Enhancing Access to Research Materials on East Asia: An Interim Report on the East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web

Maureen H. Donovan

Abstract

The East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web (http:/pears.lib.ahio-statc.edu/) uses the World Wide Web to help researchers overcome geographical barriers which hinder access to resources, both print and electronic. This project, which is directed at the Ohio State University, has received funding from the Japan - United States Friendship Commission, the U.S. Department of Education Title II-A (Library Technology and Cooperation Program) and other sources. In addition to Ohio State, universities participating in the two major grant-funded projects which make up this effort include: UC-Berkeley, Columbia, Duke, Illinois. Indiana, Iowa, MIT, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, However, already the number of participants has grown to include librarians and scholars at other institutions. The presentation describes the origins of the project, its evolution, and its future plans. Particular emphasis is given to discussing the challenges that activities such us construction of a distributed database and development or proactive services for remote users pose for librarians, as well us the various strategies that are being used in this project to address them.

1 Introduction

The East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web (http://pears.lib.ohio-state.edu/) is based at the Ohio State University Libraries, but includes participation by librarians and scholars elsewhere, especially at nine other universities which have received some funding (primarily for equipment) under its auspices. They are:

University of California, Berkeley
Columbia University
Duke University
University of Illinois
Indiana University
University of Iowa

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
University of Minnesota
University of Wisconsin
Funding for the project has been received from:

The Ohio State University and other universities [ ][1]
The Japan - United States Friendship Commission [ ][2]
The United States Department of Education [ ][3]
The Japan Foundation [ ][4]
Sun Microsystems Computer Corporation's Academic Equipment Grant Program [ ][5]

Based firmly in current technology, the East Asian Libraries World Wide Web in an initiative of East Asian collection librarians to work together in order to help researchers gain better access to scholarly resources on East Asian, whether print or electronic. At the same time it is also a management tool, useful in developing pro-active user services that we hope will enable us to share our library resources more effectively.

2 Project's Origin and Evolution

This World Wide Web initiative grew out of a number of trends in research libraries and in Japanese studies. The project now encompasses all of East Asia, but the original impetus to develop it name out of discussions of problems being Japanese collections in American research libraries.

A series of meetings beginning in 1979 was initialed by the Japan - United States Friendship Commission (JUSFC). By the mid-1980's these dealt increasingly with the need for more funding and / or alternate strategies for distributing funds in order to meet changing demands being placed on Japanese library collections at American universities. Important trends which wore identified in the discussions ranged from the information revolution, the globalization of knowledge, and the crisis facing research libraries in general, to the unprecedentedly large enrollments being made in Japanese language courses, the expansion of Japanese studies into many new fields, and the changing nature of research in Japanese studies. These trends all converged with a sharp increase in the value of the yen to make it difficult for Japanese collection librarians to cope with what Patricia G. Steinhoff has called the "loss of irrelevance" of Japanese studies.[][6] Librarians were forced by these circumstances to consider alternatives to former practices designed to build stand-alone collections in support of local teaching and research at a small number of major centers. Gradually the concept of a national or even global collection in support of Japanese studies emerged, with libraries acknowledging the increasing interdependence of their collections.

The latest survey of Japanese studies specialists confirms that the field is increasingly diverse, heterogeneous and international in scope, and that audiences, for Japanese studies have expanded and diversified.[][7] Japanese collection librarians are now exploring uncharted territory, seeking ways to cooperate and coordinate our efforts to build an information infrastructure for the changing needs of Japan specialists in various fields and professions.

The World Wide Web project is only one of a number of efforts underway. Leadership comes from the Council on East Asian Libraries and its Committee on Japanese Materials [][8],

and from the national Coordinating Committee no Japanese Library Resources, as well as from many individual and regional initiatives. Much momentum was gathered at the 1991 Conference on National Planning for Japanese Libraries held at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University which spawned a National Planning Team and nine task forces which produced reports that continue to influence activities.

The Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) and its Committee on Japanese Materials meet annually in conjunction with the Association for Asian Studies. CEAL has an annual meeting, and supports the development of East Asian collections in many ways through joint projects (for example, collecting statistics), publications and communication with related organizations nationally and internationally.

The Committee on Japanese Materials has undertaken many activities, such as holding a workshop for librarians to receive training in the methods or Japanese librarianship, compiling and publishing the National Union List of Current Japanese Serials in East Asian Libraries of North America (1992), and holding an annual meeting with programs addressing developments of interest to librarians in this field.

The National Coordinating Committee on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) was formed in 1991/92 by the Japan - United States Friendship Commission and the Japan Foundation to help them identify major funding priorities for libraries, as well as to foster the kind of coordination and cooperation that would ensure that funding decisions they were making would have the greatest positive impact possible on Japanese studies in the United States.

In 1993 NCC, together with the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), received funding from JUSFC to establish the NCC-ARL Task Force on Japanese Electronic Resources to study how the use of advanced technology could have a positive impact on Japanese collections and especially on and services that they offer to scholars distributed throughout the United States. It was under the auspices of that task force that the idea of establishing what is now called the East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web was discussed and a plan was made to go forward to seek funding. The Ohio State University Libraries agreed to take the lead role for the project.

While the proposal was still being discussed librarians at Ohio State became aware of an opportunity to seek funding from the U.S. Department of Education as well as from the JUSFC. A decision was made to approach the Dept. of Ed., with a proposal that was broader in subject scope (involving all of East Asia) and included the large Mid-Western universities with which OSU has consortial agreements. In addition, a proposal was written to the JUSFC on behalf of participants involved in the NCC-ARL Task Force (MIT was added because they approached the JUSFC about their JP-NET initiative, and it was thought to be similar enough that it should be included in the same proposal with the library network).

Both grants were approved for funding and were combined for administrative convenience at Ohio State under the rubric of East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web, Substantial matching funds have been made available in the form of personnel and / or equipment at several of the participating universities, especially at Ohio State.

3 Challenges; Plans

The East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web is currently is a very early stage of implementation. Although the process of getting organized, soliciting agreements, for

participation, writing the grant proposals, and getting set up for the basic services (establishing the WWW site, ordering and configuring equipment, etc.) has already been long and involved, the process of coordinating efforts of partner institutions is just beginning. Among the challenges which face the project, the ones that seem biggest are not the technological, but those involving personnel. Since the budget allows funding primarily for the purchase of equipment, we are relying on participating librarians to absorb the work of this project in their everyday workload. This will not be easy for anyone.

At the same time, using existing personnel resources, is also, a strong point of this project -- these librarians are not funded on soft money which would disappear after the grant-funded period is over.

Our challenge is to create incentives that will ensure that project participants continue to be active even after the novelty has worn off. Developing services that address user needs concretely is one strategy that is expected to convince practically-minded librarians that this work is worth doing. Another strategy being followed is to give at each library gets credit ("ownership") for their own contributions to this cooperative web project.

Maintaining a cooperative project requires good governance, responsiveness to participant needs, and excellent communication. Another challenge is to implement an effective administrative structure that is flexible enough to allow such a project (based on advanced technology) to move ahead quickly, and at the same time is stable enough to permit participants to become involved in governance and planning.[ ][9]

As each library gels set up the first task is to write a home page for the library and its services which includes access to its online catalog and other databases. Following that, each library is expected to select a few journal titles, monograph sets, special collections, or an area in which there is subject strength in the collection and develop finding aids or indexes which will help remote users to access these research materials.

Initially the project will allow individual librarians a chance to develop such materials independently, but it is expected that coordination will begin fairly soon. The JUSFC has asked that NCC serve as the advisory board for the Japanese studies sections of this web project. Project participants will be discussing how to set up one or more oversight committee(s) for the rest of the web. This task is explicitly mentioned as requiring attention in the Department of Education grant proposal and will be a major focus of the next year.

In spring, 1995 the project exhibited at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, receiving valuable feedback from users and potential users continuously throughout the conference, Funds have been set aside to do the name at the next meeting in Honolulu in April, 1996. If it seems appropriate an open meeting will also be held for discussions among users, of the direction the project should take.

While the mainstream of the funded project is aimed directly at East Asian studies already it has moved into tangential or peripheral areas. This is not only expected, but is happening by design. Those areas outside the mainstream of East Asian Studies are the ones which offer the biggest challenge to the East Asian collection librarian. By collaborating to ensure service for such fields we demonstrate the effectiveness of this project for solving research library problems.

Japanese science and technology information is the first of these areas in be explored collaboratively through the Research Libraries Project currently being conducted jointly by the Association of American Universities and ARL. The Japanese Scientific and Technical information Project is directed by Dorothy Gregor in cooperation with the Center for Research

Libraries and OCLC, Inc,[ ][10] The activities planned for this project include:

* Providing network access to tables of contents for Japanese STI journal literature from a variety of sources.

* Providing network access to lists of core Japanese STI serial literature, The Working Group has, for example compiled a "robotics" list from a number of sources, which includes holdings information and abstract and indexing (A & I) services coverage. The list is available on the East Asian Libraries Cooperative WWW.

* Providing network access in document suppliers, including the Center for Research Libraries and other libraries, CISTI, OCLC, Interlingua and a variety of not-for-profit and commercial suppliers in North America and elsewhere.

* Providing network access to electronic text us it becomes available.

* Working to expand TOC and A & I coverage of the literature.

* Determining the feasibility of regularizing interlibrary lending/document supply arrangements with libraries and other agencies in Japan. The Center for Research Libraries will be a focal point of this effort.

* Retrospective conversion of relevant titles, if needed.

Although planning for specifics about the databases that will comprise the East Asian Libraries World Wide Web is still underway, our discussions have emphasized that the content on this server will be constructed to reflect and extend the great depth of information that has been collected in the libraries that are participating in this project. As libraries move to accommodate the needs of remote users we will develop new techniques and new services. For this project the need for multicultural approaches is immediately apparent, as is the importance of flexibility in design of all aspects of the server.

4. Conclusion

The East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web has had very promising start, receiving much encouragement form government, academic and library organizations. As an initiative which emerged out of discussions of librarians about the needs of Japanese collections, it offers hope that collaborative work will be effective in creating an information infrastructure that supports scholarly research. Although cynics may despair that such efforts, can ever make a difference, those of us who have participated in such initiatives as OCLC, CRL, OhioLINK, etc. are guardedly optimistic about the potential for success. In the meantime, there is a great deal of hard work ahead of us if we are to achieve it.

1. The Ohio State University Office of Research awarded a seed grant ($10,000) in 1992 to Anna M. Wang and Maureen H. Donovan for a project entitled, "A Study of the Feasibility of Using Image Processing Technology for Document Delivery: A Case Study Using Japanese Language Materials." The OSU Friends of the Libraries supplemented this with $2,500.
   For the Department of Education grant (see below) Ohio State University Is providing marching funds (in the form of personnel working on the project) which amount to substantially more than the required one-third ($60,333). Other universities included In the Department of Education and the Japan - United States Friendship Commission grants are supplementing the grant awards with personnel, and, in several cases, additional equipment purchases.

2. In April, 1994 the Japan - United States Friendship Commission awarded $75,960 to the Ohio State University for the project, "Japanese Resource Sharing." Funding under this project supported Installation of a Sun SPARCstation 5 server at Ohio State and Sun SPARCstation 5 workstations at UC-Berkeley, Columbia, Duke and MIT, Some additional funds were available for each university to use for software, hardware or student hours.
   In summer, 1995 JUSFC has awarded one-year of continuation funding ($32,406) to the project through the National Coordinating Committee on Japanese Library Resources where the project is under the Subcommittee on Electronic Resources, This funding is being used for software / hardware and student hours at each university. It also includes support for one quarter of a graduate student at Ohio State and for an exhibit at the Honolulu Association for Asian Studies meeting in April, 1996.

3. The United States Department of Education has awarded $181,000 under the College Library Technology and Cooperations Program (Title II-A) to Ohio State University and five other universities for a project entitled, "Advanced Technology In Support of Resource Sharing for East Asian Studies." The five other universities included in this grant are: University of Illinois, Indiana University, University of Iowa, University of Minnesota and University of Wisconsin. This project has allowed for the purchase of a Sun SPARCcenter 2000 at Ohio State and the Installation of workstations (Windows, Macintosh or UNIX, depending on local preferences) at each of the universities. The project also supported one graduate student for one year at Ohio State for project set-up, hourly student wages at each of the universities for data input, and an exhibit at the 1995 Association for Asian Studies meeting.

4. The Japan Foundation has granted Maureen Donovan a Research Fellowship tor 1995-96 for the project, "Strategic Approaches to Japanese Information Using the World-Wide Web," with affiliation being granted by the School of Library and Information Science, Keio University.

5. In June, 1995 Sun Microsystems Corporations's Academic Equipment Grant Program awarded Ohio State University a gift of equipment (Sun SPARCstation Voyager) valued at $20,420 for Maureen Donovan's project, 'Strategic Approaches to Japanese Information via the East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web."

6. Patricia Steinhoff, "Japanese Studies in the United Slates: The Loss of Irrelevance," The Postwar Development of Japanese Studies in the United States: A Historical Review and Prospects for the Future (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 1993), 19-35. Also published in: IHJ Bulletin 13:1 (Winter, 1993).

7. Patricia G. Steinhoff, "Defining Japanese Studies in the 1990s: Who Knows? Who Wants to Know?" Japan Foundation Newsletter 22:5 (1995), 5-9.

8. The Council on East Asian Libraries was formerly called the Committee on East Asian Libraries. With this name change former subcommittees became committees.

9. For more information on strategies being used to build effective collaboration, see Maureen H. Donovan, "The East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web: A Framework for Collaboration," Mezhdunarodnala Konferenstiia Pamiantniki Dukhovnoi, Material'noi i Pis'mennoi Kul'tury Drevnego i Srednevekovogo Vostoka: Sozdaniie baz dannykh (International Conference on Monuments of Spiritual, Material and Written Culture of the Ancient and Medieval Orient: Problems of Database Creation), Moscow (Sofrino), May 30 - June 4, 1995. Conference proceedings to be published in late 1995.

10. Association of Research Libraries, "Summary of Collection Management Activities, June 1995: Report to the Chief Collection Development Officers of Large Research Libraries Discussion Group" (prepared by Jutta Reed-Scott), as posted to colldv-l@vm.usc.edu on June 20, 1995.