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The Claremont Colleges Asian Studies Faculty Research Practices

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The study of Asia is deeply rooted in The Claremont Colleges' curricula. Pomona College established the first Asian Studies curriculum in a liberal arts college in the United States. Each of the five undergraduate colleges has rich course offerings on Asia; Pomona and Claremont McKenna have stand-alone Asian Studies programs. The main programs of concentration available within Asian Studies are East Asia, South and Southeast Asia, and West Asia/Middle East. The Claremont Colleges Library has been allocating more support for the Asian Library over the past few years. In 2016 we recruited a full-time Head of the Asian Library, where there had been a half-time librarian since 2009, and we are planning a renovation of the Asian Library space; the Asian Library figures prominently in the library's Master Plan. Additionally, the library has partnered with EnviroLab Asia, an intercollegiate initiative at The Claremont Colleges to study, test, and evaluate methods and measures to address environmental problems in Asia; EnviroLab Asia is designed to facilitate interdisciplinary communication and collaboration. The Claremont Colleges Library embarked on this study with Ithaka S+R because we wished to gain greater insight into the research process of Asian Studies faculty at The Claremont Colleges, and specifically to inform the development of research services, information resources, and spaces to meet current and future research, teaching, and learning needs.

Background

The Claremont Colleges (TCC), located in Southern California, is a consortium of independent liberal arts colleges that combines the specialization, flexibility, and personal attention of a college with the resources of a university. The consortium dates back to 1925 when Claremont Graduate University (CGU) was founded in partnership with Pomona College, the oldest of the colleges (1887). The five undergraduate colleges consist of Pomona (POM), Scripps (SCR), Claremont McKenna (CMC), Harvey Mudd (HMC), and Pitzer (PIT). The two graduate institutions are CGU and the Keck Graduate Institute of Applied Life Sciences (KGI). Combined there are more than 7,200 enrolled students and 3,600 faculty and staff at TCC.

Located at the heart of the seven campuses, The Claremont Colleges Library (TCCL) is the preeminent academic resource for TCC. The Asian Library (AL) is a department in

the Special Collections and Libraries Division of the TCCL and holds Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language print and digital information resources. The Claremont Colleges began acquiring East Asian books and special collections in the 1930s to support research, teaching, and learning; since that time, the AL has been adding to its information resources through purchases, gifts, and exchange. The Asian Library collection currently comprises approximately 46,000 titles; disciplinary strengths are in the arts and humanities. The Chinese language collection includes 14th-21st century manuscript and printed materials, art works, and objects; the Japanese language collection includes 18th-21st century manuscript and printed materials. The Korean language collection includes modern materials as well as rare books. South and Southeast Asian information resources are also represented. The Asian Library maintains subscriptions to CJK databases and other e-resources.

Methodology

This report is part of a collaborative research project undertaken by Ithaka S+R with eleven colleges and universities across the United States to investigate the research support needs of Asian Studies faculty/scholars. In 2016 TCCL answered Ithaka S+R's call for volunteers to participate. We hoped that, by participating in this research study, the library would gain new insight into Claremont faculty's experiences and perceptions of Asian Studies at TCC and the wider field, their varied research needs, their use of the TCCL's Asian Studies information resources and services, and their desired level of library support for their research.

We began the work of this study by compiling a list of Claremont faculty members who are formally part of the Asian Studies programs as well as those who teach courses focused on Asia that are not formally affiliated with Asian Studies programs at TCC, including Asian American Studies. To elicit responses from scholars with a variety of approaches, we invited participation from 22 faculty members from different disciplines. Sixteen faculty volunteered for this study; 15 participants were drawn from the five undergraduate colleges, and one graduate faculty member was interviewed. These faculty members study a wide range of geographic regions within Asia not limited to China, Japan, and Korea. Eleven faculty were in the arts and humanities disciplines, and five were in social sciences; one participant was in Asian American Studies. Thirteen were tenured professors, and three were on the tenure track.

During the 2017 spring semester, we conducted in-depth, one-on-one interviews with the 16 faculty participants, following Ithaka S+R's semi-structured interview guide¹. We asked questions about their perceptions around the evolving field of Asian Studies as

¹ See Appendix 1

well as questions around the lifecycle of their research: their research projects' scope and methods, discovering and accessing information, managing the information they collect and produce, and disseminating their research.

Findings

Faculty Research Focus and Methods

In their interviews nearly all faculty members spoke to their need to balance teaching and research in the liberal arts college context. Some faculty talked specifically about their devotion to teaching and developing good courses; they also spoke of the challenge of time allocation and balancing teaching and research, and how maintaining the expected high level of student interaction results in less time for research during the academic year. A few faculty members said they want a lighter course load so that they can do more research. Faculty teaching language acquisition and development said they experience particular research challenges from working at a liberal arts college. They talked about lacking access to students with sufficient language skills to assist with research projects or to be research subjects because they [the faculty] are in a liberal arts college and not a larger research institution. Other research method challenges identified by language faculty members include issues with logistics for conducting interviews and surveys; handling large numbers of subjects to be studied/interviewed; and funds, analysis tools, and other types of support.

Asian Studies faculty conduct their research in similar ways to their colleagues in other disciplines². Some examine primary sources, conduct archival research, or produce textual analysis of classic works. Some are object oriented, looking at an object first, then studying the cultural context and theoretical implications. Some faculty members are more field work-oriented, and their research involves field trips, participant observation and interviews, site visits, and monument/site studies. While most Asian Studies faculty members' research is qualitative, a few faculty carry out quantitative studies, involving statistical analysis and data modeling. Some faculty member's research combines several methodologies, depending on topics and project aims, and can involve site visits, interviews, archival research, and/or genealogical research.

Some faculty maintain Asian Studies traditional research foci on language and culture; as one faculty member said, "Traditional translation of texts is fundamental." Many, however, work on issues such as modernity, the environment, time and space, popular culture, and contemporary writing and writers. One faculty member described their

² For example, see Ithaka S+R's *Supporting the Changing Research Practices of Religious Studies Scholars* published in 2017 <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.294119>. Accessed on the WWW 12/11/2017.

research moving out of traditional textual analysis and document/manuscript studies to comparative historical analysis (e.g. Eurasian studies). Another faculty member acknowledged that their “hardcore” research of traditional textual analysis is evolving to be more intercultural and interdisciplinary. Faculty respondents characterized Asian Studies as multidisciplinary, across countries and regions, and across time. While some faculty interviewed described their research methods as discipline driven, the majority of faculty interviewed described their current research as interdisciplinary in scope and methodology; eleven faculty members spoke about how they are looking at a text or a time period or a place from a combination of disciplinary perspectives--anthropology and political science, for example--requiring a variety of analytical and scholarly research methods.

By and large, TCC faculty recognize the emergence of Digital Humanities as a mode of research, but only two are currently working on DH projects. Three faculty expressed concerns about DH, saying they don't have time to learn the tools to create DH projects, and that DH projects take a lot of time. One said that there is an “obsession” with digital research tools, that DH projects showcase tools at the expense of answering a research question. One commented that DH projects using Asian language sources are challenging because tools such as OCR are not effective with Asian fonts/scripts and mentioned feeling hopeful about OCR software for Asian characters currently in early stages of development in Asia

Perhaps changes in research methods accounts for the level of interdisciplinarity of Asian Studies faculty research foci, and perhaps also the level of collaboration with others. Nine faculty members talked about how they collaborate now, or have collaborated in the past, with colleagues in the U.S. and abroad on research projects; seven faculty reported that they do not collaborate on research projects.

Faculty also talked about the challenges they experience in storing and accessing their research data. Six faculty interviewed maintain paper files and 10 use both paper and computer files simultaneously. Three faculty rely on proprietary software to store and access research data and have found transferring data to new/different software is problematic; they also mentioned limitations of available software. Three faculty talked about not knowing what kinds of software are available to store and/or organize research data in the most effective and efficient way. One faculty member uses open source software so that he can program the changes he requires himself. Two faculty member mentioned wanting the ability to use metadata for searching and analysis of their stored data.

Information Access and Discovery

Faculty members' perceptions of the liberal arts college context influence their information access and discovery methods. Nearly all faculty interviewed do not expect the TCCL to own the materials they need for their research projects because the TCCL is not a research library (as in the R1 context). "Our library doesn't have what is needed for [my] research focus-- [it's] to be understood given our context of small liberal arts college. It's not expected that the primary sources would be here." Faculty, however, do expect the library to support their teaching and their students' research with access to appropriate information resources. Three faculty members said that, because the library has finite resources, they do not always ask the library to acquire books for their research projects; they purchase needed materials themselves or make copies and add them to their own scholarly library.

In spite of the general understanding of teaching at a liberal arts college and the expectation of excellence in teaching and research, some faculty did express concern over the library's lack of needed information resources. One faculty member said, "Limited access to foreign newspapers means that perspectives are limited, and the regions' perspectives aren't represented in the sources available." Another faculty member said, "I don't think research can be disconnected from pedagogy or teaching. And so, any resource poor issues related to my research also impacts the students, because...I have assignments that will require them to go to the shelves. And find a book, and then find two books next to that book, and talk about why they're there and how they relate to each other. And it's really embarrassing to actually send them to try to find... books, and there's nothing really there."

For their research projects, faculty said that they rely on resource sharing/interlibrary loan services for research materials; they use digitized resources when available; and they travel to regional, national, and international libraries, archives, and other places to gain access to research materials. Most of the faculty interviewed talked about the importance of primary resources to their research projects--"I can't do anything without going to archives" -- and the need to travel to where they are located to access them. As mentioned previously, nearly all faculty interviewed do not expect the library to have the sources they require. Limited access to these materials are through library collections, but largely, faculty travel to Asian countries to find and use the primary resources they need. Some faculty members said they would like access to library collections in Asia from our library through interlibrary loan/resource sharing. The majority of interviewed faculty would like more primary and secondary research materials in Asia accessible online, for example, archives, manuscripts, and theses and dissertations.

Twelve faculty spoke about the need to travel to Asia to conduct their research and seven talked about varying levels of difficulty in locating and using primary sources such as archives, in gaining permission for access to archives, and for copying. In particular, they talked about Asian libraries protecting their collections and setting restrictive rules for admittance, copying, photographing, or scanning. In their experience, faculty found that many libraries throughout Asia are protective of rare books and consider western researchers to be “outsiders.” One faculty member mentioned that when they inquired about a collection, it was accessible to them one day and restricted the next. Some faculty pointed out that there is little access to scholarship published in some Asian countries. Several faculty talked about the dearth of digitized Asian archives. One faculty member talked about a time when they were barred from access to some archives due to local religious agenda.

Two faculty members talked about challenges in conducting research in newly arising subject fields such as popular culture that they assert have “no set scholarly research method”. These faculty members want to access information from a variety of resources, some ephemeral, and some specialized that are generally available only in large research libraries that make a special effort in collecting these materials. For these faculty working within traditional Asian subject fields but using western theoretical frameworks, there also is the challenge of gathering different perspectives in order to ascertain where the particular scholarly tradition stands. “[With the] complicated history of the people being studied, documentation can be elusive.”

Dissemination Practices

Most faculty disseminate their research through traditional ways--university press published books; articles in peer-reviewed journals; and conference papers. One faculty member said that they choose where to publish based on the subject of their research project. Twelve faculty mentioned that they disseminate their research and scholarship, either scholarly oriented or of more general interest, by blogging, posting to social media, and uploading their publications to social networking sites such as Academia.edu and ResearchGate; some regularly publish op-eds, and a couple of faculty members have their own websites where they provide information about their research.

Faculty responses about OA (open access) publishing varied on a spectrum from don’t know about OA to actively participating in OA as an editor of an OA journal. One faculty member said that they might explore OA for publishing their research because they are “no longer inhibited by tenure and promotion consideration.” The majority of faculty interviewed, however, said they do not publish in OA venues. Their reasons include

required author fees --they don't want to pay to have their scholarship published--and they are concerned about "commercial interest" standing in the way of "academic" interest. About two-thirds of respondents feel OA publishing is not rigorous, and acknowledge that the tenure and promotion process influences type and direction of faculty scholarship.

"...there's the part of me that thinks all information should be free and accessible, right, so whenever possible I would like my work to be published in a forum that anyone can access, so that's not fee-based, that's open access. But there's also the demands of being in a tenure track position, right, and a lot of academic journals are not freely accessible. Then it becomes a question of, okay, what is the article that I'm writing about, and what makes sense?"

Two faculty members talked about how their choices for publishing channels also reflects their desire to bridge the so-called "publishing divide" and to promote conversation in scholarship among western and Asian scholars by publishing in Asian languages and in Asian countries, or by choosing a western publisher because of its distribution to regions in Asia, so that their scholarship reaches audience in Asia. One faculty member talked about choosing the publisher for his book based on the publisher's lower prices for buyers in Asia, compared to those in U.S. and European markets.

State of the Field

Many faculty interviewed feel Asian Studies must expand beyond East Asia to include more countries and regions, and include disciplines beyond the traditional study of language and culture. "Rethink what is Asia--what is Asian Studies." They see the movement toward multidisciplinary approaches to Asian Studies research and, especially the social scientists, a need for more data-driven projects. Six faculty talked about different disciplines and fields working together engaging in productive conversations, identifying new issues, and using new perspectives and tools to address problems. "Let the issue define the [research] methodology." Most faculty feel that the field must find ways to extend knowledge beyond academic circles and make research understandable to the general public, "...go beyond just talking to each other and to get this information out" through more courses, more exhibitions, more education programs. In particular, two faculty members talked about how Asian Studies needs to attract and educate the best students to Asian Studies as future scholars, perhaps by encouraging more students to study abroad in Asia.

The faculty see challenges for the field in accessing information. On one hand they want to travel, or are resigned to travel, to use primary sources wherever they are, and they particularly acknowledge the challenges of travel and access to and use of materials in other countries. Nearly all faculty interviewed want more digitized primary sources and online access to scholarship and research. Two faculty mentioned that digitized Asian materials can be a problem because they feel the materials are described in limited and idiosyncratic ways and therefore difficult to discover. Faculty are less sure if they are finding all that is relevant to their topic. Two faculty members mentioned that they feel constricted by the limitations of transliteration in accessing information.

Faculty also feel that these changes in the Asian Studies field bring about opportunities. The opportunities they see include, but are not limited to, changing student demographics in Asian Studies classes; changing demographics of researchers, and consequently, research analysis; and more cross region/country, multidisciplinary projects. One faculty member commented on the increasing number of bright students from Asia who come to United States for PhDs, and students with Asian family backgrounds who are bilingual or trilingual and interested in studying Asia. Another faculty member commented on the opportunity for the United States as a neutral or central place where Asian countries can come together to talk about difficult historical questions and regional relationships. Two faculty members also commented on the opportunity for American institutions for better collaboration with those in Asian countries, and in particular stronger ties and connections with China.

Four faculty reiterated their support of the library's renewed focus on the Asian Library; they cite the value of carrying on the long tradition of Asian Studies in the library and building on our existing collection strengths by expanding research services and making connections for students with the wider Asian Studies community. Six faculty think that the growing recognition that Asian Studies is multidisciplinary itself is an opportunity for the future of Asian Studies. One faculty member said, "[the future of Asian Studies is] depending on scholarship of different respective fields to make important contributions", and another said, "It's exciting to see people with different interests and different training come together and generate new scholarship, and ask new questions. And that's the purpose of academia, to be able to create something new."

Conclusion

The majority of The Claremont Colleges Asian Studies faculty interviewed for this study acknowledge that the field of Asian studies is expanding from the traditional study of languages and cultures and becoming more interdisciplinary and inclusive of

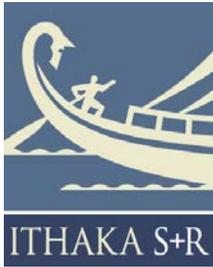
geographic regions and subjects. In general, the faculty identify as “Asian studies” and at the same time identify with their disciplines, e.g., history or sociology; with few exceptions, their research methods are closely aligned with their respective disciplines. All of the faculty publish in Asian Studies and in disciplinary scholarly venues, and a small number of Claremont Asian Studies faculty are either interested in, or are creating now, media and digital research products. Regarding expectations for their teaching, research, and college service (committees, e.g.), the faculty perceive differences between the liberal arts college and research university settings, saying that at their respective colleges (in Claremont), there is great emphasis on their course development, teaching, and high-touch student engagement as well as for research and publishing. All of the faculty interviewed talked about the challenge of carving out enough time to carry out their research; yet, Claremont Asian Studies faculty maintain a rigorous research agenda and output, considering the high expectation for teaching and service, and the library’s limited Asian information resources available on their research areas. When talking about their research practices and library resources, faculty draw a clear line for the library between acquiring materials for their teaching and their undergraduate students’ research and acquiring materials for the faculty members’ particular research projects. Instead of asking the library to acquire research materials for their projects, the faculty heavily rely on the library’s resource sharing/interlibrary loan services as well as travel to regional research libraries or further afield to Asian libraries and archives for access to research collections. The emphasis on research travel seems particular to the Asian Studies faculty. The faculty talked about the privilege and even prestige of accessing Asian collections held in research collections in the U.S. and in Asia; they also spoke of the frustrations associated with travel, politics, and bureaucracies of different regions and repositories. Considering one faculty member’s concern for easing the way for scholarship to cross geopolitical boundaries, as well as the inequitable costs for books and journals, this issue might be shared with other areas studies.

Recommendations

We see several opportunities for The Claremont Colleges Library as a result of this study.

- Partnering with the library’s Research, Teaching, and Learning Services division in order to meet the discipline-specific research needs of Asian Studies as it evolves over time;
- Increasing the Asian Library’s materials budget by seeking donor funding and other strategies in order to meet some of the current and future faculty requests for information resources;

- Proactively connecting the collections to faculty research projects and highlighting the projects that use Asian Library materials;
- Creating and strengthening relationships with libraries and publishers in Asia in order to increase resource sharing in support of faculty research;
- Involving faculty more in digitization and metadata for the library's unique and rare Asian materials, and supporting open access of the digitized collections to the worldwide community of scholars;
- Promoting the library's services that support digital project creation and management directly to Asian Studies faculty;
- Exploring how the library might support Asian Studies scholars with open access publishing and other scholarly communications issues;
- Exploring ways the library might support the faculty's data storage and management challenges.



Asian Studies Project Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Research Focus and Methods

1. Describe your current research focus/projects.
2. How is your research situated within the field of Asian Studies? [Probe for how/does their work engage with any other fields or disciplines?]
3. What research methods do you typically use to conduct your research? [Probe for how those methods relate to work done by others in Asian Studies/in the other fields they engage with]
 - » Do you collaborate with others as part of your research? [If yes, probe for what these collaborations entail, who typically works on them and what the division of work is]
 - » Does your research elicit data? [If so, probe for what kinds of data typically elicited, how they incorporate this data into their final research outputs and how they manage and store this data for their ongoing use]

Information Access and Discovery

4. [Beyond the data your research produces] What kinds of primary information do you rely on to do your research?
 - » How do you locate this information?
 - » What are the greatest challenges you experience working with this kind of information?
 - » How do you manage and store this information for your ongoing use?
 5. What kinds of secondary information do you rely on to do your research? E.g. monographs, peer reviewed articles.
 - » How do you locate this information?
 - » What are the greatest challenges you experience working with this kind of information?
 - » How do you manage and store this information for your ongoing use?
 6. Think back to a past or ongoing research project where you faced challenges in the process of finding and accessing information.
 - » Describe these challenges.
 - » What could have been done to mitigate these challenges?
 7. How do you keep up with trends in your field more broadly?
-

Dissemination Practices

8. Where do you typically publish your scholarly research? [Probe for kinds of publications and what disciplinary audiences they typically seek to engage with].
 - » Do you disseminate your research beyond scholarly publications? [If so, probe for where they publish and why they publish in these venues]
 - » How do your publishing practices relate to those typical to your discipline?
9. Have you ever made your research data, materials or publications available through open access? (e.g. through an institutional repository, open access journal or journal option)
 - » If so, where and what has been your motivations for pursuing open dissemination channels? (i.e. required, for sharing, investment in open access principles)
 - » If no, why not?

State of the Field and Wrapping Up

10. If I gave you a magic wand that could help you with your research and publication process [except for more money or time] – what would you ask it to do?
 11. What future challenges and opportunities do you see for the broader field of Asian Studies?
 12. Is there anything else about your experiences as a scholar of Asian Studies and/or the Asian Studies as a field that you think it is important for me to know that was not covered in the previous questions?
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