

Minutes - Nineteenth annual conference of EASL

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The nineteenth EASL conference was held in the library of the Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici of the Istituto Universitario Orientale of Naples from 22 to 24 September 1999. The meetings were chaired by Katharina Thölen.

A welcoming address was given by Professor Paolo Santangelo.

During the course of the conference, there was an excursion to the Museo Duca di Martina, where Dr Lucia Mengoni led a tour of the East Asian collections.

Present were:

Linda de Lange (Sinologisch Instituut, Leiden)
Cristina Cramerotti (Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire des Langues Orientales, Paris)
Bénédicte Héraud (Centre Chine, Paris)
Hubert Delahaye (Collège de France, Paris)
Diane Strobl (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München)
Hanno Lecher (Universität Heidelberg)
Andreas Mixius (Universitätsbibliothek und TIB, Hannover)
Alek Stypa (Institut Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin)
Anne Labitzky-Wagner (Landesspracheninstitut NRW, Bochum)
Johann Michael Streffer (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin)
Matthias Kaun (Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel)
Bent Pedersen (Det Kongelige Bibliotek, København)
Koen Wellens (Universitetsbiblioteket i Oslo)
Lars Fredriksson (Östasiatiska Biblioteket, Stockholm)
Katharina Thölen (Universität Zürich)
Mario Vitalone (Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples)
Giuseppe de Marco (Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples)
Marina Battaglini (Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome)
YU Dong (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)
Hiroko Brittain (British Library Document Supply Centre, Boston Spa)
Graham Hutt (British Library, London)
Sue Small (School of Oriental and African Studies, London)
Charles Aylmer (Cambridge University Library)
Mamtimyn Sunuodula (Durham University Library)
David Arrandale (Brotherton Library, Leeds)
David Helliwell (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

Observers:

JI Qing (CNPITC representative)
ZHU Chaoxu (CNPITC representative)

ACTA

1 Chairman's address

An opening address was given by the Chairman.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the Eighteenth EASL conference were accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

3 Notices of members

3.1 The new University Library in Oslo is finished, and an entire floor is devoted to the Asian collections. (Koen Wellens).

3.2 allegro has been installed for Chinese cataloguing at the Institut Monumenta Serica. (Alek Stypa).

3.3 INNOPAC has been installed at the Brotherton Library in Leeds, but not for Chinese cataloguing. Many Chinese materials are going into remote storage, to the irritation of the academic staff. (David Arrandale).

3.4 At the Royal Library in Copenhagen, the Chinese section has moved into a new building. Aleph has been installed, but multi-script functions, even for Hebrew and Arabic, have not yet been implemented. The system has been found slow to work with and old-fashioned. (Bent Pedersen).

3.5 At the Sinologisch Instituut in Leiden, retrospective catalogue conversion has been started for post-1949 materials. (Linda de Lange).

3.6 Matthias Kaun has implemented online access to the Chinese allegro catalogue of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, which currently contains some 70,000 records.

3.7 Aleph has been adopted for all German-speaking libraries in Switzerland. Limited progress has been made with Cyrillic and Near Eastern scripts, but CJK is not even at the planning stage. (Kathy Thölen).

3.8 INNOPAC has been in use in Durham since the end of 1997 for cataloguing Chinese materials in original script. Work began seriously in the spring of 1998. (Mamtimyn Sunuodula).

3.9 INNOPAC has just been installed at SOAS for original script CJK cataloguing (Sue Small).

3.10 Jean-Louis Bouilly (Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon) is participating in a 5-month professional exchange with a colleague in Canton (the twin city of Lyon since 1980). An account of his experiences is awaited with much interest. (Bénédicte Héraud).

4 Conferences and meetings

4.1 In August Yu Dong attended the conference "International Academic Symposium on Modern Science and Technology Dissemination and Chinese-Western Cultural Communication" (Wuhan, 15-20 August 1999), and gave a paper entitled «Chinese Language Books and the Jesuit Mission in China» a study on the Chinese missionary books brought by Philippe Couplet from China.

4.2 In September 1998 David Helliwell attended the EAJRS conference in Leuven and gave a paper on the conversion of NACSIS data for use with allegro.

4.3 SINODOC (the French colleagues' association) met in April, and the principal topics of discussion were automated cataloguing and collaborative acquisitions.

4.3 The China Library Group (the British colleagues' association) had met twice since the last conference, and among other things discussed the prospect of additional support for Chinese studies from HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England).

4.4 The German colleagues met in Münster in October 1998, and there was much discussion of regional union catalogues and the lack of CJK support from software providers. The next session is due to be held in Zürich in October.

5 Treasurer's report

5.1 A statement of accounts prepared by Tony Hyder was presented, and unanimously accepted. He was thanked for his work.

5.2 It was agreed that EASL should discuss what to do with its money at a later stage of the conference.

6 EACS

6.1 The Chairman read out correspondence with the past and present Chairmen of EACS (Professors Rudolph Wagner and Glen Dudbridge) concerning relations between EACS

and EASL.

6.2 It was agreed that from the next EACS conference (Turin, 2000) onwards, EASL would revert to its former practice of presenting a report of its activities.

6.3 In addition, EASL would offer to give a presentation of online and other IT resources for the benefit of academic colleagues. It was agreed that in Turin, David Helliwell should present a report of EASL activities and any union catalogue progress, Bénédicte Héraud and Friederike Schimmelpfennig should demonstrate the use of SSELP, and Matthias Kaun should give a presentation of other online resources.

6.4 The EASL delegates to the EACS conference in Turin should in the first instance seek funding from their institutions. Failing that, funding should be sought from EACS. As a final resort, it was agreed nem. con. that we should use EASL's own money for the purpose, but bearing in mind that once spent, it could not under present circumstances be replaced.

7 SSELP

7.1 A short report on the progress of SSELP was given by Hanno Lecher on behalf of Friederike Schimmelpfennig, who was unavoidably absent, having recently gone to Aberystwyth to study for one year.

7.2 Online write access to the allegro database had been developed, enabling both the editing of existing holdings and the creation of new records. Although it was recognised that the development of this facility represented significant technical progress of potentially great significance to collaborative Chinese cataloguing in Europe, serious doubts were expressed that it would actually be used to any great extent in SSELP.

7.3 Whilst recognising that strictly speaking, SSELP was the business of EACS rather than EASL, there was criticism of the lack of provision for regular updating of the database, which in time would reduce its usefulness (the services of Friederike would only take the project to the end of 1999).

7.4 These problems notwithstanding, it was acknowledged that SSELP provided much valuable information that could not be obtained elsewhere, and Friederike was thanked for her work on the project. The hope was expressed that EACS would find the means to continue it, and EASL promised its full support in the matter.

7.5 Contact with SSELP should be maintained through postings in CJKLIB-L.

8 Other union catalogue projects

8.1 A collaborative congshu cataloguing project has been undertaken by the Universities of Munich and Tübingen, and it has been proposed that Oxford and possibly other libraries should join. Funding is currently being sought for the project, whose object is to produce a complete union catalogue of all congshu in the participating libraries. A debate is continuing as to the feasibility of setting up a physically unified catalogue from data submitted in different formats. However, a trial run in Oxford has indicated that by deriving even crudely converted records, there is a time saving of at least half over record creation from scratch.

8.2 In the UK, funding has been granted for the creation of a national union catalogue of books in Chinese by the recently set up RSLP (Research Support Libraries Programme). The project has two stages: the creation of a union catalogue in Oxford from data submitted in different formats, and an 18 month programme of retrospective catalogue conversion in the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, SOAS, Leeds, Durham and Edinburgh.

9 Cataloguing issues

9.1 Members were disinclined to devote further discussion to a common format, and the matter of subject headings and material designations was postponed to the next conference.

9.2 The need for name authority was debated. Most members were of the view that using an external authority file was neither feasible nor necessary. However, it was agreed that in a name authority file, the names of any author writing primarily in Chinese should be expressed in original script. Interest in the China MARC author authority file was expressed, and it was pointed out that the use of this was implicit in the China MARC records being derived for the catalogues of Berlin and Cambridge.

10 IT demonstrations

10.1 The IT demonstration were held in the University's computer centre, a short walk away from the Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici.

10.2 Short demonstrations were made of the following newly developed resources: (1) the delivery of scanned images from within Oxford's Chinese allegro catalogue (David Helliwell); (2) the experimental application of the Z39.50 protocol for serial searching of the Chinese catalogues of Berlin, Kiel and Oxford, together with COPAC (Matthias Kaun); (3) Durham University's original script INNOPAC catalogue (Mamtimyn Sunuodula); (4) the Inter-national Dunhuang Project (IDP) at the British Library (Graham Hutt).

11 CD-ROM issues

11.1 There was some discussion of the CD-ROM version of Siku quanshu currently on offer from the Chinese University Press and Digital Heritage. EASL members were greatly dissatisfied with the form in which this resource is being marketed, and it was unanimously agreed that only the 8 full-text searchable discs were worth having. The Chairman undertook to communicate these sentiments to the producers. Attention was drawn to the discussion that had taken place some time ago on EASTLIB.

11.2 Reference to the technical difficulties of handling a resource such as Siku quanshu in its present form led to a wider discussion of this subject. It was generally felt that CD-ROMs were excessively expensive in relation to their worth, and colleagues were urged to take a much more sceptical approach to assessing their usefulness, especially when faced with powerful demands for their acquisition from enthusiastic academics.

12 Book supply issues

12.1 The observers from CNPITC made a short presentation, which led to a question-and-answer session about the current state of the book trade in China. Although there were now a number of private dealers in the market, it was pointed out that the major state-owned enterprises were not in competition, hence the difficulty in obtaining better prices by shopping around in this area.

12.2 Two colleagues had recently saved a great deal of money and paid for their trip to China by travelling to Peking to purchase books on the spot.

13 EASL trip to the USA (West Coast)

As very few members expressed the wish to participate in this visit, largely owing to the cost of doing so, it was felt inappropriate to continue the discussion at the meeting. However, it was agreed that the idea of a visit next spring should definitely be pursued, and the Secretary undertook to deal with the matter.

14 Election of officers

Kathy Thölen, David Helliwell and Tony Hyder were re-elected to their respective offices of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

15 Next EASL conference

The next conference will be held in Leiden from Wednesday 20 to Saturday 23 September, 2000.

The Nineteenth EASL Conference closed with an expression of thanks to Mario Vitalone for his excellent arrangements and superb hospitality. This was the first time that EASL had met in a palace — at times, the effect of the magnificent ceilings was more mesmerizing than that of the debates.

David Helliwell
Secretary

Oxford: 12 October 1999