

Korean collections and services at the National Library of Australia : a national asset

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Introduction

“In national terms, the Korean language collection in the National Library of Australia is extraordinary. It is by far the largest as well as most comprehensive collection in the country. The decision by the NLA leadership in the 1950s to commence regular and wide collection in Korean language materials is one of those decisions which show real long-term thinking, and is directly responsible for the ability of scholars and others within Australia who have Korean language proficiency to carry out high-level research on Korea. In this sense it is a genuine national asset and should be maintained as such.” (Wells 1998)

The National Library holds nearly 36,000 volumes of monographs in Korean as well as 1,500 serials and newspapers and materials in other formats such as microform. In comparison with other institutions outside Korea these holdings are in fact the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, more extensive than those of any single library in Europe, though somewhat smaller than the leading North American collections. The National Library also has strong holdings on Korea in English and other Western languages. The Library has developed a Korean Collection home page which provides further information on its Korean resources and related sites (<http://www.nla.gov.au/asian/lang/kor.html>).

While this paper is concerned mainly with published materials, the National Library also holds important resources for Korean studies in its special collections. The Manuscripts Section includes the papers of prominent figures associated with Korea such as Sir William Bridgeford, Sir William Keys and Sir John Mason. The Oral History area includes interviews relating to Korea such as with the writer Denis Warner, recorded National Press Club addresses by visiting Korean leaders and even a recorded speech by Sir Robert Menzies at a public meeting in July 1952 talking about the Korean War. There are also extensive holdings of current and older maps of Korea; films and videos on Korean culture, currently managed by Cinemedia in Melbourne; and Korean musical scores.

This paper covers the National Library’s Korean collections and services in the context of Korean studies and resources more generally in Australia, including major developments in the twelve years since the Ingleson Report. Jung-Sim Kim’s presentation on Monash University Library’s Korean resources is complementary, with a good coverage on electronic information for Korean studies.

History

The National Library of Australia is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary in 2001. The Library originated as a library for the new Commonwealth Parliament at Federation in 1901, and was initially based in Melbourne, the interim capital prior to the creation of Canberra. To mark the anniversary the Library has published a history of its collections. In addition a major exhibition, "Treasures from the World's Great Libraries" will begin in December 2001. This will display a Dead Sea Scroll, the first printed edition of the map of Cheng Ho's seven voyages from China between 1406 and 1433, manuscripts of Mozart's Requiem and Beethoven's 8th Symphony, a seventeenth century edition of the Tale of Genji, early Malay manuscripts and many other treasures lent by libraries from around the world. It is planned to include some rare Korean publications.

David Walker's chapter in the National Library's centenary history (Walker 2001 : 163-181) traces the development of the Asian Collections including Korean holdings. As he recounts, the first calls for an Asian collection were made in the 1930s, but it was in the 1950s during the long period of Sir Harold White's stewardship as National Librarian (1947-1970) that systematic acquisition of materials from and about Asia began (Walker 2001: 163-168).

Asian studies and Asian library collections have developed comparatively recently in Australia. Prior to the Second World War there were no significant collections of Asian publications and no Australian library was systematically acquiring current publications from the region.

This situation changed in the 1950s, as the importance of Asia was gradually recognized. The National Library and the Australian National University Library in particular started acquisition programs which have made them the leading Asian research collections in this country.

The fact that the National Library's Korean and other Asian collections have been developed since the 1950s has partly dictated the nature of these collections. While some old and rare items are held, the real strength is in contemporary materials, serving the research and information needs of academia, government and the public with emphasis on the social sciences.

During the 1960s the Asian language collections were given a formal structure and permanent home. In April 1962 the Orientalia section was established to control Chinese, Japanese and later Korean and Thai resources. After several temporary locations around Canberra, the collection and its reading room were finally housed on the Third Floor of the then new National Library building in 1968, and have remained there ever since. In 1987 the section's name was changed to its current name Asian Collections. The section now has five units with specialist language staff, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai and Indonesian, but also has responsibility for other Asian language collections including Burmese, Khmer and Lao.

Growth of the Korean collection

In April 1963 the Library's Chief Cataloguer reported that 773 Korean monographs were held out of 35,331 East Asian language works. In August 1968 when the National Library moved to its new building on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin, the Asian Collections totaled 84,000 volumes of which 2,000 were Korean. By 1970 the Korean holdings had grown to 4,000 monograph volumes and 437 serial titles, mainly on history, politics and government, foreign relations, literature and Buddhism. Most titles had been acquired during the preceding ten years as a result of successful exchanges with Korean libraries. By June 1990 10,948 titles in 18,074 volumes of Korean monographs were held out of 298,483 East Asian language volumes in all.

Current collection

At 30 June 2001 the National Library held 25,315 titles in 35,748 volumes of Korean language monographs. This was part of a total for East Asian languages of 287,711 titles in 425,163 volumes. The Korean collection has been growing at the rate of about 1,300 titles per annum over the past five years.

The strengths of the collection lie in the social sciences, especially economics, statistics, politics and government, foreign relations and law; Korean history, biography and archaeology; language and literature; philosophy and religion (Fry 1994).

The collection is strong in government publications received regularly on exchange. Major exchanges have operated with the National Assembly Library in Seoul since 1965 and with the National Library of Korea also in Seoul since 1967. These exchanges actually originated in 1951 when the Australian Delegation to the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea suggested that publications be sent to the National Assembly Library to help replace stock destroyed in the Korean War. The Library has a number of other exchange partners in South Korea, including universities and research institutes. Gifts from individuals and institutions are also an important source of materials. The Korea Foundation is a generous donor of publications as is the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Canberra.

Exchange relations were established with the Grand People's Study House of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, formerly the State Central Library of the DPRK in Pyongyang in 1973. For many years this exchange was the main source of North Korean books, serials and newspapers obtained by the National Library. Unfortunately in recent years this exchange has ceased operating, though the Library is continuing to seek materials from and about the DPRK.

Until the 1970s Korean materials were acquired almost exclusively through exchanges, but while these remain important most Korean books are now purchased through commercial suppliers. Serials are received on subscription or exchange.

Collection development policy

The latest published version of the National Library's collection development policy states that :

“The Library has over a long period, developed extensive collections relating to Asia and the Pacific. These collections have now attained considerable strength. They offer scholars research opportunities not available in other Australian libraries... The Library accepts responsibility for the maintenance and enrichment of its Asian and Pacific collections as a service to the research and library communities.” (National Library of Australia 1999 : 53-54)

Under this policy the collecting of materials about the Republic of Korea and the DPRK remains at the research level. This includes both Korean and Western language works, whether published in Korea or elsewhere.

Recent acquisitions

A few examples of recent acquisitions illustrate the range of materials being obtained. During the last few months' receipts have included *Han'guk chonjaeng charyo ch'ongso* [Collected documents on the Korean War, 1951-1953]. 17 volumes. Seoul : Kukpang Kunsu Yon'guso, 1996-1997; *Han'guk pulgyo 100-yon, 1900-1999* [100 years of Korean Buddhism]. Seoul : Minjoksa, 2000; *Han'guk sasang nonmun sonjip* [Collection of Korean philosophy theses]. 50 volumes. Kyonggi-do Koyang-si : Purham Munhwasa, 1998; *Mugu chonggwang taetaranigyong* [Tarani Buddhist sutra recently reproduced from a sutra discovered in Korea in 1966]; *Pukhan inmyong sajon : 2001-yon kaejong chungbop'an* [Biographical dictionary of North Korea]. Seoul : Taehan Maeil Sinbosa, 2000; *Pukhan ui munhwajae wa munhwa yujok = Cultural assets and sites in North Korea*. 5 volumes. Seoul : Soul Taehakkyo Ch'ulpanbu, 2000; *Yongnamdae Pangmulgwan sojang Han'guk ui yet chido* [Old Korean maps]. 2 volumes. Kyongsang-pukto Kyongsan-si : Yongnam Taehakkyo Pangmulgwan, 1998; *UN ch'amjon kinyom chohyongmul togam* [Illustrated guide to the monuments to UN participation in the Korean War]. 2 volumes. Seoul : Kukka Pohunch'o, 2000.

Microfilms continue to be important for retrospective sources on Korea. For instance the Library recently acquired the 31 rolls of a microfilm collection of the *Board of Foreign Missions : Korea Mission Records, 1903-57*. These are from the Presbyterian Historical Society in the USA and supplement the Library's Korea mission materials from the nineteenth century.

Original older works are also obtained. The Library has just purchased a copy in excellent condition of the 1785 edition of Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville's *Nouvel atlas de la Chine*. This atlas is important not only for its detailed coverage of China but for containing the first separate map of Korea by a European cartographer.

Staffing

Although collecting had begun much earlier there was no consistent staffing for Korean until November 1971 when Mrs Taisoo Watson was employed in the Orientalia section. She was succeeded by Mrs Jung-Hee Fry, who has presided over the collection for a quarter of a century, completing 25 years service at the Library in August 2001. As Ken Wells has written :

“The nature of the collection is very much the result of continuity in acquisitions responsibility in the person of Mrs Fry, who has been consistent and diligent in maintaining a good collection that serves the purposes of academics, the Korean reading public, and those who require reliable information on Korea.” (Wells 1998)

In 1990 a second Korean position was created, and Mrs Jung-Ok Park has been Mrs Fry’s able assistant for the past eleven years.

Bibliographic control

While for many years locating items in the Korean collection required checking of the Korean card catalogue in the Asian Collections Reading Room, access has greatly improved more recently. All current Korean monographs are now accessible on the National CJK Service and in the National Library’s own online catalogue searchable through the Internet.

A major milestone was reached in July 2001 as all titles in the main Korean monograph run (OK) have now been catalogued onto the automated system. This leaves some smaller sequences including North Korean books and the McLaren-Human Collection of older Korean works to be added.

Formed collections

David Walker’s history of the National Library’s Asian Collections stresses the important role of formed collections acquired over the years from eminent scholars, book lovers and organizations (Walker 2001 : 172-178). These formed collections in Asian and Western languages have provided the base for further collection building.

McLaren-Human Collection

The McLaren-Human Collection is the Library’s most important formed collection for Korean. This major gift of old and rare Korean titles had belonged to Mrs Jessie McLaren. She and her husband went to Korea from Melbourne as Presbyterian missionaries in 1911 and stayed for thirty years. Her interest in Korean culture led her to collect many books, some of which she was able to bring back to Australia at the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941. Following her death, her daughter, Mrs Rachel Human of Melbourne donated the material to the National Library in 1984 so that the books could be kept together and be freely available for use.

The collection is rich in old and rare titles, dating from the fifteenth to the early twentieth centuries, and primarily relating to Korean history and literature. There are 82 titles in 150 volumes of Korean books. 15 are from before 1890, including *Tongmunson* [Anthology of Korean literature] in 10 volumes from 1544, *T’oegye sonsaeng munjip* [Collected literary works of T’oegye] in 6 volumes believed to be from 1599, *Samjol yugo* [Posthumous works of Samjol] in 3 volumes from 1672 and *Namhwagyong (chuhae)* [The Chuang-tzu, Taoist classic] believed to date from 1680. The oldest publication, *Samgang haengsilto* [The Three Principles of Basic Human Relationships] is believed to date from 1490. This work of 118 cloth pages consists of illustrated Confucian moral tales in Chinese and Korean scripts. The McLaren-Human Collections also contains a number of items in Japanese and Chinese.

A list of the books in the McLaren-Human Collection is available free from the Library (National Library of Australia 1985).

Harold S. Williams Collection

The Harold S. Williams Collection relates mainly to the history of foreign settlement in Japan and the interaction between Japan and the West but also includes works on other parts of East Asia, including China, Hong Kong and Korea.

Harold S. Williams, who lived from 1898 to 1987, was an Australian who spent most of his adult life in Japan. He was a businessman, writer and collector, whose extensive library of monographs, manuscripts, maps and pictorial items was donated to the National Library between 1978 and 1995. His book collection has been fully catalogued.

While mostly about Japan, his collected papers, newspaper cuttings and photographs include a few items on neighbouring parts of East Asia, including China, Hong Kong, Macao and Korea. The Library recently published a detailed guide to these papers and other materials, which is available free of charge (Collins 2000)

Korean library developments in Australia 1989-

Ingleson Report, 1989

The Ingleson Report of 1989 drew attention to the concentration of East Asian library resources in Canberra; the need for an automated cataloguing system for East Asian scripts and the shortage of specialist Asian Studies librarians. Ingleson also reported that the only viable collection of Korean material was at the National Library, though there were small collections at the ANU, the University of Sydney and La Trobe University. This report was important as the first major examination of Australia's Asian library resources for many years. The Ingleson inquiry was intended as a review of Asian studies in universities as the basis for advice to government on future directions.

Following Ingleson several reports and a series of meetings on Asian library issues organised by the National Library during the 1990s reiterated the need to overcome these and related problems.

A major result of cooperative action stemming from these meetings has been the development of the National Chinese, Japanese and Korean Service. This national system for automated cataloguing of East Asian scripts was implemented in June 1996. Currently 24 Australian academic, research, special and public libraries are members of the National CJK Service.

Survey of Trends in Asian Studies and Asian Collections, 1992

A survey of Asian Studies teaching and research trends and priorities for improving Asian library resources nationally was carried out by the ANU Library and the National Library in 1992. In the three years since the Ingleson Report interest in Korean studies had clearly grown. Monash University had established a Korean research collection as part of the National Korean Studies Centre or NKSC linking several Victorian universities, while Griffith University was also becoming active in Korean studies.

Asian Collecting Agreements Meeting, November 1995

This meeting was called at the National Library to see if Australian libraries with Asian collections could indicate areas for possible collecting and access agreements. The most significant outcome of this gathering was agreement that given Australia's increasing interest in Korean studies and collections and services, the National Library should call a meeting of major stakeholders to consider collecting and access issues for Korean language materials. It was agreed that it was an opportune time to seek more systematic co-operation particularly to avoid unnecessary duplication of Korean research materials and to provide maximum accessibility to the collections nationally. Documentation from this meeting is at:

<http://www.nla.gov.au/dnc/asiamtg.html>

Korean Collections Meeting, March 1996

Prior to this meeting at the National Library, the Library prepared a *Conspectus Report for Korean Library Collections in Australia* (<http://www.nla.gov.au/dnc/asiart/korea.html>) and *Results of the DNC Korean Library Materials Survey*

(<http://www.nla.gov.au/www.nla.gov.au/dnc/korea/results.html>). These showed that the overall national collection and budget for Korean were modest, with only two major players, the National Library with by far the largest collection and the National Korean Studies Centre with its developing Korean collection at Monash University.

It was agreed that as a first step towards implementation of a number of resolutions there should be an evaluative study of the needs of Australian researchers and business related to Korea for the next five years. This study would be used by the Korean Working Group of academics and librarians to establish the present situation and the value of setting up electronic networking, formal supply arrangements and the need to fill gaps in the totality of the holdings of Australian libraries. The Working Group included the President of the Korean Studies Association of Australasia, other leading Korean scholars and librarians from institutions with major Korean interests.

Extensive documentation on the meeting is at:

<http://www.nla.gov.au/dnc/korea/korea.html>

Agreement between National Library of Australia and The Australian National University Library for collecting and providing access to Korean vernacular materials, August 1996

The National Library and ANU Library have several collecting agreements for East Asian materials. An agreement reached in 1955 for Japanese language resources is still operating successfully. Broadly speaking it divides collecting by subject and by period, with the ANU Library collecting pre-Meiji Restoration and the National Library post-1868 publications. Cooperative arrangements for Chinese materials also date back to the mid-1950s. More recently the two libraries agreed in 1998 to divide responsibility for Chinese provincial statistical yearbooks. The division is geographical with ANU Library acquiring yearbooks for northern and the National Library for southern provinces of China. A similar agreement for Chinese local gazetteers is now being finalized.

In August 1996 the libraries signed an agreement to cooperate in the collection of Korean vernacular materials, so as to, where possible, avoid duplication of collections, and to facilitate effective use of the Korean holdings of both institutions. The text is at <http://www.nla.gov.au/dnc/agree/mevan.html>
In effect the agreement formalized a long-standing arrangement between the libraries whereby the ANU has left most collecting of Korean language research materials to the National Library.

Under the 1996 agreement the National Library has undertaken to continue to develop and maintain a research level collection capable of supporting the needs of postgraduate students and independent researchers, with a continuing level of budget of around A\$80,000 per annum. In fact the National Library's annual budget for Korean is well above this figure.

The National Library agreed that its collecting would in the main continue to concentrate on the social sciences, in particular economics, statistics, politics and government, public administration, foreign relations, law and social conditions. Korean history, particularly in the modern period was to remain an area of strength. Major works in the humanities, including language and literature, philosophy and religion and the arts would continue to be collected.

The ANU Library agreed to develop and maintain a basic, mainly Western language reference and study collection that would support undergraduate teaching at the University.

In determining future collecting directions for Korean materials, the National Library would take into account new and emerging research emphases as well as the collecting intentions of other libraries.

Both libraries agreed to contribute at least minimal level bibliographic records to the National CJK Service for new Korean acquisitions within two months of receipt.

Both libraries also agreed to facilitate access and lend materials through the interlibrary loans system. The National Library extended liberal lending conditions to

the ANU for Korean materials (and later extended this to other Asian language materials).

Survey of Users of Korean Materials in Australia, 1997-1998

A survey of existing and potential or assumed users of Korean materials was carried out by the Korean Working Group, with the assistance of consultants, between June and September 1997 (Korean Working Group 1998). Funding for the project was provided by the Korea Foundation, the Australia-Korea Foundation, the Korean Studies Association of Australasia and the National Library of Australia.

The survey was conducted by mail questionnaire and interviews. Face to face interviews were carried out in Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane between June and October 1997, and telephone interviews were carried out in November 1997. The total survey population was 155 throughout all Australian states.

The objectives of the project were:

- to survey research and information needs related to Korean academic studies
- to survey research and information needs for Australian businesses having dealings related to Korea
- to determine library usage patterns, on-line usage, adequacy of collections, areas of growth, readers' services, subject/formats used for research and information
- to determine growth areas, together with the reaction to and the potential for paid-for services and the types and numbers of potential users/information seekers.

The objectives of the project were largely met and the results of the survey established not only areas requiring further investigation, but also resulted in recommendations and resolutions for future actions, collection strategies and policy development.

The conclusions drawn were that:

awareness of the extent of collections around Australia was relatively low, especially among the business community;

use of on-line services was clearly increasing, but knowledge – and use – of the CJK system was low;

rationalisation of collections, together with lack of awareness of other collections, may be a factor in lower levels of satisfaction with library services and collections;

timeliness of information, both in the provision of information and the currency of information collected, was an issue, in particular the lack of newspapers and current periodicals;

there was a need for materials about and from North Korea in all subject areas; gaps in collections in areas other than North Korea related more to a perceived lack of depth in collections rather than a lack of subject matter; and

further research was needed to determine the viability of offering or extending paid for services.

A series of recommendations were developed for referral to the Korean Working Group. The recommendations addressed the issues raised.

Recommendations were:

1. that Australian libraries continue to work together to improve access to materials on Korea in both printed and electronic formats; that coordination between libraries be improved; that increased networking should be pursued including via the Internet
2. that access to the National Chinese, Japanese and Korean Online System be more widely promoted and made available in all major and academic Australian libraries
3. that existing library services be more effectively promoted as it appeared that users were not fully aware of them
4. that contacts with Korean libraries be developed to improve services to Korean users in Australia; that the possibilities of obtaining photocopies and loans through formal arrangements with them be pursued
5. that the problem for users of slowness of inter-library loans and supply of photocopies be considered as well as the effectiveness of the system including direct charges
6. that access to electronic economic data on Korea be improved within Australia
7. that collecting of library materials on North Korea be given greater priority by Australian libraries with Korean holdings especially the National Library
8. that gaps in collecting, such as lack of current periodicals and newspapers, be considered together with possible funding sources
9. that needs of business which were bypassing libraries be discussed more fully with business councils and users.

Implications for the National Library

The findings of the survey were clearly important for the National Library, as by far the largest provider of Korean collections and services in Australia. The survey found rather low awareness and use of Korean collections and of the National CJK Service pointing to a need for greater promotion to prime clients. Perceived problems with slowness and charging issues with inter-library loans were also raised. Material from and about North Korea was identified as a priority for collecting.

Follow-up by the Library has included extensive promotion of the National CJK Service including at meetings such as the First KSAA Conference.

The National Library is continuing to devote considerable resources to acquiring Korean and Western language works about Korea, including seeking to improve holdings relating to North Korea.

By no means all the issues raised in the survey have been dealt with fully in the three years since the report was published. Some including perceived difficulties with inter-library loans are common to libraries generally and are being looked at nationally. As Ken Wells suggests, other needs such as those of business may require different solutions outside the research and academic library system. Nevertheless the survey remains a valuable document, and certainly the most detailed assessment of user library needs for any one Asian language resource ever undertaken in Australia.

The future

As it has for the past five decades the National Library remains strongly committed to providing Korean collections and services, in cooperation with other libraries. Technical changes including the growth of electronic information such as CD-ROMs and networked resources are greatly expanding the range of all libraries in their collecting and provision of services. However despite major changes in information technology traditional library materials will remain vital for libraries and their users. The National Library will continue to collect Korean publications and provide improved access to its Korean holdings, as well as to electronic resources. This is in line with the Library's goal for 2000-2002 and beyond that "All Australians, at their place of choice, have direct, seamless access to print and electronic sources of information." (National Library of Australia [1999])

Given the importance of Korea to Australia use of the collection is likely to continue to grow. As has been noted "The use by academics is actually increasing, and this increase has been quite rapid since the late 1980s. The number of scholars on Korea has been increasing, though still inadequate, and ... this is the time when the enlightened policy of the 50s and 60s is really showing its long-term fruits." (Wells 1998)

One area where more could be done is in scholarships and grants for researchers to make greater use of the collection. For example it would be good to see Korean studies scholars applying for Harold White Fellowships at the National Library. The Library instituted the Fellowship scheme in 1983. The aims are to promote the Library as a centre of scholarly activity and research; to encourage scholarly and literary use of the collections and the production of publications based on them and to publicise the collections. Each year a number of Fellowships and Honorary Fellowships have been awarded to enable established scholars and writers to work for periods of three to six months on materials in the Library's collections.

There have been no recent applications and no Fellowships awarded for research on the Korean collection. So far ten Fellowships have been awarded for Asia-related topics, including four in the past two years. They have involved work on the Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Thai, Burmese, Philippine and other holdings.

As Ken Wells has urged : “Use is increasing, but it is up to us who use the collection to promote it wherever we can, and justify and protect the expenditure on it by further increased use” (Wells 1998).

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