

Minutes - Twentieth annual conference of EASL

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The twentieth EASL conference was held in the Centraal Faciliteitsgebouw of Leiden University from 20 to 22 September 2000. The meetings were chaired by Katharina Thölen. Professor James Liang welcomed the participants to Leiden University and gave a short opening address.

During the course of the Conference, to mark the occasion of EASL's twentieth anniversary, a reception was hosted in the Sinologisch Instituut by the International Association of Asian Studies (IIAS, represented by Professor Wim Stokhof) and IDC Publishers (represented by Mirjam Philippi-de Mink and Martijn de Graaf), and a speech was made by Professor Michel van Crevel. A visit was made to the Von Siebold House, paid for by Linda de Lange as a farewell present upon leaving the profession to pursue a career in the law; her generosity was gratefully acknowledged. A conference banquet was held at the Anak Bandung Indonesian Restaurant, during the course of which J-M Streffer delivered a peroration on the life and work of the outgoing Secretary.

Present were:

Linda de Lange (Sinologisch Instituut, Leiden)
Joyce Wu (Sinologisch Instituut, Leiden)
Helga Lormans (Sinologisch Instituut, Leiden)
Hing Wan CHAN (Sinologisch Instituut, Leiden)
Cristina Cramerotti (Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire des Langues Orientales, Paris)
B-énédicte Héraud (Centre Chine, Paris)
Hubert Delahaye (Collège de France, Paris)
Inga-Lill Blomqvist (Nordisk Institut for Asienstudier, København)
Martin Hanke (bookseller, Hamburg)
Beatrijs Eemans (Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises)
Renate Stephan (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München)
Diane Strobl (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München)
Hanno Lecher (Universität Heidelberg)
Thomas Gaiser (Universität Tübingen)
Richard Teschke (Universität München)
Patricia Frick (Institut für Sinologie, Würzburg)
Alek Stypa (Institut Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin)
Anne Labitzky-Wagner (Landesspracheninstitut NRW, Bochum)
Michael Schütte (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)
Johann Michael Streffer (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin)

Matthias Kaun (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin)
Lars Fredriksson (Östasiatiska Biblioteket, Stockholm)
Katharina Thölen (Universität Zürich)
Mark Ulyanov (Russian State Library, Moscow)
Hiroko Brittain (British Library Document Supply Centre, Boston Spa)
Graham Hutt (British Library, London)
Sue Small (School of Oriental and African Studies, London)
David Helliwell (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

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1 Chairman's address

The Chairman gave an account of the year's activities.

2 Minutes

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

3 Notices of members

3.1 At Edinburgh University, Shenxiao Tong has assumed responsibility for the Chinese collections. The vacancy at Leeds University Library created by the retirement of David Arrandale has been filled, but the name of the appointee is not yet known. Disquiet was expressed at the failure of the library to disseminate news of this vacancy among the profession, and the officers were instructed to convey these sentiments to the librarian. Tony Hyder has retired from his post as Institute for Chinese Studies Librarian in Oxford, and an advertisement for a replacement is expected to be posted in the coming weeks. The Bodleian Library (Oxford) has been able to acquire Siku quanshu cunmu congshu through an extraordinary grant of money. (David Helliwell).

3.2 The East Asian reading room at Bayerische Staatsbibliothek has been combined with Northeast and Eastern European studies, at some sacrifice of open shelf material. (Diane Strobl).

3.3 Sinicum (Bochum) is about to move into a larger building (Anne Labitzky-Wagner).

3.4 The East Asian Department of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin now has a website, which includes an online enhancement of the Blauer Leihverkehr inter-library loan facility. (Johann-Michael Streffer).

3.5 In Heidelberg there are plans to unify the Chinese, Japanese and East Asian Art institutes. Money has also been received to build up the digital resources project. (Hanno Lecher).

3.6 At Tübingen the library is getting less funding, and the librarian's time is being increasingly spent on providing technical support. (Thomas Gaiser).

3.7 The Bayerische Staatsbibliothek has acquired Siku quanshu cunmu congshu, assisted by a contribution from Munich University. The project to catalogue the library's collection of Yao Daoist manuscripts will be concluded at the end of September. The library currently holds about 1,150 of these manuscripts, of which 800 will be published in a separate volume of the Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in

Deutschland. Fundraising is going on for another 800 to 1,000 items to be bought. (Renate Stephan).

3.8 Munich University has acquired the electronic edition of Siku quanshu (Richard Teschke).

3.9 Resources are gradually becoming more plentiful at the East Asian Library in Stockholm. (Lars Fredriksson).

3.10 The Russian State Library is undergoing major refurbishment, which will be completed in Spring 2001. The separately housed Oriental Department is also being reconstructed, and the work will be completed by the end of this year. The head of department, Meri Trifonenko, has been elected secretary of IAOL. (Mark Ulyanov).

3.11 Linda de Lange announced that she would resign on 22 September from the Sinologisch Instituut in Leiden, where she is currently in charge of Chinese cataloguing, having 3 part-time assistants. No advertisement has yet appeared for a replacement.

3.12 At the Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises (Paris), there is a shortage of funding. A CD-ROM of its holdings of stele inscriptions is now ready. SINODOC (the French colleagues' association) has sought funding for the development of a common original script platform for cataloguing Chinese books in French libraries. A decision is expected soon. (Hubert Delahaye).

3.13 The British Library Lending Division is now being run as a business. All subscriptions for periodicals not consulted during the past 10 years have been cancelled. The demand for Chinese materials is much greater than for Japanese or Korean. (Hiroko Brittain).

3.14 At SOAS, the basement has been refurbished and an environmentally controlled archive constructed to house manuscripts and rare printed books. Rolling stack shelving has also been installed. £30,000 has been obtained for the purchase of expensive Chinese items, and has been mostly used for microfilms, including those of newspapers. Some 2,000 records have been created on the INNOPAC system to date. (Sue Small).

3.15 The library of the Nordisk Institut for Asienstudier, hitherto unrepresented at EASL, is funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, and collects materials in western languages mainly in the contemporary social sciences. Its holdings currently number some 26,000 books. (Inga-Lill Blomqvist).

3.16 Patricia Frick has succeeded Helga Stahl at Würzburg, and as well as maintaining the library with Michael Leibold, also teaches. A romanised online catalogue is expected to be available within 2 months.

3.17 A new chief executive has been appointed at the British Library. (Graham Hutt).

4 Conferences and meetings

4.1 From 7-8 October 1999, the German-speaking colleagues participated in the Treffen der Sinica-Bibliothekare in Zürich. There were demonstrations of Aleph (intended for all university and municipal libraries in German-speaking Switzerland) and a99 (the Windows version of Allegro). The München-Tübingen-Zürich congshu project was also discussed.

4.2 On February 19, David Helliwell attended the Visible Traces exhibition

and seminar on rare books and special collections from the National Library of China at Queens Library Gallery in New York. He took the opportunity of visiting colleagues in the libraries of Princeton and Columbia universities.

4.3 On 9 March Hanno Lecher attended the CEAL (Council on East Asian Libraries) meeting in San Diego.

<http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/~cealctp/meeting00.htm>

4.4 From 7-9 June, Joyce Wu attended a conference entitled Diyici zhongwen wenxian ziyuan gongjian gongheng hezuo huiyi in Peking.

5 Treasurer's report

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

6 The constitution of EASL

6.1 The nature of EASL was discussed, and thought given as to whether it should become more formal. The consensus was that it should remain as it is, and continue to operate in its traditional way.

6.2 It was felt by an overwhelming majority of those present that EASL should retain its modest funds, to be used, for example, as they were this year, to enable members who could not obtain sufficient funding from other sources to make EASL presentations to EACS. No expenditure is to be made unless authorised by a majority of those present at the EASL conference.

7 EACS and other organisations

7.1 Hanno Lecher had made a presentation on behalf of EASL at this year's EACS conference in Turin with the title Tracking sinological literature in Europe – is improvement in sight? It had been very well received, and together with Friederike Schimmelpfennig's SSELP presentation, had done much to improve relations between the academic and library communities.

7.2 Hanno Lecher reported that the EACS online newsletter, edited by Mette Thølen of Copenhagen University, was open to contributions from EASL members.

7.3 In view of the fact that EASL was by nature informal, it was considered inappropriate to re-open discussion of formal relations with EACS or any other formally constituted bodies.

8 EASL online resources

8.1 Matthias Kaun was again thanked for his continued maintenance and improvement of the EASL homepage.

8.2 A number of libraries had still not entered details of their libraries into the EASL homepage by using the simple online form devised by Matthias for the purpose. They were encouraged to do so.

8.3 Since the last conference, Matthias had also set up a mailing list for the exclusive use of EASL members (EASL-L@listserv.gmd.de), and this was now functioning well. It has become the standard way for the both

the officers and members of EASL to communicate electronically with the entire membership. New members should send their e-mail address to Matthias (kaun@sbb.spk-berlin.de) in order to be added to the list.

9 SSELP

9.1 David Helliwell summarised the contents of a discussion document that he had prepared for EACS and EASL regarding the present situation and future prospects of SSELP. Hanno Lecher read out a rejoinder on behalf of Friederike Schimmelpfenning, who was unfortunately absent. It was noted that no representative of SSELP was present.

9.2 Members were overwhelmingly of the view that there was no point in devoting further discussion to this topic, and that EASL should withdraw its support from SSELP.

9.3 It was agreed that EASL should discuss producing a union list of Chinese serials under its own auspices at the next conference.

10 IT presentations

10.1 Short demonstrations were made of two different approaches to the provision of access to a number of catalogues through a single interface. David Helliwell introduced the search interface to the current RSLP (Research Support Libraries Programme) to produce a UK union catalogue (that is, a physically integrated union catalogue) of Chinese books; and Hanno Lecher demonstrated the progress achieved on Heidelberg's EVOCS (European Virtual OPAC for Chinese Studies) project (a virtual union catalogue, whereby separate databases are searched simultaneously).

10.2 Richard Teschke repeated the description and appraisal of the electronic edition of Siku quanshu which he had made at the EACS conference in Turin. Members were impressed by the professionalism of his presentation, but less so with the database itself, over which they expressed a number of misgivings, the most serious being that it will only run under Chinese Windows. In the ensuing discussion, it became clear that a number of colleagues were both unable and reluctant to acquire CD-ROMs on any scale, largely owing to the inordinate expense of so doing, and the fear that the systems required to run them were so various and potentially obsolescent.

11 Other electronic resources

11.1 Cathy Thölen drew attention to the CD version of *Fuyin baokan ziliao*. The discs are made up with the required sections according to the requirements of the customer.

11.2 Lars Fredriksson drew attention to the online version of *Quanguo baokan ziliao suoyin* available from Shanghai Library, but at considerable expense. He offered to approach the library with a request that EASL members might be given access on favourable terms through a joint subscription to either the main site or a local mirror site.

11.3 Hanno Lecher offered to investigate the possibility that a consortium of EASL libraries might acquire a joint license for access to the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database known as China

Journal Net, which under normal circumstances is prohibitively expensive. The database contains more than 7,000 journals, over 4,000 of which are available full text (with both search and download functions), and the rest with abstracts and/or titles of contained articles. The title index for all articles is freely accessible. If a consortium acquired the licence, the database would be installed locally as mirror site so that access would be much faster. Hanno will keep members informed of progress through the EASL mailing list.

<http://www.chinajournal.net.cn/>

12 EASL trips

12.1 The reasons for the abandonment of the proposed EASL trip to the AAS/CEAL conference in San Diego last March were analysed, and lessons drawn from the experience. The principal cause was lack of money, but timing difficulties were also a consideration. For the same reasons, it was decided not to attempt to organise a joint visit to Chicago next year, but individuals were encouraged to make the journey if they could afford to do so.

12.2 The success of the EASL visit to China in April, 1994 (organised by Thomas Hahn with the help of CNPITC) was recalled, and a second visit was proposed. However, no member present was willing to take on the organisation, and it was agreed that discussion of the proposal should be pursued through the mailing list.

13 Book supply issues

There was an unstructured discussion on matters of book supply, the principal problem now being unreasonably high prices. The consensus was that the best deals were available either through the smaller, private book stores, or through individually negotiated discounts from the state corporations.

14 Election of officers

Kathy Thölen and Tony Hyder were re-elected to their respective offices of Chairman and Treasurer. David Helliwell resigned as Secretary, and Bénédicte Vaerman (Leuven) was elected in his place. [David Helliwell will continue as secretary until Bénédicte Vaerman returns to work next April after maternity leave].

15 Next EASL conference

The next conference will be held in Copenhagen from 5-8 September 2001.

The Twentieth EASL Conference closed with an expression of thanks to Joyce Wu and Linda de Lange for their excellent arrangements.

David Helliwell
Secretary