

 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

東亞圖書館
East Asian Library
and the *Gest Collection*

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From the Editor

This issue of the *East Asian Library Journal* is comprised of what I feel certain will be recognized as ground-breaking research in the study of the book and printing in East Asia. The issue opens with Sören Edgren's update on the Research Library Group's Chinese rare-book cataloguing project. Following that are three papers that were first presented in March 2001 at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies as a panel entitled "How to Study the History of the Chinese Book: Practical Tips and Wishful Thinking." In some ways these three main presentations are deceptively simple—a fieldwork report, some counting of numbers of books, and speculation about reading habits. Yet each of the three articles demonstrates the application of methods new to the study of the book in China. The results are exciting and, I hope, will stimulate discussion.

Cynthia Brokaw, professor of Chinese history at Ohio State University, writes about her fieldwork, which took place in centers of printing and book production, primarily in western Fujian province, that were important in late-imperial China. She hints at what an expansion of this kind of research might reveal about patterns of publishing and distribution of books throughout China. Lucille Chia, professor of Chinese history at the University of California, Riverside, lists a variety of methods for extracting information from imprints in order to count and estimate the number of books published in Ming-dynasty China. Anne McLaren, professor of Chinese literature at the University of Melbourne, drawing on well-established studies of the history of the book and reading in European traditions, presents a provocative look at what questions can and should be asked about reading practices in traditional Chinese society. The implications for and the potential to influence

future studies of this aspect of scholarly inquiry are already evident in other scholars' interest in these approaches to research.

It is never pleasant for an editor to have to call attention to a mistake, but this one at least gives me an opening to talk about Princeton's East Asian collection and to pay tribute to two recently deceased scholars who played such a large role in establishing it. The official name of the East Asian collection at Princeton University is East Asian Library and Gest Collection. The title page of volume ten, number one (Spring 2001) of the *East Asian Library Journal* bore a slightly different name.

In fact, the name of this great collection of books about or published in East Asia has gone through several transformations over the more than seventy years of its existence. Most simply, and perhaps fondly, many still refer to it as "Gest." Guion M. Gest was an engineer and businessman with a passion for collecting and the financial resources to indulge that passion. Gest's collaboration in the 1920s, thirties, and forties with Irvin V. Gillis, a consultant and long-time resident in Peking (Beijing), resulted in the remarkable treasure that forms the core of the East Asian Library and Gest Collection.

Not many articles have been published about Gest, Gillis, or the "Gest Collection." I can point to Hu Shih's article in volume fifteen (Spring 1954) of the *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, Diane Perushek's article in volume forty-eight (Spring 1987) of that same journal, and Sören Edgren's article in volume six, number two (Winter 1993) of this journal, known then as the *Gest Library Journal*. In the summer of 2002, Su Chen, director of the University of Minnesota's East Asian collection, came to Princeton to read through archival materials in search of information to amplify what she had already gathered on the history of Mr. Gest's collection when it was held at McGill University in Montreal prior to its purchase in 1937 by the Rockefeller Foundation for the Institute for Advanced Studies and its subsequent placement in the permanent care of Princeton University. We eagerly await this scholar's revision of her manuscript for a further unfolding of the history of the East Asian Library and Gest Collection.

Any history of the Gest Collection since it came to Princeton and of the growth of the East Asian Library around that collection would of course acknowledge the significance of the roles that Marius B. Jansen

and Marion J. Levy Jr. played in convincing the university to retain the Gest Collection and in expanding that collection beyond the Chinese materials that made up the original Gest acquisition. Professor Jansen, who taught Japanese history at Princeton beginning in 1959, died on December 10, 2000, at the age of seventy-eight. Professor Levy, who taught sociology and international affairs at Princeton beginning in 1947, died on May 26, 2002, at the age of eighty-three. Obituaries of these two scholars and teachers, who were such an important part of the experience of those of us who came to Princeton as graduate students in East Asian Studies, appeared on the Princeton University website and in various print media. I would like to add to these tributes some indication of the fundamental and profound influence these two professors had on the preservation and development of the East Asian library at Princeton.

For the facts, I am drawing on two informal histories of the East Asian Studies Program, both written in 1993, one an untitled account of East Asian Studies at Princeton by Professor Jansen, the other entitled "East Asian Studies at Princeton—A View from the Beginnings" by Frederick W. Mote, now Princeton Emeritus Professor of Chinese History. Both are on file for general reference in the East Asian Studies Department office. The accounts make clear that the establishment and growth of the academic department known today as the East Asian Studies Department and Program were possible because of the existence at Princeton of the Gest Collection, a significant core of Chinese-language rare books.

And further, Professor Mote's account gives unambiguous and heart-felt credit to Professors Levy and Jansen, both colleagues and dear friends, for their work over the years on behalf of the East Asian library. He wrote this of Marion Levy's passionate commitment to retaining the Gest Collection at Princeton:

Recognizing (as most then at Princeton did not) the great value of the collection, the young Professor Levy was invited to explain to the senior faculty why Princeton, if it intended ever to develop East Asian Studies, must retain the collection and give it space when the new Firestone Library became ready for occupancy in 1950. Subsequently, he connived with the then

University Librarian, Dr. Julian Boyd, to convince the President and the Trustees that rival Yale was eager to acquire the collection and would thereby be enabled to make an important advance in developing the field. The Trustees promptly voted to keep the Gest Collection at Princeton Whether the story about Julian Boyd's and Marion Levy's stratagem to induce the Trustees to retain the Gest collection reflects all of the dimensions of that crucial decision . . . , it is clear that the further decision to commence the study of East Asia at Princeton followed directly from the existence here of the Gest Collection. (Fritz Mote, "East Asian Studies at Princeton—A View from the Beginnings," informal history dated September 1993, pp. 5-6.)

And Professor Mote wrote of Marius Jansen's refined acumen in building a balanced East Asian library here:

During 1958-59 the University came to the decision that my position in Chinese studies must be matched by one in Japanese studies. Here a proper search was conducted, although those of us most deeply involved . . . knew all along that we wanted Marius Jansen for this position. . . . [B]ecause I had long known him his arrival added to the warm spirit of friends engaged in a common effort. . . . During Marius' first year a decision was reached to create an undergraduate "Program in East Asian Studies," at that time conceived of as a proto-department as well as the instrument for coordinating East Asian Studies across the campus. . . . Marius headed the Program from its inception. His other major task was to oversee the creation of a Japanese research library. The Gest Collection held virtually nothing in Japanese. The University was generous in providing special start-up funds and Marius made buying trips to the Kanda district in Tokyo. Mrs. Soowon Kim was hired to become the acquisitions librarian for Japanese. The Jansen-Kim team's feat in creating so important and well-balanced a collection in a matter of about two decades may be unmatched in the annals of East Asian Studies in this country. (Ibid., pp. 8-9.)

A well-researched history of the Gest Collection, when eventually written, will surely yield further evidence of the inextricable intertwining of East Asian Studies at Princeton and the East Asian Library and Gest Collection. One part of the conclusion to Professor Mote's article on East Asian Studies quoted above contains precisely this point:

References to the East Asian Library appear throughout the foregoing, and it is clear that the existence of the library has been the major impulse toward the creation and maintenance of EAS at Princeton. Libraries tend to be as strong as related faculty members demand that they be,—and no stronger. (*Ibid.*, p. 16.)

Ten years later, it remains true that the continued existence and growth of the East Asian Library and Gest Collection depend on innovative use and expansion of the existing resources by the undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty of the East Asian Studies Department and Program at Princeton, and also by students and scholars of East Asian studies from around the world. Further, as Professors Levy and Jansen's involvement in the academic life at Princeton demonstrates conclusively and as the conviction of Professor Mote's words states uncompromisingly, "The most important matter now facing the future of East Asian Studies at Princeton" has to do with convincing the university to "assign to our library the priorities necessary to accomplish even the minimal enhancement of support now urgently needed" (*ibid.*, p. 16).

The *East Asian Library Journal* was founded in 1986 to draw attention to the East Asian Library and Gest Collection at Princeton and to publish articles on the history of the book and printing that would have wide appeal and relevance to the field of East Asian Studies. It is the only journal that specifically seeks to publish in a Western language articles on the varied topics associated with the history of the book and printing in East Asia, a region of diverse cultural identities that incontrovertibly have been and continue to be mutually influencing.

I trust you will enjoy this issue and take the time to write to me with your responses and comments. If it is time for you to renew your subscription, you will find a renewal form enclosed with this mailing. I

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