

## The Challenge of Evaluating and Developing an Interdisciplinary Collection: The East Asian Collection at the Public College

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# The Challenge of Evaluating and Developing an Interdisciplinary Collection: The East Asian Collection at the Public College

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## Abstract

When the faculty of the College of Staten Island, CUNY (CSI) introduced a new baccalaureate level program in East Asian Studies the library faced the challenge of evaluating the adequacy of its holdings to support the program and its future development. Multidisciplinary fields of study (e.g., East Asian Studies) that pertain to a specific geographical or cultural area present a unique set of evaluative issues because their subject content cannot be confined to set classification ranges, rendering the traditional methods of collection analysis inadequate. This poster will present the results of an evaluation of CSI's East Asian Studies collection, discuss some of the challenges the authors encounter when analyzing this collection, and it will propose ways that the collection can be strengthened in the future.

This analysis, as any analysis of a multidisciplinary field, must begin with clearly defining its span—in this case the scope of the East Asian Studies program at CSI. Then the authors will identify a few peer institutions with East Asian collections that can be used for purposes of comparison. Then the authors will examine how to best use the available tools (e.g., Aleph integrated library system, OCLC WorldShare Collection evaluation tool, and the CSI stacks).

The poster will then explore strategies for specific (call number, subject, and keyword) catalog searches and the types of searches available by the WorldShare Collection Evaluation tool which could render results relevant for the purpose of multidisciplinary content evaluation. The authors will share related subject headings lists and call number ranges that could be successfully used to cover the area of interest and the keywords crucial to successful searches.

## Introduction

The faculty of the College of Staten Island, CUNY (CSI) introduced a proposal for a new baccalaureate level program in East Asian Studies to be initiated in the fall of 2015. Proposed program is truly interdisciplinary and its goal is to “introduce students to Asian cultures and societies through the study of translated literary and historical documents.” It also proposes studying, through a variety of methods, the specifics of social structure and political systems of East Asian countries, as well as making available courses in major East Asian languages: Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Additional spur came from the external evaluators invited to examine CSI Modern China program during the self-study process. In their report they encouraged the College to develop an East Asian program on the

foundations of already strong Modern China program.

The timing of the introduction of a new program seems to be extremely adequate. The East Asian region, especially China, continues to play a major role on the world stage in the 21st century and its growing importance offers improved employment and advancement opportunities for students participating in the program. The Asian population in Staten Island borough increased 7.5% from 2000 to 2010 and it is expanding. The College of Staten Island is the only public institution of higher learning in the borough and the only one that offers an East Asian Studies programs. In this it follows other CUNY Colleges—Queens, Brooklyn, Hunter, and City College, which established similar programs some time ago. As

interest in a program is expected to grow, the long-range plan to develop a Master of Arts in East Asian Studies in the next few years is being discussed.

The proposed courses concentrate on three major countries of the region: China, Japan, and Korea, and cover various periods of history as well as areas of culture, economy and politics.

With this proposal the College library faced the challenge of evaluating the adequacy of its holdings to support the program and its future development. Multidisciplinary fields of study (e.g., East Asian Studies) that pertain to a specific geographical or cultural area present a unique set of evaluative issues because their subject content cannot be confined to set classification ranges, rendering the traditional methods of collection analysis inadequate. Our presentation shares the results of an ongoing evaluation of the CSI's East Asian Studies collection, discusses some of the challenges the authors encounter when analyzing this collection, and it proposes ways that the collection can be strengthened in the future.

It must be stated that there is no perfect tool to conduct collection evaluation. To approximate collection depth and size a variety of methods and tools needs to be employed to guarantee adequate results. At this stage the most important tool of our analysis was OCLC's WorldShare Collection Evaluation, introduced by OCLC by the end of 2013. We also used our own online catalog (Aleph, version 21) as well as citation analysis of major East Asian journals. We also compared our electronic journals and database's holdings with the holdings of identified peer institutions. The process was and still is evaluated on the way. Evaluation adjustments and decisions about collection development are happening concurrently.

## **WorldShare Collection Evaluation Tool**

WorldShare Collection Evaluation (CE) tool uses the Library's own holding data as reported to the OCLC Worldcat and provides an interface (still being developed, since the tool is fairly new ) to help visualize them. The data can be represented in the table that enables us to look at the age, size, and format of the collection. It also allows for comparisons with other selected libraries, one on one, or with several libraries at once. The third function of analysis is the possibility of benchmarking against holdings of other libraries, as with comparisons—one on one or with a several libraries simultaneously. The data are presented on the screen in the form of a table or chart in a real time.

Comparisons and benchmarking are based on the subject list (conspectus) provided by WorldShare CE and founded on LC classification. The conspectus consists of 31 broad subject divisions, which are further subdivided into narrower categories and those into a third tier of more specific subjects. The corresponding LC classification ranges are assigned to every subject and subcategory.

The list of 31 subjects is as follows: Agriculture, Anthropology, Art & Architecture, Biological Sciences, Business & Economics, Chemistry, Communicable Diseases & Miscellaneous, Computer Science, Education, Engineering & Technology, Geography & Earth Sciences, Health Facilities, Nursing & History, Health Professions & Public Health, History & Auxiliary Sciences, Language, Linguistics & Literature, Law, Library Science, Generalities & Reference, Mathematics, Medicine, Medicine By Body System, Medicine By Discipline, Music, Performing Arts, Philosophy & Religion, Physical Education & Recreation, Physical Sciences, Political Science, Preclinical Sciences, Psychology, Sociology, Unknown Classification.

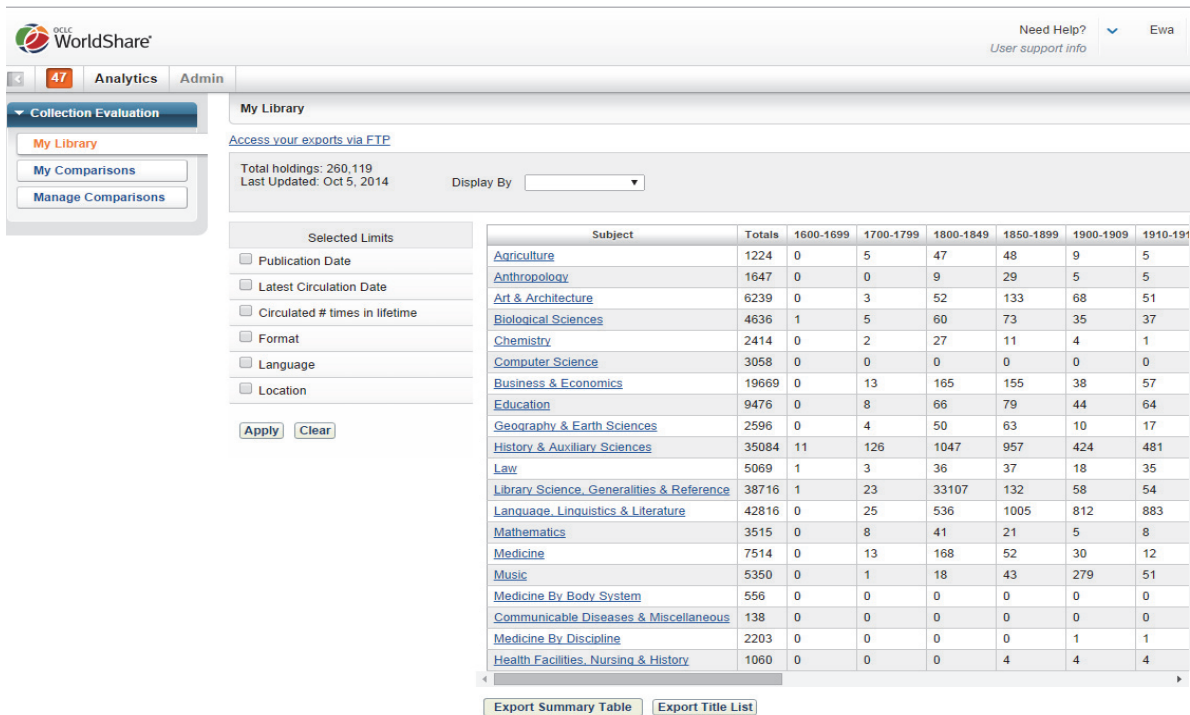


Figure 1. The screen shot of the Worldshare CE with subject and numbers of holdings in a table.

Each subject unfolds into a dropdown menu of narrower subjects (three tiers). An important feature of the Collection Evaluation is the possibility of obtaining list of holdings on the title level. Those came in the form of Excel files and can be generated for the whole library and on any specific narrow subject. It is worth keeping in mind that smaller lists of titles can be generated on more specific subjects and are easier to manage. Also the snapshot of the collection can be limited by the values visible on the right—publication date, circulation date, format, language, and location.

While analyzing the interdisciplinary collection one must keep in mind that the conspectus based on LC classification is discipline oriented and different aspects of the same topic are scattered throughout the classification scheme. Analyzing materials of different disciplines but limited to certain geographical area can be challenging. Only several subjects provided in WorldShare CE are subdivided geographically, at least on the current level of the of the tool development. Nevertheless some disciplines or divisions (as is the term in

WorldShare CE) are further divided into geographical areas on the second or third level of subdivisions. The easiest division to separate the East Asian area (understood by us according to our needs as China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Shanghai) are History and Language, Linguistics, and Literature. Language, Linguistics, and Literature divisions naturally list in narrower subdivision languages and literatures of the world—East Asian languages and literatures included.

Here is a first glance at the numbers in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese literatures and languages. This short list immediately tells us that our holdings in Korean literature and language are very weak and this area needs immediate attention.

<a href="#">Japanese Language</a>	13
<a href="#">Japanese Literature</a>	94
<a href="#">Korean Language</a>	1
<a href="#">Korean Literature</a>	5
<a href="#">Chinese Language</a>	35
<a href="#">Chinese Literature</a>	152
<a href="#">Indo-Chinese, Karen, Tai, etc. Languages &amp; Literat</a>	10

Figure 2. Number of holdings in language and literature.

Each country’s literature is further subdivided by either genre of literature or chronologically by literary period specific for this particular country and presented in the year of publication columns.

We also compared the numbers of our holdings as reported by OCLC with our local catalog holdings. According to OCLC holdings we have 152 titles in Chinese literature. The number of titles retrieved from our catalog with a subject = Chinese literature is—173—higher than holdings reported in OCLC. The difference is a result of our membership in a larger library system. We are part of the multilibrary CUNY system and our library shares a lot of electronic titles with other CUNY colleges—those are not listed in OCLC as the College of Staten Island library holdings, but as all CUNY holdings, which use different OCLC symbols. Being a part of a larger system widens

significantly our collections and it is truly advantageous to our users, who have access to holdings of all CUNY libraries.

Some of the divisions in WorldsShare CE, especially narrower subjects, are subdivided by geographical terms. Those are scattered through the subject spectrum. For example, the Art and Architecture division lists as follows: Architecture (China, Japan); Arts in General (Eastern and Southeastern Asia); Painting (China, Japan, and Southeastern Asia); Visual Arts in General (China, Japan, Korea, and Southeastern Asia). With these types of divisions it is easier to extract data about an art collection referring to East Asian countries. On the chart below our Visual Art holdings are reflected, divided by years of publication and color coded for three countries.

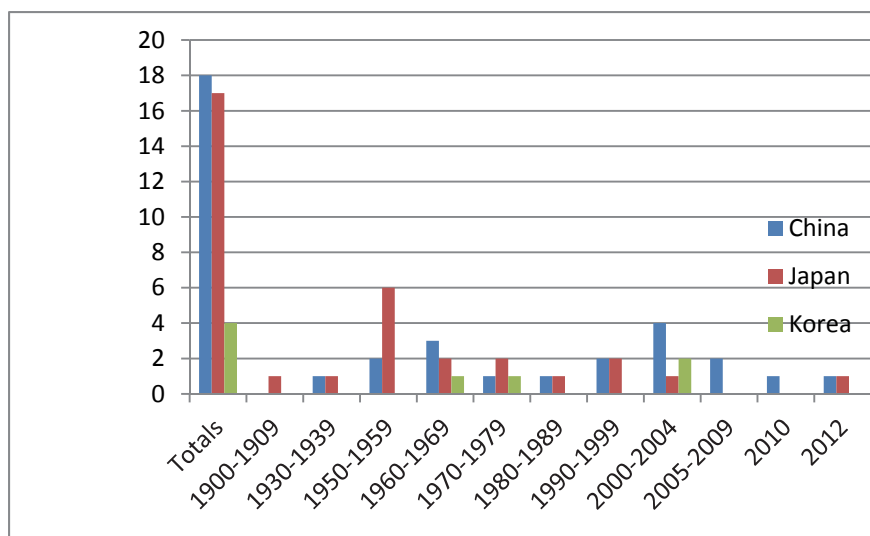


Figure 3. Visualization of our art holdings.

Other topics are subdivided “by region or country” only in a very general way. A good example is the division of Anthropology, which is subdivided into six narrower subjects: Anthropology, General, Ethnology, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Folklore, Proverbs, Manners and Customs, Social Usages, Etiquette. From those only one—Folklore—is further subdivided again into six narrower categories—Folklore, Philosophy Research General, Folk Literature by Form, Folk Literature by Race or Group, Folk Literature by Subject, and Folk Literature by Region or Country.

For the purpose of our evaluation we like to look only at those titles which refer to East Asia. In this case it is necessary to request a report of titles in this category. The report, as it was mentioned earlier, is prepared by the Worldshare CE in form of an Excel file and contains all the titles in category Folk Literature by Region or Country. One needs to establish the LC classification range for the appropriate area by consulting the LC classification scheme. In our case it is call number range: GR330—336 China, GR339-342—Japan, Korea.

The requested report is usually available the next day. The Excel file can be downloaded from the provided site and relevant titles can be extracted using the sort and filter option in Microsoft Excel. A word of warning—the downloaded file should not be too big—it might cause problems with download and manipulation, but the efficiency in extracting the data depends on familiarity with Excel.

As was mentioned before, WorldShare CE allows for comparison with and benchmarking against other libraries. Various institutions were chosen for comparison based on our faculty suggestions and the list of peer institutions provided by the Office of Institutional Research of the College of Staten Island. The library focused on the following East Asian programs as best-fitting comparisons: Queens College-CUNY, Hunter College—CUNY, Western Washington University, Union College, NY, and Wesleyan University. The main criteria used in selection were the level of the East Asian

program they already have established and the size of the student body.

As we noticed above, our weak holdings in Korean Literature needed immediate attention. We compared ourselves to the Union College Library and found out that while we have only six titles in this subject, they hold 62, with only one title shared. We also benchmarked ourselves against a few other libraries. In this case it was more than worthwhile to generate the title list to look at the titles we might add to extend our collection. Benchmarking is a useful tool in the collection development process—generated list of titles with different types of filters (like publication date) can be extremely useful in the future selection process. The list below is an excerpt of the list obtained from the Excel file from the report benchmarking our holdings on Korean Literature with three schools. Titles listed are not held by us, but are held at least by two other institutions and are definitely candidates for acquisitions.

1. From Wonso Pond	PL991.38.K6	2	notHeld
2. And So Flows History	PL992.26.M8	2	notHeld
3. Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology	PL984.E8	2	notHeld
4. The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry	PL984.E3	2	notHeld
5. A History of Korean Literature	PL956	2	notHeld

**Table 1. Korean Literature candidates for acquisitions.**

Sociology is one of those general subjects that are subdivided by topic, not geographically. To find titles related to a specific geographical area one needs to consult the LC classification. For example in Social History, Social Problems, and Social Reforms subjects which are not subdivided by region, the call number range of HN50-995 is given as the range for other regions and countries. By consulting in more detail the LC classification tables one can establish that the range of call numbers HN720.5-HN755 refers to East Asian countries of interest. Titles with those call numbers can be generated and used for comparison and selection purposes.

WorldShare CE was our main tool to analyze our collection and the examples above show different

ways of using the tool. We also use the journal citation method. The analysis of 1,929 Citations in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, covering the period February 2012—February 2013 was undertaken as a pilot project. 29 monographs were cited more than once in a sample of 1,929 citations from five issues of the journal from February, 2012 (volume 71, issues 1, 2, 3, 4) and February, 2013 (volume 72, issue 1).

- 7 (24%) contained no geographical subject headings relevant to Asian Studies.
- 22 (76%) contained geographical subject heading relevant to Asian Studies.

This initial sample suggests that a small but substantial portion (in this sample 24%) of the monographs used in Asian Studies will not be identified based on LC subject heading analysis alone. We will continue our citation analysis in order to find patterns and identify titles essential to the East Asian Studies area.

### Journal Evaluation

As our initial evaluation shows, our library subscribes to 23 journal titles related directly to the region of East Asia: 20 related to China, two to Japan, and one to Korea. During the evaluation 35 titles selected from the 140 most important journals in the field listed by Advisory Board of the Bibliography of Asian Studies were searched

across e-journal and database holdings at CSI. We discovered that CSI-CUNY held 70% of all titles (24), from which 50% were current, and 20% had a 1-4 year delay. CSI-CUNY did not hold 30% of all titles (11) from which ¼ were Korean related, ¼ Religious Studies, and ¼ Early Historical Studies. The rest were a mixture of cultural and language-related journals.

### Database Evaluation

In an evaluation of the electronic resource holdings of 19 benchmark institutions with the College of Staten Island, the following databases were most prevalent. We will contact our faculty to solicit their opinion about our databases holdings and possible new acquisitions.

Core	CSI-CUNY Held/ Not Held
Bibliography of East Asian Studies	Not Held
Historical Abstracts with Full Text	CUNY Held
PAIS- Public Affairs Information Service	Not Held
MLA Bibliography	CUNY Held
JSTOR	CUNY Held
Project Muse	CUNY Held
Linguistics & Language Behavior Abstracts	Not Held

Table 2. Most prevalent electronic resources holdings.

### Future Considerations

Our evaluation is ongoing. Currently we are continuing analysis of specific subjects holdings, our citation analysis, and electronic journals holdings. In the near future we would like to

- Generate monograph lists to enhance the strength of the existing collection East Asian collection.
- Determine the desired future collecting intensity or collection goal/acquisition commitment to East Asian Studies as seen below.
- Use vendor platforms (e.g., YBPs, GOBI) which utilize call number ranges to assist in future collecting in East Asian Studies.

LC Call Number Ranges	Subject Area	Collection Depth Current   Future	Levels
DS	History: Asia (General)	2	3c
DS 501-519	History: East Asia (General)	2	3c
DS 710-800	History: China	2	3c
DS 801-900	History: Japan	2	3b
DS 901-937	History: Korea	1	3b

**Table 3. Current and future collection depth.**