

CHINESE ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES:
ACQUISITIONS, COLLECTIONS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

By

PRISCILLA C. YU

*Chinese Academic and
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Collections, and Organizations*

**FOUNDATIONS IN LIBRARY AND
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*University of Illinois
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Preface

Librarians have become key players in the global communications and information revolution. In this new role, the world has become our laboratory, and as we learn about other countries, we begin to know ourselves better. Professional librarians need to know what is happening in different types of libraries around the world, what they are doing, how they are achieving their goals and why they are as they are. By increasing our knowledge of the work of professional colleagues abroad, we may be able to help them identify their problems as well as assist ourselves in discovering new solutions to common questions. This will broaden and deepen our understanding of other libraries and ourselves.

It is for this reason I have undertaken this study. Research for this book first began in 1985 when I visited four major libraries in China: Peking University Library, National Library of China, Beijing; Fudan University Library, Shanghai; and Nanjing University Library, Nanjing. Since then, repeated on-site visits and in-depth interviews have been conducted with librarians at the four institutions. These returned visits have allowed me over time to update and see the new constructions and changes. Many hours were spent interviewing library directors and librarians, discussing the various aspects of new changes and developments. Through these visits, I was able to collect valuable primary data sources in both Chinese and English to further enrich this work.

The purpose of this study is to examine the current practices, theories, and functions of academic and research libraries in China. The author chose in terms of size and comprehensiveness the top three Chinese academic libraries. I have used each library to focus upon one subject area, while also touching on other areas of library service. For example, in examining Peking University Library, the emphasis will be on acquisition practices; for Nanjing University Library, the focus will be on administration and organization; for Fudan University Library, the emphasis will be on reforms and modernization. In sum, the work includes the examination of administrative practices and management, service units within and outside the main library, acquisitions, the budget, collection development, and automation in the three libraries. In each chapter, an assessment of the overall development of the library as well as some of the serious concerns confronted are considered. For the final part of the study, I have chosen the largest research library in China, The National Library of China, emphasizing the theme of continuity and development.

This work is unique in that the author was privileged to gain access to valuable statistical data for many aspects of library activity, enabling the study to be richer and providing a deeper knowledge and understanding of the challenges and problems facing Chinese academic libraries.

It is the author's hope that this study will arouse interest and stimulate further studies of Chinese libraries, including encouraging and assisting the Chinese academic libraries and librarians to advance their development and goals and contribute to better international understanding among libraries and librarians globally.

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Chapter I

Introduction

A university has been described as a place where scholars and teachers are the head, the students the body, and the library its heart. It cannot be denied that the modern university library is one of the most important institutions that enables a university to attain its objectives.¹

The principal role of the library is educational; libraries are not just to store books, but are dynamic forces of education. The library's mission is to develop the collections and provide the needed information services to meet the university's instructional, research, and service programs. Libraries serve collective as well as individual needs, contributing to national development and to particular research.

Chinese academic libraries have occupied a vital role in national and individual scholarly development and have evolved in close association with the growth of higher education in China, along similar patterns of library development globally. Beginning as institutions with limited functions and serving exclusive clientele, Chinese libraries have become key national institutions, serving the nation as collectors and depositories of information and knowledge.

Let us examine briefly how libraries in China have evolved, in particular academic libraries. The collection of documents in China can be traced back as early as the Shang Dynasty (1766-1123 B.C.). China, the inventor of paper and the art of printing, has been noted for her famous imperial and family libraries. In China's recorded history, the earliest known documents were those carved on tortoise shells and animal bones. These were part of the collections of royal archives or libraries in the Shang Dynasty.