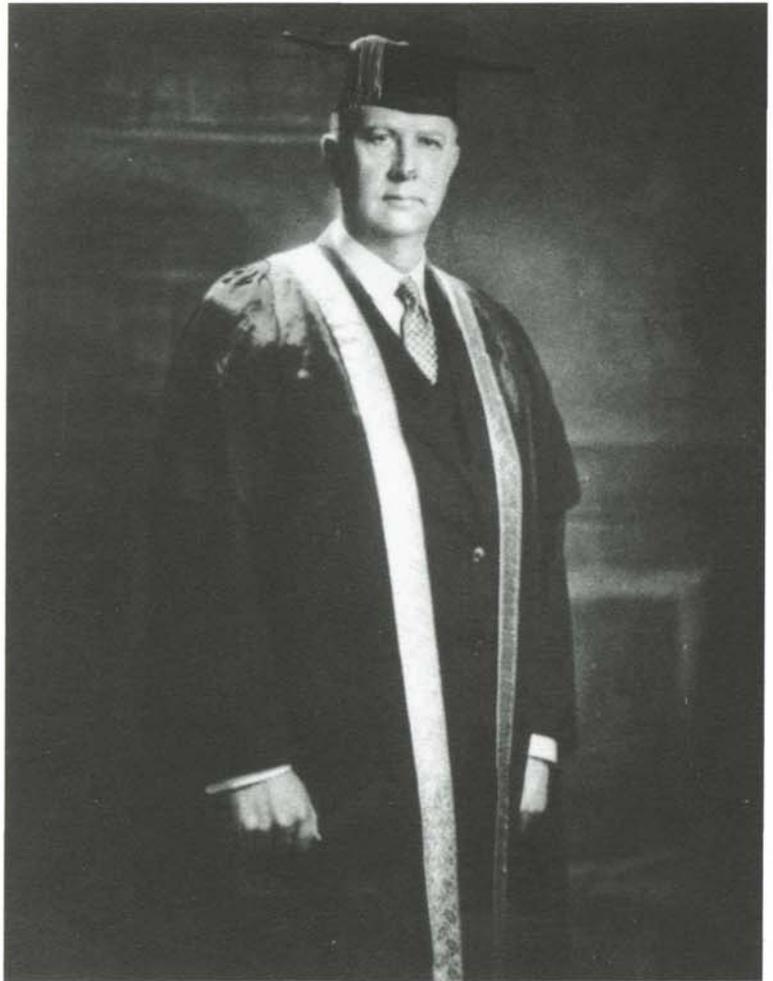
By the 1930s, the Gest Library clearly had become a major center of ancient Chinese texts in North America and enjoyed a high reputation in the field of Sinology around the world. Even scholars from China came to visit the library.

THE DEPARTMENT OF CHINESE STUDIES, 1930-1934

The most important consequence of the Gest Library's being located at McGill was that McGill University established a Department of Chinese Studies, the first Chinese studies program in Canada. However, the ideas of the principal and the chancellor of McGill about this department were somewhat different. Arthur Currie, the principal, intended to use education as a means to promote international peace, while Edward Beatty, the chancellor, hoped this department would promote Canadian trade with China.

Arthur Currie had been a general, commander of the First Canadian Division and the commander of the Canadian Corps in Europe during World War I, and the first Canadian to be promoted to the rank of general. (See figure 10.) When the war was over, Currie was a Canadian hero and received honors nationally and internationally. In 1920, McGill selected him principal, the eighth in the university's history. His war experience led him to state, "War is not a means to establish peace. It is a delusion and a lie."⁴⁹ What was the means to peace? Currie's answer was education. He was convinced that mutual understanding between nations gained through learning was the means to peace.⁵⁰ The post-war international situation also led him to promote Chinese studies at McGill. In a 1931 letter to Gest, he wrote,

I am beginning to think that Europe's day is done; she no longer dominates the world. The hope of England herself lies in the Empire, but she herself does not yet appreciate that



10. Sir Arthur Currie,
Principal, 1920–1933,
McGill University, *ca.*
1930. PU 010537,
Photographic Collection,
McGill University
Archives. Photograph
courtesy of McGill
University Archives.

fact. Before the war she was on top of the world and beheld her ships sailing the seven seas and back again carrying raw products one way and manufactured articles the other. That day is gone and will never return . . . The Pacific Ocean will become the centre of the world's political activity . . . The war proved that no nation can live unto itself alone and that whatever one nation does must influence for good and ill every other nation. That is why I believe the University did a wise and far seeing thing in setting up a Department of Chinese Studies . . .⁵¹

Chancellor Edward Beatty was a businessman, the chairman of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and a leading figure in Montreal business circles. (See figure 11.) He was concerned with increasing Canadian



11. Sir Edward Beatty, Chancellor, 1921–1942, McGill University. PR 001861, Photographic Collection, McGill University Archives. Photograph courtesy of McGill University Archives.

trade with China when he saw the United States surge ahead of Canada in this domain. In a 1926 letter to Arthur Currie, he wrote,

I must confess that the principal factor which influences me is the advantage to Canada in future trade relation with China, which I regard as of very great value and for which I should think we would be wise in making preparation. It is not, I think, exaggerating the present situation in China to say that one of the factors which has ensured the American nation more favourable treatment than that accorded Great Britain has been the presence of leaders in the so-called “Student Movement” who received their education in American universities.⁵²

On 20 December 1926, Arthur Currie submitted a proposal to the

McGill Board of Governors to establish a Department of Chinese Studies, arguing that, from a political point of view with respect to the Canadian position in the Pacific, it was very desirable that there should be a better understanding between Canada and China; that from an economic point of view, Canada should develop its trade with the Orient and incidentally obtain favorable trade treaties with China; and that the Gest Library provided the archival resources and foundation for bringing Chinese studies to McGill. The McGill Board of Governors approved this plan and decided to devote \$8,000 annually to the department.⁵³

The department was originally to have been established in 1927. Professors from the departments of history and politics were asked to offer courses on Chinese language, literature, philosophy, history, politics, and economics. However, Currie preferred to have a native Chinese scholar as chairman of the department. This proved difficult because most Chinese scholars who possessed profound Chinese expertise had no mastery of English. Thus, for lack of a chairman, the department was not formally established until 1930.

Currie was personally in charge of the search for a chairman. He asked for recommendations from "almost every known Sinologist" and personally interviewed the candidates. The results, however, disappointed him. "We have had many suggestions made to us with regard to possible heads," wrote Currie, "but on investigation the majority of them have been found wanting. Some of them were little better than newspaper correspondents and journalists who had written much about China without any profound knowledge of the subject."⁵⁴ He even approached Hu Shih about the position in 1928 but was unsuccessful. At that time Hu was the president of the China Public School (*Zhongguo gongxue*) in Shanghai. A suitable person finally appeared in 1929 when Kiang Kang-hu approached McGill for this position.⁵⁵ (See figure 12.)

Kiang Kang-hu, a well known Chinese scholar, was born to a mandarin-scholar family of Jiangxi in 1883. His grandfather Jiang Shuyun (1830-1892) had become a provincial-level degree holder (*jueren*) in 1864, a metropolitan-level degree holder (*jinshi*) in 1877, and was appointed a member of Hanlin Academy (*Hanlinyuan*). His father Jiang Dexuan (1854-1910) earned a provincial-level degree in 1882, a metropolitan-level degree in 1886, and rose to become a second secretary of the Ministry of Works in Peking. Kiang himself studied at the Peking



12. Dr. Kang-hu Kiang, Department of Chinese Studies, 1934. PU 028536, Photographic Collection, McGill University Archives. Photograph courtesy of McGill University Archives.

Imperial Academy (Jingshi daxuetang) in 1899 and earned a provincial-level degree in 1901; traveled to Japan three times in 1901, 1903, and 1907; and studied politics and law at Waseda University during his 1901 trip. In 1901, he was appointed director of the Beiyang Translation and Compilation Bureau (Beiyang bianyiju) with an official rank of four (*sipin guan*) and remained in that position until 1905. In 1906, he became a second secretary in the Ministry of Education and assistant professor of Japanese at Peking Imperial Academy. Kiang had been politically active since his youth, and from 1910 to 1911 he traveled to Europe to investigate various European political movements. He organized the Chinese Socialist Party (Zhongguo shehuidang) to promote socialism and became the leader of the party. When the government banned this party in 1913, he was prosecuted by the Yuan Shikai government. Kiang fled to the United States as a refugee in 1914. He taught Chinese

language and Chinese culture at the University of California, Berkeley from 1914 to 1920 and received an honorary doctoral degree from that university. Kiang also worked as a consultant to the Oriental Collection of the Library of Congress. In 1920, he returned to China and then traveled to Russia to study Soviet-style socialism in 1922. What he learned there reportedly disillusioned him about socialism.⁵⁶ He then turned to academic work. In 1923 he was invited to be the president of Nanfang daxue in Shanghai in which position he remained until 1927. He also traveled to Burma, Siam, Annam, The Philippines, and other Southeast Asian areas during these years.⁵⁷ In 1927, Kiang accepted an invitation from the Library of Congress to serve as a consultant. While there, he learned that McGill was looking for a Chinese scholar to chair its Department of Chinese Studies.⁵⁸

After receiving Kiang's application, Arthur Currie wrote to Edward T. Williams, professor in the Department of Oriental Languages, University of California at Berkeley, to confirm Kiang's academic background saying, "We need a scholar very much more than an organizer, and we need a man who can as far as possible interpret the spirit of the Oriental philosophy and literature." Williams responded, ". . . Dr. Kiang is one of the foremost living scholars among the Chinese, perhaps the foremost. He is without doubt thoroughly qualified to 'interpret the spirit of the Oriental philosophy and literature.'" ⁵⁹ Currie was concerned also about Kiang's political activities and wrote to the Canadian Legation in Washington, D.C., to investigate "if Kiang was suspected in any way." The agency made informal inquiries to the British Embassy and the United States Department of State, both of which confirmed that there was "absolutely nothing against Dr. Kiang."⁶⁰ Currie interviewed Kiang and was "very impressed." At the end, he appointed Kiang chairman of the Department of Chinese Studies with the rank of full professor. Thus, the Department of Chinese Studies was inaugurated in 1930 after a four-year delay.⁶¹ Currie was very proud of his achievement. In a letter to the League of Nations, he wrote, "This is the only department of an Occidental university concerned with Chinese studies which is headed by a Chinese scholar with the rank of full professor."⁶²

Currie had made an excellent choice. The sole faculty member in the department, Kiang introduced a curriculum of three courses and

taught two of these courses each year. The first, an introduction to Chinese civilization, an annual course consisting of a series of lectures on history, geography, government and social institutions, philosophy, religions, literature, and the arts, was taught in English and was well received by students and local residents. The second was a Chinese-language course in which Kiang taught reading, writing, speaking, and translation. The third was an advanced course in reading both modern documents and ancient texts written in Chinese. The first two courses were offered to second-year students or higher and those who had a good understanding in other subjects. The third course was for graduate students only. Although the enrollment was restricted, the courses generated interest as the registration figures show. Total annual enrollment in the courses Kiang offered grew from twenty to twenty-seven over three academic years, with as many as twenty-three students in the Chinese civilization course. On the average, the number of female students enrolled in the courses was twice the number of male students. In 1932, the department admitted two students to a Master of Arts program.⁶³

Kiang was also actively engaged in the local community. He organized the Hungtao Society (Hongdaohui) in Montreal for the "diffusion of Chinese thought and popularization of Chinese philosophy." He and other members voluntarily gave lectures on Chinese culture and courses on modern Chinese to the local community. Under his leadership, the society grew very quickly, and by 1932 there were 350 members, 200 Canadians and 150 Chinese. With the membership fees, the society set up two scholarships at McGill, one for students in the Department of Chinese Studies and one for Chinese students in other departments. Kiang became the McGill faculty member who gave the most outside lectures.⁶⁴ In addition, he published a total of twenty-five articles and papers in the three years that he was at McGill.⁶⁵

Arthur Currie enthusiastically supported the department, and he approached Oxford University Press about publishing Kiang's manuscript on Chinese civilization, as Kiang planned to use it as a textbook. Currie also traveled to China to recruit students for the department. After three years of hard work and with the department was seemingly firmly established, Kiang decided to take a one-year leave to return to

China. With permission from Currie, he left in the summer of 1933, scheduled to return in the fall of 1934. Unfortunately, this proved to be the wrong time to depart, for during this absence, the university decided to discontinue the department and to cancel his contract, and thus Kiang Kang-hu never returned to McGill.⁶⁶

Two factors contributed to this decision to discontinue the Chinese Department at McGill, the Great Depression and the sudden death of Arthur Currie on 30 November 1933 at the age of fifty-eight. McGill was a private school, and its operations relied heavily on donations and endowment income. During the Great Depression, low interest rates resulted in a drastic decline in endowment income, and many promised donations were rescinded. McGill had been operating in the red since 1926, and the university's deficit soared. From 1926 to 1927, the deficit was \$197,071. For the period 1927 to 1928, it increased to \$208,847 and then to \$263,251 in the next fiscal year. It soared to \$316,552 in the 1929-1930 academic year and jumped to \$338,357 in the following academic year. The deficit dropped slightly to \$337,234 for the fiscal period 1931 to 1932, was further reduced to \$222,845 in 1932-1933, but then rose again to \$269,301 in 1933-1934.⁶⁷ The McGill Board of Governors took deficit control as its first priority and set up a special financial committee to seek suggestions on cutting expenses. In October 1933, the Board of Governors made a decision that McGill should bring its deficit to zero within five years, and if that goal could not be met, the board members would pay the deficit from their own pockets.⁶⁸ Beatty asked the finance committee to suggest ways to reduce the deficit. During these years, McGill sold its securities, increased student fees, froze hiring, cut academic programs, and reduced salaries and wages. The Department of Chinese Studies was a victim of this retrenchment.

Ironically, the Department of Chinese Studies had been set up in 1930 when McGill encountered the largest deficit of this period and was discontinued in 1934 when McGill's financial situation had improved greatly. It is thus arguable that the financial difficulty that McGill experienced was not the true reason for eliminating the Department of Chinese Studies. Currie had been the most enthusiastic supporter of the Chinese studies program, and his death following a stroke withdrew the

last, best protection for the department. Currie did not intend to disband the Chinese studies program even though McGill was in financial difficulty. On 3 November 1933, less than a month before his death, he sent a message to Kiang to urge him to return on time.⁶⁹ But Currie's passing changed everything.⁷⁰

McGill had no official principal for almost two years following Currie's death, during which time Edward W. Beatty, the chancellor of McGill, served as unofficial principal.⁷¹ In the meeting of the Finance Committee on 17 May 1934, Ira MacKay, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and a member of the finance committee, suggested that the university should not continue to pay the cost of the Department of Chinese Studies from the university's general fund and that the department should find its own funding. On 5 July 1934, the Board of Governors accepted the Finance Committee's recommendation and decided to discontinue the Department of Chinese Studies. It then informed Kiang, who was in China, that his contract with McGill had been terminated.⁷² The Department of Chinese Studies, and with it Arthur Currie's dream of building a strong Asian-studies program at McGill to open a door to Asian civilizations, was gone.⁷³

MOVE TO PRINCETON, 1935-1936

At the same meeting in May 1934, the Board of Governors also decided that McGill would stop supporting the Gest Library and as well discontinue Nancy Swann's service at the university.⁷⁴ McGill chose to close the library, too. However, closing the library did not necessarily imply moving the library out of the university. In fact, McGill tried to keep the Gest Library at the university, but all of these attempts failed. Eventually in 1936, Guion Gest sold his collection to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

Documents on this part of the history of the Gest Library suggest that the financial difficulty of McGill at that time was what caused the university to give up the Gest Library. But on close examination, several other factors may have that contributed to its sale. First, Currie's death, undeniably, was a crucial factor. At least Guion Gest regarded it as such

in that he wrote Nancy Swann in March, 1935, "It is unfortunate, indeed, that Sir Arthur Currie died and the feeling of cooperation that existed during his life has been broken."⁷⁵ Second, Guion Gest had deposited his collection at McGill, and McGill expected that he would eventually donate it to the university. As evidence, Currie wrote in 1933, "I have always understood that this library was on loan to the University, but Mr. Gest has always said, too, that he hoped this would be its permanent home."⁷⁶ Based on this assumption, McGill invested in the library in many ways and even built an academic program associated with it. Gest, however, never intended to donate it to McGill, as evidenced by a letter he wrote in 1930, "This Library, at least during my life time, will not be given to anyone, . . . You must remember that the creating of a library of this kind has taken considerable time and money, . . ."⁷⁷ The misunderstanding that arose between Gest and McGill over the Gest Library turned a happy initial relationship between McGill and Gest into a sad ending for both. It seems that Gest had never conveyed his intentions clearly enough to McGill; and at the same time, McGill did not ask Gest for clarification until 1935.

Third, although Currie supported the Gest Library in many ways, his view on how that library should be used was quite different from Gest's. Currie saw the library as an open door to knowledge of Chinese civilization to be run primarily for educational purposes, while Gest was more interested in pursuing projects that could demonstrate the practical value of his collection. Currie was thus reluctant to promote Gest's ideas, and Gest complained that his collection was not being fully utilized at McGill. In a letter dated 14 February 1933 to Frederick P. Keppel, president of the Carnegie Foundation, Currie expressed this difference:

Mr. Gest felt that within his Library, investigators would find something of great practical value, particularly in the realms of Medicine and Engineering. And so he has always pressed me to engage a Chinese pharmacologist, to prosecute research in Chinese Medicine. He also thought that electrical and other engineers would be sure to find among his books something of great practical value at the present day. This, you will understand, would soon develop into a very expensive

project. I have always felt that the best use to make of the Library, in its earlier days, was to develop an interest in and a knowledge of Chinese civilization. I felt that in using the Library in this way, we were opening a door to a knowledge of a civilization of which we know altogether too little. . . . My attitude leaned to the academic side; and Mr. Gest's more to the practical side.⁷⁸

Another conflict arose around a project for translating the twenty-four Chinese dynastic histories into English, a project that Arthur Hummel, chairman of the American Council of Learned Societies' Committee on the Promotion of Chinese Studies, and Nancy Lee Swann proposed in January 1932. The committee secretary Mortimer Graves told Guion Gest that the committee would provide \$16,500 over a period of five years, and asked McGill to raise an additional \$30,000 for the project.⁷⁹ Gest asked Currie to support the project. After consulting with several experts, Currie turned it down. Kiang Kang-hu advised Currie that there were no scholars in North America who were qualified to undertake such a project and that because the twenty-four dynastic histories could be found in several places in North America, such a translation project was not necessarily one that McGill needed to initiate.⁸⁰ Currie wrote to Gest,

I have given this matter a great deal of thought. . . . I have taken counsel with several whom I would regard as qualified to judge and it has been impressed upon me that this is a most unreasonable under-estimation of the amount of work involved. You know so much more about these matters than I do that I hesitate to venture an opinion, but I think before beginning we ought to have the proper appreciation of what is involved. The Chinese Dynastic Histories, now twenty-six in number, record the events of the past six thousand years and in their extent amount to over four thousand chuan or volumes. They are, with only a few exceptions, work compiled by groups of official historians and mandarin scholars of their respective epochs. In addition to government documents and other biographies, there are special writings on subjects

relating to all natural and social sciences. I am told that the translation of them into the English language would require at least one hundred Chinese scholars in various fields probably better qualified than any in America in addition to one hundred Western sinologists better qualified than most now in America, besides two to three hundred Chinese and Western clerical assistants of superior qualifications, all of whom would be required to engage in full time work for the five years proposed. The opinion has been expressed that to translate these histories by the staff now suggested would require them to continue their work for the next four or five centuries.

It is said that in this whole world there are not at present enough Chinese scholars to write the English translation or enough Western scholars to read the Chinese texts. Certainly no Chinese or Western scholars now living is able to undertake the work covering so many different branches of knowledge. As you should well know there are many Western sinologists who speak the Chinese language quite fluently but who can scarcely translate a Chinese text. I have also been told that one of the greatest French sinologists living in the last forty years undertook, in his lifetime, to translate but one of the shortest of these volumes and died before the work was half completed. Frankly, Mr. Gest, this is a most tremendous undertaking more than equivalent, far more than equivalent to preparing a new *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

It seems to me that we should begin in a more fundamental way and that is to try to increase as soon as possible and as rapidly as possible the number of Western Sinologists, some who really know the Chinese writing. I believe that what we might call a summer school takes place this year at Harvard. I would use my utmost endeavor to have a similar school take place here in the summer of 1933-34.⁸¹

Fourth, there were the questions of the significance of the collection and its estimated monetary value. Once he realized that Gest might not donate his collection to McGill, Currie wanted to buy it from Gest.

However, when he consulted Sinologists about the relevance, significance, and value of the Gest Library, their opinions confused him.

As mentioned above, the significance of the Gest collection lay in its rarity. Writing in 1954, Hu Shih concluded that 41,195 volumes in the Gest collection were rare books, some of them so rare that they could only be found in this collection, and he argued that this collection had value to a research university.⁸² Some twenty years earlier, this question with respect to Guion Gest's collection had already arisen: Is a collection good enough for a museum also good for a university library? In May of 1934, when Gerhard Lomer, the McGill University librarian, learned that the Board of Governors planned to withdraw its financial support for the Gest Library, he wrote this to the board: "Whatever the Governors' reason may be, my considered professional opinion is that it would be a great mistake to have the Library placed in another institution, and that we are sure, at a later date, to regret any precipitate action."⁸³ About a year earlier, Kiang Kang-hu contrariwise had told Arthur Currie that the Buddhist texts, which made up thirty-five per cent of the value of the collection, were of little use other than as museum exhibits.⁸⁴ Then, in December of 1935 on a visit to Montreal, Ferdinand D. Lessing, newly appointed professor of Chinese in the Department of Oriental Languages at the University of California, expressed an opinion that concurred with Kiang's, "[T]he collection [is] really a bibliophile's collection, of very little use to a university that wanted a good working Chinese library. They [are] museum pieces, but not suitable to turn students loose into."⁸⁵ These issues are part of a classic debate about rare book collections in university libraries. Decisions about collecting such items are usually based on price and the university's financial status, rather than on the immediate utility of the works, and Currie knew that McGill had no money for museum pieces at that time.

How much the Gest collection was worth was what Currie very much wanted to determine. According to a short note prepared by I. V. Gillis, the total expenditure on the library from 1926 to 1931 was \$208,483.64.⁸⁶ However, one should be cautious with this sum, as Gillis did not give any detailed information on what went into determining the total or what the purpose of this note was. Arthur W. Hummel, who in the spring of 1933 had gone to McGill to look over the Gest holdings,

told Kiang Kang-hu that Gest had approached Library of Congress about buying his library. The memorandum of that visit reflects the intensity of the discussion.

Kiang asked him confidentially how much he [Gest] wanted for it. Hummel hesitated to reply but finally did and told him, confidentially, three hundred thousand dollars. Hummel said they [Library of Congress] would never consider anything like this, they are cut etc., etc. and at present could not do it. But they might take parts of it and give him some lesser sum. . . . In Kiang's opinion, the library is worth nothing near that sum. Kiang says he [Gest] got the books very, very cheaply and that was a ridiculous valuation.⁸⁷

As mentioned above, in December 1935, Ferdinand Lessing went to McGill, at Guion Gest's urging, to look over the collection. Professor Charles Edmund Fryer of the Department of History at McGill University, who had arranged the invitation for Lessing's visit, asked him how much the University of California could put up for purchase if they were to consider buying the Gest collection and separating out of it what they wanted. Lessing said that twenty-five thousand dollars was a possible minimum and fifty thousand the maximum.⁸⁸ Such vastly different opinions left Arthur Currie uncertain if McGill should buy the collection and how much McGill should pay for it if the university did decide to acquire it. Most unfortunately, Currie died before resolving this issue. In 1936, the Institute for Advanced Study paid one hundred thirty thousand dollars for this collection, calculated at the rate of one dollar per volume, though at that time the size of the collection had been somewhat overestimated.⁸⁹

Even if Currie had proposed buying the collection, the Board of Governors might not have approved this purchase because McGill simply did not have the money for such an acquisition. From 1930 to 1944, the collections at McGill libraries remained steady at four hundred fifty thousand volumes. That is, McGill essentially bought no books during these fifteen years. Under such circumstances, it would have been very difficult to have persuaded the Board to pay one hundred thirty thousand dollars for the Gest collection without allocating comparable resources to

other faculties and projects. Furthermore, in 1932, Currie had asked each faculty and staff member to accept a salary cut of between three and ten percent. The total saving from this measure had been only eighty-seven thousand dollars, or sixty-seven per cent of the price eventually paid for the Gest collection.⁹⁰

Another factor disturbing Currie had been that the institutions who wanted to buy this collection were all American, from the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. No Canadian institutions joined this competition. He apparently had come to believe that the Americans wanted to have this collection placed in the United States. Currie recalled that in 1927 on a visit to Honolulu, “. . . I was told by a prominent professor of an American university that we could not hope to retain at McGill Mr. Gest’s Library, that the pressure upon him [Gest] to house it in the United States would be too strong for any resistance on our part.”⁹¹ Currie had found this attitude distasteful and had endeavored to fend off any attempt by institutions in the United States to buy Gest’s collection. For instance, when he learned that Guion Gest had informed McGill that he intended to transfer the Buddhist Tripitaka to Columbia University, Currie wrote to the president of Columbia University, saying, “It looks as if the several warnings I have received that the pressure by American universities to obtain possession of the Library stored at McGill would become so great that we could not retain it, are now justified.”⁹² In both McGill University and Princeton University Archives, files indicate that several other American universities, such as Michigan, Chicago, California, and Columbia, as well as Harvard, had also conveyed interest in acquiring the collection.

Perhaps the idea of moving the library to an American university had come from Guion Gest himself. In a letter to Gest on 11 September, 1929, Robert P. Blake, the director of library of Harvard University, wrote,

I was much interested to learn from Professor Lucius Porter and from Dr. Laufer that you had acquired a marvelous collection of Sung, Yuan, and Ming printed books and manuscripts dealing with Buddhistic matters, which you would like

to place in some American university where it would be useful to students and scholars interested in the subject. . . . I understand from Dr. Laufer that you desire to have a special room for the collection, and this we should be able to offer you in Boylston Hall, directly connected with the Chinese collection.⁹³

Finally, not everyone at McGill liked to deal with the Guion Gest or his library. One of these was Carleton W. Stanley, a professor and assistant to the principal of McGill. In preparing for the 1931 tea in the library, Gest asked McGill to arrange a broadcast of the event from the library through the Northern Electric Company and their hook-up with international news to Shanghai and Tokyo. He also asked Edward Beatty, as chancellor of McGill, to give a speech, because Arthur Currie was traveling in India and China at that time. After Gest expressed this idea to Stanley in person, Stanley wrote this in his letter to Beatty, "I have just spent an hour with Mr. Gest, who, you probably know, is the donor of the Gest Chinese Research Library. In his mind, the Library really seems to be something like a sword hanging over our heads, with which he threatens us when he wishes to stir us up to give him more publicity."⁹⁴ In response to this letter, Beatty wrote, that it would be difficult to arrange for the company to do the broadcast. And he added, ". . . I . . . will not be available to speak over the broadcast. . . . Perhaps, Mr. Gest would like to do it himself."⁹⁵ Clearly such an unfavorable atmosphere had already been building up among many others involved.

With these concerns in mind, it seems apparent that potential problems leading to the sad removal of Gest's collection from Canada had slowly accumulated over the years and that McGill's financial difficulty likely served only as the fuse for the final explosion.

The Great Depression had affected Guion Gest's financial well-being, and he needed money to save his business. Gest came to McGill to ask for a loan on the pledge of his library. The Board of Governors did not approve this idea at the beginning because McGill was not a financial institution and had in fact been selling off its own property in order to continue operations. Currie successfully persuaded the board to give Gest two loans for a total of \$25,000. One for \$10,000 was a mortgage on two pieces of Gest's property in Montreal, and the other

\$15,000 was for "purchase" of his library. The agreement stated, "The University has agreed to purchase from Guion M. Gest the Gest Chinese Library for the sum of Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000). A condition of this sale is that Mr. Gest shall have the right to re-purchase the library at the same figure, plus interest at 6% compounded half yearly, at any time up to the thirtieth of April 1934."⁹⁶ Thus, McGill University records confirmed the principle that Gest could repurchase the library, but only when he had repaid the two loans.⁹⁷ A few months later, Gest asked for an additional loan of \$20,000, and McGill rejected his request on the grounds that "the University had no money to invest at the present time and as we considered it inadvisable to sell securities at the present market in order to provide money . . ."⁹⁸ This conditioned loan agreement actually undermined the relationship between McGill and Guion Gest. Because Gest definitely would not sell his library at the price of the loans, he began actively looking for buyers. This put university officials at McGill into the difficult position of being forced to explain the situation and defend its position whenever a potential buyer approached McGill.

From the beginning of 1933, rumors emerged that Gest was under pressure to move the library to the United States and that McGill was glad to get rid of the library.⁹⁹ Currie wrote a long letter to the president of the Carnegie Foundation, a major benefactor of McGill, to explain McGill's position.¹⁰⁰ As mentioned above, when Gest asked to transfer the Buddhist sutras to Columbia University, Currie wrote to the president of Columbia to stop this attempt.¹⁰¹ In order to deal with this issue, Currie developed a strategy: one, to raise funds to buy the library, and two, to prevent other institutions from buying this library from McGill.¹⁰² But by the end of 1933, Currie's fund raising had failed, and Gest also failed to find a buyer. McGill extended the deadline for repaying the loans two years to ease the tension between McGill and Gest.¹⁰³

This uneasy balance was broken when McGill decided to withdraw all financial support for both the Department of Chinese Studies and the Gest Library on 17 May 1934.¹⁰⁴ Nancy Lee Swann was informed on 21 May that her and her assistants' services at McGill would be terminated at the end of August,¹⁰⁵ Gest was informed on 10 July that the library would be closed at the end of July,¹⁰⁶ and Kiang was informed on 12 October that his contract would be discontinued.¹⁰⁷ These decisions

were announced so suddenly that none of the parties affected were prepared for the drastic turn of events. Gerhard Lomer warned the Board of Governors in writing that it would be "a great mistake" to remove this library from McGill, but his entreaties went unheard.¹⁰⁸ Lomer knew that McGill authorities had been pained for years in dealing with the uncertain status of this collection and wanted to resolve this matter. When Gest complained about the closing of his library, Lomer told him that McGill had closed it because the benefits of the collection were "too indefinite to be regarded as an asset involving annual expenditure."¹⁰⁹ Gest insisted on the reopening of the library and promised to pay all expenses including Nancy Lee Swann's salary.¹¹⁰ Although his arrangement actually left Nancy Lee Swann without pay for months, the library stayed open until 1935.

At that time, the Gest Library occupied one of the best floors of the Redpath Library building at McGill University, and yet McGill no longer had a Chinese program. The longer the library continued operation, the more frequently its occupancy of that space was questioned. In 1935, the McGill Library Committee suggested moving the Gest Library to some other location. In August of 1935, G. R. Lomer informed Gest that "unless the library is offered to McGill as gift, it will be removed [on] September 16."¹¹¹ On 12 November 1935, nine years and nine months after its opening at McGill, the Gest Library was officially closed. The only matter left unsolved was how to deal with the uncertain status of this collection.

In September of 1935, Arthur Eustace Morgan was appointed as the ninth principal of McGill. (See figure 13.) Morgan was from England and had been the first principal of University College, Hull from 1926 to 1935 before his move to McGill. Dorothy McMurray, who was the principal's secretary at the time and eventually served four principals of McGill from 1920 to 1963, commented that Morgan was somewhat left wing.¹¹² It was said of Morgan that "During his administration there was controversy over the attitude the University authorities should adopt towards the small but vocal group of socialist professors and students."¹¹³ Although he was invited by Edward Beatty, the chancellor of McGill, Morgan did not get along with Beatty. He served at McGill less than two years and resigned in May 1937.¹¹⁴



13. Arthur Eustace Morgan, Principal, McGill University, 1935–1937. PR010532, Photographic Collection, McGill University Archives. Photograph courtesy of McGill University Archives.

In dealing with Guion Gest, Morgan's approach was quite different from Currie's. Currie valued Gest's contribution to McGill and thus always was prepared to compromise with Gest, while Morgan simply argued that McGill owned the library and thus put his efforts toward preventing other institutions from assisting Gest repurchase the collection. For instance, when Gest suggested that McGill and he should join forces to apply for funding from the Carnegie Foundation, Morgan rejected this proposal, saying that the library "is a property of McGill."¹¹⁵ This strategy put McGill's reputation at risk because it created an impression that McGill was using the repayment deadline against Gest rather than seeking a solution to satisfy both sides. When Gest approached Abraham Flexner (1866–1959), director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton from 1930 to 1939, about purchasing his collection, McGill faced a dilemma.

Abraham Flexner was one of the most influential managers in American philanthropic history.¹¹⁶ (See figure 14.) He had served the Rockefeller Foundation for fifteen years (1913–1928) and spent one hundred twenty million dollars of the foundation funds on American medical education.¹¹⁷ He successfully pursued the Fuld and Bamberger families to create a new experimental organization of higher learning, and with their financial backing, he designed and founded the Institute for Advanced Study and served as the first director of the institute from 1930 to 1939.¹¹⁸

Flexner wanted to buy the Gest collections for two reasons. First, the Institute for Advanced Study was new and had a School of Humanistic Studies, which focused primarily on the Western classics. But Flexner hoped that the study of oriental history and cultures would later be added in, as he foresaw the probable importance of the Far East after World War I. Second, he “was certain that if the [Gest] Library were not purchased promptly as a unit, it would be broken up into items and disposed of.” He was deeply concerned lest this happen.¹¹⁹ On February 12, 1936, Flexner wrote to Morgan:

I have been approached in the matter of the Gest Chinese Library and have had a conversation with Mr. Gest on the subject. Before taking any definite steps in the matter I wish to be perfectly clear as to the relationship between McGill University, Mr. Gest, and the Library. I shall under no circumstance compete with McGill for the Library if McGill is in position to purchase and utilize it. On the other hand, if it is, as Mr. Gest leads me to suppose, clear that McGill University does not intend to purchase, I should like very much to know what the situation is from your point of view, for I am most anxious to do nothing that would cause you the slightest embarrassment. It seems to me immaterial where the Library finally reposes so long as it is in the possession of a university which is interested in utilizing it in scholarly fashion.¹²⁰

Flexner also told Morgan: “Mr. Gest has offered the library to the institute for the sum of \$135,000, which will permit him to wipe out his obligations in Montreal and leave him a fair margin of cash. This, he tells me, is the least that he can take for it . . . if McGill University can raise



14. Photograph of Abraham Flexner, first director of the Institute for Advanced Study, taken in 1926 and signed by Flexner on 28 October 1949. Photograph courtesy of the Institute for Advanced Study Archives.

the money to purchase the Gest library, the Institute for Advanced Study will take no steps in competition with it.”¹²¹ McGill was forced to make a decision: buy the library or let it go.

In responding to Flexner, Morgan pointed out that the Gest Library belonged to McGill and that it was not a question of McGill purchasing the library, but rather one of the possibility of Gest repurchasing from McGill. He also made it clear that McGill had spent about sixty thousand dollars on the library and the Chinese studies program. He also is quoted as saying that if Gest redeems the library, “I should personally feel that the University had been treated shabbily.”¹²² In a letter written about two weeks later, Morgan expanded the domain of the potential disappointment with this assertion, “If, however, another learning institution were to use its funds to enable him [Gest] to make a profit and at the same time to remove an asset of learning from this University we should feel hurt.”¹²³

To resolve this tension, Flexner and Morgan met on 7 April 1936. Morgan wrote a memorandum of this meeting:

I discussed with Dr. Flexner the question of the Gest Library. He assured me that he was in no sense committed and had not given any indication to Mr. Gest that he would buy the Library. I explained the situation once again, and Dr. Flexner said that in the circumstances he did not propose taking any action, as he did not feel that it would be right to do what might seem inimical to the interests of another institution.¹²⁴

Prior to this, on March 3, 1936, David H. Stevens of the Rockefeller Foundation had called Morgan to say that Flexner had approached the foundation about acquiring the Gest Library from McGill. He said he was under an impression that McGill was unable to utilize the library and contemplated disposing of it possibly by selling the collection in batches in the book market. Morgan wrote a memorandum of his conversation with Stevens, which states, "The Principal assured him that this had never been contemplated and the Library, although not open to the sight-seeing public, was available to conscientious scholars. Mr. Stevens was clearly of the view that it would be an improper activity on the part of the Foundation to assist one learned body to obtain this from McGill University unless the University was anxious to dispose of it."¹²⁵

While Gest himself was anxiously waiting the result of the meeting, Morgan told Gest that Flexner "had no intention of purchasing the Gest Library from one University in order to give it to another." Gest asked, "What conditions of sale would satisfy the University." Morgan replied, "The re-purchase of the Library by Mr. Gest under any conditions would be very upsetting to the University, [and] while the University would have to surrender the Library under the terms stated in the Deed, it would feel very disappointed if it were compelled to do so." Gest then asked if McGill could consider an extension of time with respect to the repurchasing of the Library, Morgan replied, "The university as trustees of the Library could not consider such a proposal."¹²⁶ That was 16 April 1936, very close to the deadline set for the repurchase. On April 21, Gest wrote to Morgan again.

Owing to the short time remaining and the importance of

this matter as well as the very large sum of money of my own involved, it would be hard to believe that there would be a denial of my request. You, as well as the Board, undoubtedly appreciate the tremendous loss it would be to me if this postponement was not favorably acted upon. You must realize I could not afford to take any such loss.¹²⁷

After consulting Edward Beatty, the chancellor of McGill, Morgan turned down Gest's request.

Surprisingly, on 29 April, Gest brought the sum of money to McGill, repaid his loans, and repurchased the library. McGill gave him three months and necessary assistance in removing the collection from McGill. In another surprise, in July of that year the Institute for Advanced Study announced that it had purchased the Gest Library and that the library would directly remove from McGill to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. Nancy Lee Swann, would join the institute and remain curator of the Gest Library. The Rockefeller Foundation assisted Abraham Flexner in purchasing the library with the foundation paying half of the cost, an agreement reached in June 1936 after Guion Gest had regained his library.¹²⁸ On 31 July 1936, the Gest Library was completely removed from McGill, ending the tenure of that collection at McGill.¹²⁹

The loss of the Gest Library had a significant negative impact on McGill. McGill had no Chinese studies for more than thirty years until the department was reestablished in 1968. Its Chinese collection remains very insignificant, numbering only about twenty thousand volumes in 1999. Now, when East Asian studies has a demonstrated importance in the fields of international studies, Chinese studies at McGill seem to have suffered because of a lack of strong library support.

REFLECTIONS

The trials and tribulations of the Gest Library at McGill University from 1926 to 1936 involved many important institutions in Canada and the United States such as McGill, the Institute for Advanced Study, the University of Chicago, the University of California, Columbia University, Harvard University, as well as the Committee on the Promotion of

Chinese Studies of the American Council of Learned Studies, the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, and many notable figures, including Guion M. Gest, I. V. Gillis, Nancy L. Swann, Arthur Currie, Edward Beatty, Kiang Kang-hu, Arthur E. Morgan, Abraham Flexner, Frederick Keppel, Hu Shih, Arthur Hummel and Wang Zhongmin, making its short history there significant in the early development of East Asian libraries in North America.

Throughout this history of the Gest Library at McGill University, we have observed the close relations between a library and an academic program. When Guion Gest deposited his library at McGill, McGill's Chinese study program came into existence; when the Chinese study program was discontinued, the Gest Chinese Research Library also lost its significance for the academic goals of McGill. Lack of clear title to property in an institution, no matter how attractive the property might be, can later engender problems of a catastrophic nature. Such vagueness as to who owns what can cause frustration regarding continuing investment in the property and related academic programs, as this case has amply demonstrated.

A careful judgment of a particular collection's relevance and usefulness to an institution is very important and necessary, particularly when it may involve a significant investment. Both Arthur Currie and Abraham Flexner were persons with vision. They noticed the changing landscape after World War I and the increasing importance of Asian countries in world affairs. They actively promoted East Asian studies in their respective organizations and encouraged the acquisition of the Gest Library. In its early days at the Institute for Advanced Study, prior to its being moved from storage-like quarters in the basement of a building at 20 Nassau Street to library space at Princeton University, the Gest Library had an experience very similar to its experience at McGill. Nancy L. Swann wrote in 1942 that the Gest Library was "practically unused for the more than four years that it has been housed in Princeton."¹³⁰ As the operation of the library involved an expense of seven thousand dollars a year, some board members of the Institute for Advanced Study in 1942 suggested selling the library. Fortunately, Princeton University insisted on its rights and rejected the plan, as there was an agreement in funding the purchase of the Gest Library that the Gest Library would be

used jointly by both the Institute for Advanced Study and Princeton University. This saved the library from once again being sold.¹³¹ With the great surge of interest and funding devoted to Asian studies in North American universities after World War II, the Gest Library, acquired through the foresight of Abraham Flexner and the Institute for Advanced Study, became the nucleus of the monumental East Asian collection now housed and administered at Princeton University and today known as The East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

NOTES

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1. When Gest Library was purchased from Guion Gest, it was agreed that the collection as the property of the Institute for Advanced Study would be housed at Princeton University and maintained by the university for use by both institutions. Beatrice M. Stern, "A History of The Institute for Advanced Study: 1930-1950," vol. 1 (unpublished manuscript, 1950), p. 298. Based on our confirmation with the Institute for Advanced Study, this arrangement remains unchanged.
2. Hu Shih (1890-1962), "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 15.3 (Spring 1954), pp. 113-141; Diane E. Perushek, "The Gest Chinese Research Library," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 48.3 (Spring 1987), pp. 239-252.
3. This article is based mainly on archival materials found in MUA and in Gest Library Papers now housed in Mudd Library, Princeton University. Before the Gest Library moved to the Institute for Advanced Study, McGill asked Nancy L. Swann to transfer all original files to McGill authority. She made carbon copies for her own files, but as she described in her letter to Gerhard R. Lomer, McGill University librarian, her own set "is not quite as attractive as that turned over to the Bursar's Office [treasurer of McGill University at the time]." See Swann to Lomer, 10 September 1936, Gest Library Papers, box 240, McGill University, Mudd Library, Princeton University. From what we observed in materials in the McGill University Archives and in the Gest

Library Papers at Princeton University, Nancy Swann's statement is basically correct. Most of the archival materials about the period 1926 to 1936 are at McGill, but Princeton does have some original files that do not exist at McGill. The carbon copies in Mudd Library at Princeton are limited in comparison with the originals at McGill.

As to the reference index system, McGill University Archives has an archive file index system. For instance, the notation Gillis to Gest, 4 January 1931, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives indicates that Irvin Van Gorder Gillis' letter to Guion M. Gest dated 4 January 1931 is in file folder C69 in file box RG2 in the McGill University Archives. The Gest Library Papers has similar index system. For instance, the notation Swann to Lomer, 10 September 1936, Gest Library Papers, box 240, McGill University, Mudd Library, Princeton University indicates that a letter by Nancy Swann to Gerhard Lomer dated 10 September 1936 is in a folder titled "McGill University" in box 240 of the Gest Library Papers housed in Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton University.

4. Files before 1941 state that the Gest Library had about one hundred thirty thousand volumes. However, in preparing the library report of 1941, Nancy Swann reported that "a clerical error" occurred "some half-a-dozen years prior to the acquisition," which overstated the number at one hundred thirty thousand volumes. She had no accurate the number at the time, but she said, "It can be stated, however, that the Gest Library contains more than one hundred thousand volumes, . . ." See, Nancy Swann, "Rough Draft of a Paragraph 1941-1942," Gest Library Papers, box 239, Reports, Mudd Library, Princeton University. Accordingly, this article will use this number.
5. In 1936, after the library moved to Princeton, the Gest Chinese Research Library was renamed the Gest Oriental Research Library. There are only a few documents that describe the uniqueness of the Gest Collection. The primary one is the *Geside dongfang cangshuku shumu* (Title Index to the Catalogue of The Gest Oriental Library), 4 vols., compiled by Gillis and Pai Ping-ch'i (Bai Bingqi) in Peking: n. p., 1941. This catalog listed the title of each work in the collection. In 1954, Hu Shih wrote "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," an article about the library, cited in note two above. Hu was the curator of the Gest Library from 1950 to 1952. He was also a well-known Chinese philosopher and historian, professor of Peking University from 1918 to 1932, Chinese ambassador to the United States from 1942 to 1946, president of Peking University from 1946 to 1948, and director of Academia Sinica in Taiwan from 1958 to 1962. In 1929 Berthold Laufer (1874-1934), professor at the University of Chicago and curator of the Field Museum of Natural History, wrote an eight-page pamphlet about the Gest Library, *The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University*, (Montreal: McGill University, 1929). A copy of this pamphlet may be found in Gest Library Papers, box 237, Mudd Library, Princeton University. Nancy Lee Swann (1881-1966) served first as acting curator and then as curator of the Gest Library from 1928 to 1948. In 1932, at the request of Arthur Currie, the

president of McGill University, she wrote a report about the library, *The Gest Chinese Research Library*. This report was prepared for The League of Nations. In 1987, Diane Perushek, then curator of the Gest Library wrote an article, cited above in note 2, "The Gest Chinese Research Library." The data used in this section are mainly from these documents.

6. Nanjing (Nanking) was the capital city during the early Ming from 1368 to 1420. In 1420, the Yongle emperor moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing (Peking). Beijing was the capital of China continuously until 1928, when the Nationalist government changed the location of its capital to Nanjing and Beijing was renamed Beiping. After 1949, the communist government moved the seat of its government back to Beiping again and changed its name to Beijing.
7. Note on Ch'en Pao-ch'en (Chen Baochen), Gest Library Papers, box 231, Ch'en Pao-ch'en, Mudd Library, Princeton University. The information in the note was from *China Year Book* (Shanghai: North China Daily News and Herald, 1931), p. 607. According to the note, Chen had been the "tutor to the ex-Emperor Hsuan T'ong [Xuantong] since July 1911."
8. Gest to Lomer, 20 September 1926, Gest Library Papers, box 238, Lomer, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
9. According to Sören Edgren's article, "I. V. Gillis and the Spencer Collection," *Gest Library Journal* 6.2 (Winter, 1993), pp. 21-22, the primary sources of the biography of I. V. Gillis are two articles. One is an eight-page typescript, "Captain I. V. Gillis, Founder of the Gest Oriental Library," a chapter from the unpublished memoirs of Mr. Thomas Sze. Sze was a fellow member with Gillis in the International [Masonic] Lodge in Peking. The other is "Gest—McGill—Gillis: Three Notable Forces Create Most Comprehensive Chinese Research Library Outside China — How They Did It," a four-page article from the English-language journal *Peking: News and Views of China* (August 1931). Both articles are in the Gest Collection. The biographical information for Gillis used in this article is mainly from the articles by Hu, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University;" Perushek, "The Gest Chinese Research Library;" and Edgren, "I. V. Gillis and the Spencer Collection."
10. Hu Songping, *Hu Shizhi xiansheng nianpu changbian chugao* (First Extensive Chronological Biography of Hu Shizhi [a.k.a. Hu Shih]), vol. 6 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1984), pp. 2001-2002, 2135.
11. Hu Shi, "Ji Meiguo Pulinsidun daxue de Geside dongfang shuku cang de Qisha zangjing yuanben" (Notes on the Original Edition of the Qisha Tripitika in the Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University), *Dalu zazhi* 19.10 (30 November 1959), pp. 269-271.
12. Hu Shih's four articles are: "My Early Association with the Gest Oriental Library," *The Green Pyne Leaf* 6.6 (1951), pp. 1-3; "The Gest Oriental Library: the Eye Trouble of an Engineering Contractor Leads to a Rare Collection of 100,000 Volumes," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* (March 7, 1952), pp. 9-10; "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," (see note 2 above); and

- "Notes on the Original Edition of the Qisha Tripitika in the Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," (see note 11 above.)
13. Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," p. 114.
 14. Gillis to Gest, 19 August 1932, RG2. C75, McGill University Archives.
 15. Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," p. 116.
 16. See Edgren, "I. V. Gillis and the Spencer Collection," p. 7.
 17. Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," p. 115.
 18. Gillis to Gest, 19 August 1932, RG2 C69, McGill University Archives.
 19. Laufer, *The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University*, p. 5. Also see note four above.
 20. Arthur Currie, the principal of McGill University, asked Kiang Kang-hu, a McGill professor, to persuade the Chinese government to release these books. Although Kiang personally knew Chen Lifu, the Chinese minister of education when they both studied in Japan, Chen declined Kiang's request. See Kiang to Currie, 25 August 1931, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 21. In the Qianlong era, a second manuscript set of the *Yongle Encyclopedia* was made. Of the 11,095 volumes in that set, approximately five hundred volumes are extant today. The whereabouts of the original manuscript set of the *Yongle Encyclopedia* is unknown.
 22. In moveable-type printing technology, characters are first cut in wood as individual type and then assembled into blocks in order to print a text. Once this printing is completed, all the type are redistributed and then reassembled to print another text.
 23. Gillis offered a set to the Library of Congress for \$2,000, but the Library of Congress did not buy it. This set was eventually scattered when the Japanese interned Gillis. In addition to the complete set acquired for the Gest Library, Gillis also acquired a second, incomplete set comprising 317 titles, one fewer than in the complete sets. See Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," p. 118.
 24. Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," pp. 116-119.
 25. For details of this story, see Hu Shih, "Notes on the Original Edition of the Qisha Tripitika," pp. 269-271.
 26. Hu and Gillis reported different tallies for the numbers of volumes of this set. According to Gillis' report, the set consisted in a total of 5323 volumes, 698 from the Song, 1635 from the Yuan, 876 from the Ming, and 2114 dated after 1600. See Laufer, *The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University*, p. 8. The number cited in this article is from Hu Shih.
 27. Laufer, *The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University*, p. 8. Here Laufer is quoting Hu Shih. Note that Gillis' own notebook records on the condition of each volume of the *Qisha zangjing* has the title "Dabeisi jing" written on its front cover. See this unpublished record book in the Gest Collection in the East Asian Library, Princeton University.
 28. Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," p. 129.
 29. Gillis to Gest, 4 January 1931, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.

30. Currie to Gest, 14 March 1931, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
31. Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," p. 116.
32. Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," pp. 120-121.
33. I. V. Gillis, Preface to Gillis and Pai, comp., *Title Index to the Catalogue of the Gest Oriental Library*, p. 2.
34. Perushek, "The Gest Chinese Research Library," p. 240.
35. The biographical information on Nancy Swann in this paragraph largely draws on William B. Pettus' untitled and undated biographical and evaluative statement about Swann, typed on letterhead of the North China Union Language School. See Gest Library Papers, box 239, Swann, Mudd Library, Princeton University. William B. Pettus was the director of the North China Union Language School, later known as the California College in China. Also see, Susan Mann, preface to *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China* by Nancy Lee Swann (2001), p. xxi.
36. Nancy Lee Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China, First Century AD* (New York and London: The Century Company, [1932]). Since that first publication, there have been two reprints issued: the first, (New York: Russell and Russell [1968]) and the second, Michigan Classics in Chinese Studies 5 (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2001).
37. Perushek, "The Gest Chinese Research Library," p. 240.
38. Charles S. Gardner to Currie, 6 May 1931, RG4. C19, McGill University Archives. At the time, the curator of the library was Robert de Résillac-Roese.
39. On 4 January 1926, the McGill Board of Governors approved the proposal and left this record:

Mr. G. M. Gest, a contractor and engineer, recently purchased this library for \$20,000. Mr. Gest through long residence in the East had made some influential friends in China among them being the Tutor to the present Chinese Emperor. It was through this connection that he learned of this very valuable Library. Some difficulty is being experienced in securing its removal from China. The first installment, however, consisting of eighteen cases of books, has now arrived in Montreal. The University is very much indebted to the Canadian Pacific Railway for all the trouble they are taking in connection with the transportation of this Library. Mr. Gest has loaned this Library to the University for ten years and has engaged Dr. Robert de Résillac-Roese, a Sinologist, as Assistant Curator and Cataloguer of this collection. Suitable accommodation has been found in the University Library for this reception.

McGill Governors' Minute Book, 1920-1935, p. 360.

40. Currie to Frederick P. Keppel, 14 February 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives. Keppel (1875-1943) was president of the Carnegie Foundation from 1923 to 1941.
41. Guion M. Gest to Joseph H. Gest, 1 March 1926, Gest Library Papers, box

- 237, Opening of the Chinese Library, Mudd Library, Princeton University. G. M. Gest, in writing to his older brother Joseph Henry Gest, an artist and director of the Cincinnati Museum Association, addresses him as Harry. In turn, Joseph Gest addresses his brother as Guy. At this writing, it is not clear to which institution Gest referred when he wrote "The University at Williamstown, Mass."
42. Laufer, *The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University*, p. 5.
 43. Gillis and Pai, *Title Index to the Catalogue of The Gest Oriental Library*, p. 5.
 44. Nancy Swann, "Chinese Libraries as Centers for Research," (Undated), attached to Swann, "The Gest Chinese Research Library," 24 April 1934, RG2. C19, McGill University Archives.
 45. Arthur Currie, foreword to Laufer, *The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University*, p. 3.
 46. Robert de Résillac-Roese, "Report on the Accession and Activities of the Gest Chinese Research Library from 1 May 1928 to 1 May 1929," 20 May 1929, p. 4, RG4. C19, McGill University Archives.
 47. "The Gest Chinese Research Library, Annual Report, 1930-1931," p. 2, RG4. C19, McGill University Archives.
 48. Lomer and Swann, "The Gest Chinese Research Library, [1933-1934]," pp. 3-4, RG4. C19, McGill University Archives.
 49. Robert H. Michel, "The General Portrayed: Sir Arthur Currie and His Painters," *Fontanus*, vol. 7 (1994), p. 73.
 50. Arthur Currie, foreword to Laufer, *The Gest Chinese Research Library at McGill University*, p. 3.
 51. Currie to Gest, 14 March 1931, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 52. Beatty to Currie, 22 November 1926, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 53. Memorandum for the Principal: Establishment of a Department of Chinese Studies at the McGill Board of Governors' Meeting on 20 December 1926, *McGill Minute Book, 1920-1935*, pp. 397-398.
 54. Currie to Gest, 23 September 1927, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 55. In documents cited in this article and in print, Kiang Kang-hu's name appears in various spellings. These include Kiang Kang-Hu, Kang-hu Kiang, and Kanghu Kiang, which in quotations will retain the spelling used in the original. The biographical information on Kiang Kang-hu in this article is primarily from the monograph by Wang Peiwei, *Jiang Kanghu yanjiu* (Research on Jiang Kanghu) (Wuhan: Wuhan chubanshe, 1998), and a folder in the McGill University Archives which contains the following items, "Biographical Sketch of Kiang Kang-hu," "Memorandum Regarding Dr. Kiang Kang-Hu," and *Who's Who in China: Biographies of Chinese Leaders*, fifth ed. (Shanghai: The China Weekly Review, 1936), RG2. C59, McGill University Archives.
 56. Edward Thomas Williams to Currie, 14 January 1930, RG2. C59, McGill University Archives. In his letter to Currie, Williams, a professor of Department of Oriental Languages at the University of California, wrote of Kiang, "He was formerly active politically and had a price on his head, but I am

- informed by those have seen him recently that his visit to Russia disillusioned him and he has lost sympathy with Communism." Also see Wang Peiwei, *Research on Jiang Kanghu*, chap. 6.
57. "Biographical sketch of Kiang Kang-hu," RG2. C59, McGill University Archives;" also see *Who's Who in China: Biographies of Chinese Leaders*, fifth ed., p. 45, and Wang Peiwei, *Research on Jiang Kanghu*, pp. 1-3, 221-224.
 58. Kiang Kang-hu to Gest, 21 September 1929, RG2. C59, McGill University Archives.
 59. Respectively, Currie to Williams, 3 January 1930, and Williams to Currie, 14 January 1930, RG2. C59, McGill University Archives.
 60. Currie to Vincent Massey, 8 January 1930, and Massey to Currie, 16 January 1930, RG2. C59, McGill University Archives. At this time Vincent Massey was Canada's diplomatic representative in the United States.
 61. McGill University Annual Report, 1928-1933, p. 14.
 62. Currie to the Secretary General, League of Nations, 7 October 1933, RG4. C69, McGill University Archives.
 63. The Secretary of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science to the Secretary of McGill University on September 16, 1935, RG4. C19, McGill University Archives.
 64. "The Department of Chinese Studies," attachment to Currie to the Secretary General, League of Nations, 27 October 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 65. This number for Kiang Kang-hu's publication is from McGill University annual reports in 1930-1931, 1931-1932, and 1932-1933 in the section on faculty publications.
 66. After being dismissed by McGill, Kiang remained secluded for a few years in the south of China. In 1937, when the Japanese invaded Peking and supported the Wang Jingwei government (1940-1945), Wang invited Kiang to join his government as vice-director (1940-1942) and director (1942-1944) of the Bureau of Examination (Kaoshiyuan), an institute for the examinations and promotions of civil officers. In 1910, Wang had plotted an assassination of Zai Feng, Pu Yi's father, but the plot was discovered and Wang was imprisoned by the Qing authorities. For some reason, however, his case was linked to Kiang (Wang Peiwei, *Research on Jiang Kanghu*, p. 27), and Kiang was subsequently investigated. After this event, Wang Jingwei and Kiang Kang-hu got to know each other. In 1945, Kiang was charged as a war criminal for his activities from 1940 to 1944 and jailed thereafter. He died in jail in 1954. Wang Peiwei, *Research on Jiang Kanghu*, chap. 9 and 10. The authors did not find any official documents at McGill that might suggest a connection between Kiang's arrest in 1934 and the cancellation of his contract with McGill.
 67. McGill University Annual Report (1933-1938), pp. 11-12.
 68. McMurray, *Four Principals of McGill*, p. 35.
 69. Wilfred Bovey to Kiang, 3 November 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives. In the letter, Bovey wrote, "The Principal wishes me to tell you

- that he is expecting you back at the beginning of next session." Bovey was then the director of the Department of Extra-Mural Relationships at McGill.
70. Bovey to Kiang, 10 January 1934, RG4. C19, McGill University Archives. Bovey wrote, "His [Arthur Currie's] departure has made a great change in the University and we scarcely know what alternations may now take place."
 71. Dorothy McMurray, *Four Principals of McGill: a Memoir 1929-1963* (Montreal: The Graduates' Society of McGill University, 1974), pp. 31-32. From 1919 to 1963, McMurray was principal's secretary of McGill University and worked for four principles.
 72. Extracts from Minutes of the Finance Committee re Gest Chinese Library and Extracts from the Governors' Minutes re Department of Chinese Studies, RG4. C19, McGill University Archives. In his letter to McGill regarding his dismissal, Kiang wrote, "I do not complain for the discontinuance of the Chinese Department nor do I beg for any special favor, but I can not understand how a professor can be so slighted and ignored by an institute of McGill's standing. I am doubly sorry for this treatment since the University has shown me great consideration and I have repeatedly pledged undivided service." Kiang Kang-hu to Bovey, 1 November 1934, RG4, C19, McGill University Archives.
 73. Currie to Keppel, 14 February 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives. In his letter to Keppel, Currie wrote, "I always dreamed that here at McGill we might set up a Department of Far Eastern Studies—to include a study of Purdon [Bhutan], Indian, Chinese and Japanese civilization. We have spent many years and much fortune in learning all there is to learn about Grecian, Roman and Egyptian civilizations, but in the Asiatic, which will be found as interesting as any of others, we have up to the present done comparatively little."
 74. Extracts from Governors' Minutes re Gest Chinese Library, RG4. C75, McGill University Archives.
 75. Gest to Swann, 30 March 1935, Gest Library Papers, box 239, Sir Currie, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
 76. Currie to Keppel, 14 February 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 77. Gest to S. L. Joshi, 19 May 1930, Gest Library Papers, box 233, Joshi, Mudd Library, Princeton University. S. L. Joshi had been professor of religion and Hindu studies and chairman of the Department of Comparative Religion at Dartmouth College since 1926. He first came to the United States as a scholar and lecturer in 1907. Joshi and Gest first met in Baroda, India, in Gest's words "years ago."
 78. Currie to Keppel, 14 February 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 79. Mortimer Graves to Gest, 8 January 1932 with a copy of *Suggestion for Translation in English of the Dynastic Histories of China*, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 80. Currie, memorandum, 12 April 1932, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 - Currie to Keppel, 14 February 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
 81. Currie to Gest, 16 March 1932, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.

82. Hu Shih, "The Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University," pp. 115-116.
83. Lomer to Archibald Glassco, 22 May 1934, RG2. C75, McGill University Archives.
84. Currie, memorandum after discussion with Kiang about the value of the sutras, 1 May 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
85. Memorandum from Professor [Charles Edmund] Fryer to the Principal [Arthur E. Morgan], as dictated by Fryer and recorded by Dorothy McMurray, 3 December 1935, RG2. C75, McGill University Archives. Professor Charles Edmund Fryer (b. 1876), a professor of history at McGill from 1908 to 1942), was the elder son of the famous Sinologist John Fryer (1839-1928) who taught for many years at the University of California, Berkeley.
86. Value of the books, expenditures for books, Gest Library Papers, box 250, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
87. Dorothy McMurray, Memorandum to the Principal [Currie], 27 May 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
88. Memorandum from Charles Fryer to the Principal [Currie], 3 December 1935, as dictated by Fryer and recorded by Dorothy McMurray, Principal's Secretary, RG2. C75, McGill University Archives.
89. Flexner to Morgan, 19 February 1936, RG2. C75, McGill University Archives. Also see the note 4.
90. *McGill University Annual Report*, 1931-1932, p. 11.
91. Currie to Keppel, 14 February 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
92. Currie to Nicholas Murray Butler, 3 May 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
93. Robert Blake to Gest, 11 September 1929, Gest Library Papers, box 231, Robert P. Blake, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
94. Carleton W. Stanley to Beatty, 26 January 1931, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
95. Beatty to Stanley on 28 January 1931, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
96. "Purchase of Gest Chinese Library on April 25, 1932," RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
97. Extracts from Minutes of the Financial Committee re Gest Chinese Library, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
98. "Mr. Gest's Request for Increased Loan," 10 September 1931, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
99. Keppel to Lomer, 2 February 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
100. Currie to Keppel, 14 February 1932, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
101. See note 92 above.
102. Currie's memorandum for his interview with Gest, 31 May 1933, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
103. Extracts from Minutes of the Financial Committee re Gest Chinese Library, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Lomer to Gest, 10 July 1934, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.

107. Bovey to Kiang, 12 October 1934, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
108. Lomer to Glassco, 22 May 1934, RG2. C75, McGill University Archives.
109. Lomer to Gest, 10 July 1934, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
110. Gest to Lomer, 21 August 1934, RG2. C69, McGill University Archives.
111. Lomer to Gest, 9 August 1935, RG2. C20, McGill University Archives.
112. McMurray, *Four Principals of McGill*, pp. 35-36.
113. <http://www.mcgill.ca/principal/past/>.
114. McMurray, *Four Principals of McGill*, p. 38.
115. Morgan to Gest, 18 January 1936, RG2. C191, McGill University Archives.
116. Steven C. Wheatley, "Abraham Flexner and the Politics of Education Reform," *History of Higher Education Annual*, 8 (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester, 1988), p. 45.
117. Abraham Flexner, *Funds and Foundations, Their Policies, Past and Present* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), pp. 58-60.
118. Wheatley, "Abraham Flexner and the Politics of Education Reform," p. 45.
119. Beatrice M. Stern, "A History of the Institute for Advanced Study: 1930-1950," vol. 1 (unpublished manuscript, 1950), p. 298.
120. Flexner to Morgan, 12 February 1936, RG2. C191, McGill University Archives.
121. Flexner to Morgan, 19 February 1936, RG2. C191, McGill University Archives.
122. Morgan to Flexner, 14 February 1936, RG2. C191, McGill University Archives.
123. Morgan to Flexner, 2 March 1936, RG2. C191, McGill University Archives.
124. "Principal's Memorandum of His Interview with Dr. A[braham] Flexner at President [Harold W.] Dodds' House, Princeton," 9 April 1936, RG2. C191. McGill University Archives. Harold W. Dodds was president of Princeton from 1933-1957.
125. "The Principal's Memorandum for the File," 3 March 1936, RG2. C191. McGill University Archives.
126. "Memorandum on Interview Held by the Principal and Bursar with Mr. Gest, Thursday," 16 April 1936, RG4. C191, McGill University Archives.
127. Gest to Morgan, 21 April 1936, RG2. C191, McGill University Archives.
128. Stern, "A History of the Institute for Advanced Study: 1930-1950," vol. 1. pp. 298-304.
129. Swann to Lomer, 31 July 1936, RG2. C193, McGill University Archives.
130. Perushek, "The Gest Chinese Research Library," p. 250, quoting a letter from Swann to Lawrence Seymour, dated 14 November 1942.
131. Stern, "A History of the Institute for Advanced Study: 1930-1950," pp. 299-300.

GLOSSARY

- Bai Bingqi (Pai Ping-ch'i) 白炳騏
 Ban Zhao (Pan Chao) 班超
 Beiyang bianyiju 北洋編譯局
 ce 冊
 Chen Baochen (Ch'en Pao-ch'en) 陳寶琛
 Chen Lifu 陳立夫
 Dabeisi 大悲寺
Dabeisi jing 大悲寺經
 difangben 地方本
Geside dongfang cangshuku shumu 葛思德
 東方藏書庫書目
Geside huawen cangshuku 葛思德華文
 藏書庫
Gujin tushu jicheng 古今圖書集成
 Hanlinyuan 翰林院
 Hongdaohui 弘道會
 Hu Shi (Hu Shih) 胡適
 Hu Shizhi 胡適之
 Jiang Dexuan 江德宣
 Jiang Kanghu (Kiang Kang-hu) 江亢虎
 Jiang Shuyun 江澍昀
 Jingshi daxuetang 京師大學堂
 jinshi 進士
 juren 舉人
 Kaoshiyuan 考試院
 Lin Yutang 林語堂
 Nanfang daxue 南方大學
 Pu Yi 溥儀
Qisha zangjing 磧砂藏經
 sipin guan 四品官
 Takamatsu 高松
 Tokugawa Iyesato 德川家達
 Tokugawa Iyemasa (Iyemasa) 德川家正
 Tong Shigang (T'ung Shih-kang) 童世綱
Tushu jicheng (Tu shu tsi ch'eng) 圖書集成
 Wang Jingwei 汪精衛
 Wang Zhongmin 王重民
 Wuyingdian juzhenben congshu 武英殿
 聚珍本叢書
Yongle dadian 永樂大典
 Yuan Shikai 袁世凱
 Zai Feng 載灃
 Zhongguo gongxue 中國公學
 Zhongguo shehuidang 中國社會黨