

FOURTY-FOURTH ANNUAL EASL CONFERENCE
Berlin, 4–6 September 2024

Minutes

Wednesday, 4th September

09:00–10:00 (location: Simon-Bolivar-Saal, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 431 Potsdamer Platz)

Welcome speeches

- Welcome speech by Vice-Director of Stabi (name?)
- Apologies introduction of participants

Delphine Spicq, College der France:

Users coming back to the new building, Delphine struggles with the ALMA-catalogue and reduction of doubles. New cataloguers have started working at the Collège de France. Cooperation with the Shenyang Imperial Palace for an exhibition and workshop on a 19th-century atlas of the hunting grounds of Mukden, which belongs to the Chinese Library of the College.

Marc Winter, Zürich:

Retro-cataloguing of the Chinese-language collection in the main building completed, now only the outdoor storage facilities (800-1000 metres) remain, what remains are mainly congshu holdings. Will be retro-catalogued over the next few years. Additional funds have been earmarked to complete this task.

Marc Gilbert, Leiden:

In 2023-2024, the Leiden Naxi were described and new records produced, with the help of Beijing Association of Dongba Culture and Arts. Together, we worked at an online exhibition. we worked at an online exhibition: [The world's last picture writing: Naxi Dongba manuscripts](#). The Robert van Gulik archive is being inventoried and described. An unpublished article written in 1941 was discovered and will be published in *T'oung-pao* in September 2024. The digitization of Unofficial Poetry Journals from China entered its 5 year. Another batch of material will be made available online, and a symposium organized in November 2024. Leiden has signed a MoU with the National Museum of Taiwan Literature.

Joshua Seufert, Princeton:

Retro-cataloguing project for pre-1800 books. Big Acquisition project. Library found a possibility to hire a librarian for cataloguing this collection, position still open. Digitized a lot of material. Much has been micro-photographed, so instead of scanning the books, the library is scanning the micro-films. The *World Journal (Shijie ribao)*, published in New York until 1993, is part of this. 2025 they prepare an exhibition.

Kunyi Zheng, Bonn:

This is Kunyi's first participation and she just introduced herself to the group.

Anne Sapich, Münster:

The Asian Studies Centre was opened in May 2024. It is an informal virtual center for networking and to inform about projects, cooperations in and on Asia as well as a contact

address for students and scholars who want to study/research in Asia or who come from Asia. We will see if the centre will have its own rooms with an information centre or library in the future. Since March 2024 there is a junior professor for "Literature and Culture of Modern China" at the Institute so the library's collection area will be extended.

Benedicte Vaerman, Leuven:

The library received a lot of donations. Financial situation is good, but the databases are still too costly. China library is doing ok, but the studies program is problematic, very few students in sinology. Prof. Standaert will retire, new professors have already started and Benedicte is mainly engaged in retro-cataloguing forty-year-old books.

Eva Tang-Michael, Leipzig:

This is Eva's first participation and she just introduced herself to the group.

Øystein Kleiven, Oslo:

No public address yet, more later during the internal meeting.

Ekaterina Pavlova, Latvian National Library:

Symposium for the 10 years signing of the MoU, still very limited funding- New director at the library.

Veronika Danesova, Prague (Lu Xun Library):

She is in charge of multi-language collection and was involved in several projects over the last year.

Katharina Feriančíková, Prag (Library of Far Eastern Studies (Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague):

Together with four other departments of the Faculty of Arts, the library will be moved into a new building in two years. It is not certain, whether the sinological part of the library will be moved too. However, we should prepare for the movement of the whole library. So, library staff selected multiple books to offer to other libraries, including sinological literature.

Yinhan Zhao, National library of China:

Just introducing himself. More tomorrow.

Sarah Chiesura, Emma Harrison, Hanlin Hsieh and Alexavier Lu, British Library:

BL suffered a major cyber-attack last year in October and is recovering from a traumatic ransom ware attack. Readers are back to pre-computer era, meaning orders via pen and paper. Now new systems can be implemented. Trying to find the positive aspects of this attack.

Melody has curated a major exhibition on Dunhuang "Silk Road Oasis : Life in Ancient Dunhuang". Also new Website for Dunhuang-project.

Ruili Zhang, Manchester:

Archives Relating to China - Bowring Papers

The Bowring Papers collection consists of the papers of the Bowring family, whose best-known member was Sir John Bowring (1792-1872), a politician, administrator, and traveler. These documents are a key source for studies of Anglo-Chinese relations in this period. For more details about this collection, please visit the [Bowring Papers](#) website.

Sun Hui, CATS Heidelberg:

Bad news: two thirds of the budget for monographs was cut, but negotiations are going on. Acquisitions through TRCCS instead (230 volumes last year, 270 this year). New strategy: Western-language e-books might be purchased by the University Library. Relying greatly on Blauer Leihverkehr interlibrary loan system (700 titles in a year).

Good news: Last September: additional half-position for Daniel Stumm, so more staff.

New library administration system next year. Word Share Management Services. Exhibition on Chinese comics: March 2023, but still going on. New director of the University Library appointed (Jochen Apel)

David Helliwell, Oxford 1976-2017:

Still working on finishing his catalog of pre-1912 books in the Bodleian library. This is available through David's blog [Serica-project](#).

Cathleen Paethe, Max Planck Berlin:

No major changes in employment: Still herself plus 1 student assistant (10hrs/week) who has just left. The proportion of books in the original language (CJK) has reached 10% of the total stock. The number of projects and researchers dealing with Chinese language regions (especially PRC and Taiwan) has increased. Recent topics are Cosmology in Early and Late Imperial China and Mathematics. There is a new independent research group since 2024: Astral Sciences in Trans-Regional Asia (ASTRA); among other languages: Tibetan, Chinese.

Siebert Martina Stabi Berlin:

Working on unifying data structure. There is now a Kazach expert at the Stabi.

Matthias Stabi Berlin:

Greetings from, Cordula, who unfortunately cannot attend this year, more later.

Miriam Seeger (Chinese University of Hong Kong), report via mail:

Universities Service Centre for China Studies (USC) Collection at CUHK continues with its two major projects, the reclassification of the collection to LOC and the digitization of ca. 1 million pages of 40+ regional newspapers from the late 1940s to 1970. In the reclassification project we finished the folk history collection and currently continue with the biggest part, the yearbooks, gazetteers, and general books. In the digitization project, it is expected to finish digitization until the end of the year, however, article-level indexing and setting up of the open access online database will take about one more year. In addition to the print folk history collection, USC had a folk history website 民間歷史檔案庫, which was temporarily taken offline due to copyright concerns. After careful content review and content migration it is expected to re-publish the website later in autumn this year.

Additions to and approval of the agenda made.

Visits planned; meeting times and meeting points arranged.

Farewell dinner – details given.

10:00–10:30 Coffee break

10:30–12:30 Internal meeting (EASL members only)

The Minutes of the 43rd meeting (Paris) were approved, no changes demanded

Report of the treasurer:

The current amount of our money as of 8:00 a.m. today is EUR 1,941.87. There is an increase from interest in the amount of EUR 1.57 as of the end of 2023. Report approved.

Reports on Conferences visited:

Nothing substantial came from this, nobody attended any specific conferences with a library focus.

12:30–14:30 Lunch break**14:30-15:45 EALI meeting (location: conference room, Stabi) members only**

CNKI: The first and main question on everybody's mind concerned CNKI: Has the "cleaning process" been completed? What has been erased? We all don't know! According to Matthias, there was a fine CNKI had to pay and the internal policy (data protection, personal data, content data and meta data protection) had to be strengthened. The idea was to get customers to re-sign the license agreement saying that as customers we agree to subscribe to the "One China Policy". Matthias refused to sign this. Apparently CNKI has cancelled the licence agreement unilaterally.

As far as the dissertation database is concerned, those are publications that were never licensed for publication.

Not surprisingly: there is no consensus about what can be downloaded or what is not available anymore.

Online Renmin Ribao: Marc Gilbert asks whether the price is stable or not. Matthias tried to find out about the price. He could not find any information. Marc contributes that *Renmin Ribao* gives no user statistics. Matthias concurs. For inquiries about user statistics, refer to Danny Liu. There is of course still the lingering question about trustworthiness of user statistics. If any institution declines the offer by Danny Liu for *Renmin Ribao*, please let Matthias know, why and how an institution unsubscribes to *Renmin Ribao*.

Matthias was made aware of the free resource Asian Digital Archive Network by Roger Greatrex launched by the Macau Scientific and cultural Centre run by the Portuguese government (cf. www.cccm.gov.pt)

CASS-databases' all-European-access: Apparently all it takes is to send and inform CASS about the IP-Range and register and you get access. Several colleagues agree that in Oslo CASS promised us open access.

About a next meeting: Should we have another EALI-meeting for under the year? We agree to set up a meeting if there is demand. If not, next EALI-meeting will be during the next EASL-meeting.

16:30–17:45 guided tour at Staatsbibliothek Unter den Linden with Kulturwerk

We were shown the architecture and introduces to the concept of Stabi Unter den Linden and went to see the "Schatzkammer", which is a constantly changing exhibition of noteworthy pieces of the collection, which is free and changes every three months.

18:30 Reception at Staatsbibliothek Unter den Linden

Thursday, 5th September

09:30–12:00 Vendors' presentations (open to all)

09:35–09:50 Ariane Rückebeil, Eastview:

After a short introduction of the company: what is new? Over 120,000 titles on a broad variety of subjects, all in block or individually purchasable. Eight perpetual access rights. China Social Science Monographs.

For 2025: Area Studies Initiative. 9 titles, of which eight will be open access. For Asian Studies the *Independence Evening Post* from Taiwan will be open access. For Japan, the *Japan Times Weekly* will be accessible. More countries were added to the Global Census Archive, which had been introduced to EASL in 2023. Ariane emphasizes the point, that these data has not been homogenized like it is in other data collections.

Newspaper and Journal Archives & More: TBMC, UDP and PKU Law (formerly: China Law Info).

Finally more than 4,000 new print books and full MARC-Records.

09:45–10:00 Wang Lan 王嵐, CASS:

After friendly opening remarks and a short introduction to CASS, the CASS delegation gets into information. First there is a detailed introduction of CASS main library with over 2 million books and over 500,000 ancient books and documents. Director Wang invites us to come and visit and use the CASS library, whenever in Beijing. There is also a International Research Library with more than 230,000 volumes and over 800 journals. In addition, there is the Library at the Institute of Economics with more than 600'000 books and a Library of Law with more than 270,000 paper books. Also there is a Library of Xi Jinping thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and finally a Thesis and Dissertation Library. National Center for Philosophy and Social Sciences Documentation. To connect with the library use the adress casslibrary@cass.org.cn or just drop by at #5 jianguomen neidajie 5号建国门内大街.

10:00–10:15 Liu Hongchao = Steve Liu, CNKI:

First there is an introduction to the CNKI “Product Ecosystem”; Secondly, Steve introduces a newly upgraded Service, which promises a new experience and AI-enhanced products. User Engagement – Complimentary Access. As far as the Newly Upgraded Services are concerned, Steve provides an impressive amount of even more impressive numbers in all collections.

Steve points to the “List” search function especially for librarians in order to create entire lists of results. In the presentation, there is a QR-Code to help us further.

10:15–10:30 Yin Hanchao 尹汉超, National library of China:

“The Mission of the National Library of Chinas in Sinological Studies: ChineseStudies Centre of the National Library of China”. First a short overview over the history of Guojia Tushuguan. In 2009 the library opened a new reading room. Then he apparently randomly introduces several scholars and publications. Further he focuses on international cooperation before 1949. www.nlc.cn/enweb

10:35-10:50 Donna Kuan (TBMC):

Newspaper Resources. She starts with an overview of Newspaper development in Taiwan: 1896-1945: Japanese Colonial Period; 1951-1988 Newspaper License Limited Period (Newspapers limited to about 30 titles, due to “paper shortage”) and since 1988: Free Market. She introduces the history and development of the newspaper market.

10:45–11:15 Coffee break

11:15–11:30 Hu Yu, CIBTC:

Introduction of new services: OSPOL: Online Selection Platform Tool for Overseas Libraries (PDA-Platform). Shen introduces several databases under Shang Gu Hui Dian 尚古汇典 and the China Local Documentary Library. She gives examples on local documentation, using the example of Shanghai. For contact please use huyu@cibtc.com and liyaxin@cibtc.com.

11:30–11:45 Li Chen 李晨, CNPIEC (Head of Department of Exports):

Under the title “Boundless Literary Horizons Partnering to Shape the Future of Cultural Exchange”, Li Chen introduces several services. CNPIEC is organizer of the Beijing International Book Fair (Next time in June 2025) Invitations are available through Li Chen. Online Catalog (PDA) <http://cnbook.cnpiec.com.cn>.

China ebook hub: www.chinaebook.com (cf. the flyer provided)

Chinese Big Sets Table of Contents: <https://toc.cnperreading.com> Searchable Indexes for books.

Featured events: Invitation Program for Librarians and Booksellers during the Book Fair China Publishing Group Book Fest www.cpggreatbooks.com
lichen@cnpiec.com.cn for further questions.

11:45–12:00 Jason Dai, Wanfang data:

Chinese Studies Online (CSO) a one-stop service platform for access to different types of research:

- Journal Articles: 3.518 journal titles, compared to 2023 an increase of 25 titles;
- Dissertation: increase 7% (total 2.139.942 titles)
- Conference papers: increase 4,64% 1.567.809 full-text records.
- Law: 1.567.809: increase 4,96;
- Local Gazetteer (post 1949); Local gazetteers (pre 1949) including 135.954 records. Increase 7%.

He then goes on to explain search and filter functions of the CSO Website. Further questions: jason@wanfangdata.com.

12:00-12:20 Roland Borsos: www.hanyucidian.org in collaboration with Shanghai cishu chubanshe. Several reference works are collected in this database. Also things like the Zhongguo gujin diming da cidian. Additions in the future will be Da Cidian. The company offers a free trial period of several months. Several access methods (university account, via proxy or IP range) and others. 89 Euros for one year!

12:00–14:00 Lunch break

14:00–15:30 Presentation of rare books from the Stabi collection

The colleagues bring out a fascinating selection of treasures from the collection. Of particular interest are the attempts to describe Chinese characters using a 'key', apparently a product of the misconception that Chinese characters are 'ideographic' and therefore understandable without knowledge of the language. It was also wonderful to see comic books from the 1950s on display, as these materials are so rarely seen..

16:00-17:45 Visit Ethnologische Sammlungen und Asiatische Kunst, Humboldtforum,

Schloßplatz, 10178 Berlin

The group is divided into two sub-groups and we are given a tour of the East Asian collections of the Humboldt Forum. The collection of Silk Road murals in the room for Central Asian art is very special.

Friday, 6th September

09:30–12:40 Members' presentations (open to all)

09:30– 09:55 Matthias Kaun, Stabi:

Matthias explains how Stabi Berlin has provided "Access to Asia" for Nordic and Baltic libraries after NIAS was cut. He begins by reviewing the history of cooperation between NIAS and Stabi Berlin: They had to find out which tasks were better carried out by which institution. In other words, which tasks are better suited to Stabi and which to NIAS. NIAS - now called "NOBAS Instituton" (Nordic Baltic Association for Asian Studies) and reduced to 19 institutions (from 24) and Stabi will share costs and technical adjustments according to possibilities and capabilities and then he gave insights into how these negotiations have been going on since EASL Paris 2023.

09:55–10:20 Hanlin Hsieh, British Library

Hanlin explains how the exhibition "Life of the Buddha: Life of Or 132127" and talks about an item with the shelf number Or 13217, connected to an exhibition "Buddhism" which was held between October 2019 and February 2020. She explains about the term "Life of the Buddha", which goes back to the Ming, when the text was called *Shi shi yuan liu* 釋氏源流. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the text saw several editions, circulated under different titles. She then compares different editions and starts by looking at an edition with black and white illustrations vs. one with colored illustrations.

To find out when it was rebound or coloured, she looks at the history of the institution, but also at the history of the purchase of this item. The invoice refers to the item as "found in the department", and Hanlin finds that it was bought in St Petersburg in 1893. Further research suggests that the book was bought in Mongolia by Baron A.N. Korf and went to the so-called "Institute of Smolna", but since it was converted into the headquarters of the Bolsheviks and later the mayor of the city, it is difficult to find archival material on the history. This suggests that Korf gave the boxes to someone who took them to St Petersburg, but later the trail was lost. Hanlin then finds a similar edition in the Völkerkundemuseum Heidelberg, 22 illustrations, accompanied by a page of Chinese text, acquired in 1911 by Victor Goldschmidt, founder of the Portheim Foundation.

Finally, the question of acquisition and binding can be answered. When the illustrations were coloured cannot be determined because of the structure of the pigments, but Hanlin suggests Mongolia.

10:20–10:45 Veronika Danesova, Lu Xun Library, Prague:

Children's literature at the Lu Xun Library. Veronika starts with a quick look at the library's activities, but there is less digitisation, and the three activities are the science fair, the virtual exhibition and digitisation.

The children's book thing goes back to the library's contribution to the exhibition of the whole library. This had to be done because in June 2024 about 200 books were damaged by rain water. She introduces several series and distinguishes between fables, fairy tales and adventure stories. She shows examples of San Mao 三毛 stories, but there are also Chinese classics in a child-friendly form. And finally, of course, propaganda picture books: Chang

yi chang 唱一唱. Some are educational, and Veronika pointed out what malnutrition can do to people (aimed at 10-12 year olds). <https://www.lib.cas.cz/en/online-catalogues/> But contact Veronika for a link.

10:45–11:15 Coffee break

11:15–11:40 Delphine Spicq, College de France:

The restoration of an old manuscript version of a Mongolian sutra: Delphine presents a Mongolian translation of an originally Tibetan sutra. She first gives details of the edition found and then the text it contains. It is the Sutra of Transcendent Knowledge = Ārya-āstasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sutra. She then introduces the physical state and explains how money was found to pay for the restoration and how it was restored.

11:40–12:30 Martina Siebert und Brent Ho, Stabi Berlin:

The two colleagues explain the path of the data from the server to the user and the role of the library in the middle. How the data gets into the repository and how the metadata gets into the PICA format that can be used for cataloguing. Explaining the technical background of what is needed to access the text, and also how to structure the ranking mechanism. In the second half, Brent Ho goes into the technical details, using terms such as "embedded vector" and "embedded model selection"

From an explanatory [website](#): "Vector embeddings are a valuable technique for transforming complex data into a format suitable for machine learning algorithms. By converting high-dimensional and categorical data into lower-dimensional, continuous representations, embeddings enhance model performance and computational efficiency while preserving underlying data patterns." Cf. the website for additional explanations.

12:30-12:55 Marc Gilbert, The Van Gulik collection

In 2022, the van Gulik estate donated a last part of his literary legacy to the Leiden University Library. Marc presents the material and in particular an unpublished article on the Chan master Donggao 東皐禪師 (1639-1696), who left China with the fall of the Ming dynasty and fled to China. Marc then investigates why van Gulik was so interested and spent 20 years researching a Ming dynasty monk. It seems that van Gulik felt a connection with the T'oung-pao 110. 3-4 (2024) will finally publish this article.

12:30–14:30 Lunch break

14:30–16:00 Internal meeting (members only) (location: Stabi)

The future of EASL:

29 colleagues discuss the future of EASL. As more and more institutions don't send people, the question arose.

David asks: "If institutions don't send people, who's lost? It is not the loss of EASL as there are enough people to make the EASL meeting worthwhile.

Emma points out that we don't know why they're not here, so it's a guess.

Viktoria points out that for some institutions it might be a necessity to present something at the conference in order for the institutions to pay for coming to EASL.

Matthias and Martina ask how attractive EASL is for colleagues.

Marc G. suggests that the invitation should state that English is the language of the meeting and that knowledge of Chinese is not essential to get anything out of the meeting.

Perhaps personal letters of invitation could be a new argument?

Olivier points out that even this year, when Stabi Berlin is helping the Nordic and Baltic

countries with access to literature and it would have been useful to come, he was still not sent to EASL and had to come at his own expense and during his holiday.

Marc G. suggests that some more people should have a function (chairing the EALI meeting, being in charge of the agenda, whatever it may be).

Matthias suggests to redesign the meeting as the agenda does not look attractive to the superiors.

Sara thinks we should have more member presentations and reduce the number of visits.

Emma asks if a thematic grouping might encourage members to make more presentations and engage a bit more.

Thematic meetings maybe? Something like annual themes. Maybe a focus section.

Marc W. points out that it is also our duty to make sure that there is a tradition of visiting EASL in our home institutions.

The question arises, what does the EAJRS do differently from us? They are more people, they have a stronger presence and they are much more formal.

Emma asks if there is a way to join forces with other CJK specialists? It would be a burden for the organisers. And Matthias reminds us that the meeting with EACS in Tallinn wasn't successful.

Marc G. says that it is also a question of money and organisation: Korean Resource Specialists take Korean money, EAJRS has membership fees. Both have CfP, abstracts and proper panels.

Joshua suggests focusing on the first problem. Broadening the base and "professionalising" the meetings are good things, but we also need to actively invite colleagues to come to EASL and get involved. He suggests that a formal, personal invitation combined with a draft agenda might have a stronger impact on superiors.

Ekaterina asks if it would be useful to have hybrid meetings. There is a fear that people will not come if it is a hybrid meeting and also that institutions might not delegate anyone if the meeting is partly online. Cathleen also supports reorganising the agenda. She predicts that she would not have been delegated based on this year's agenda. The agenda needs more content.

Marc G. asks if we should have a Facebook page? Add a blog to the website as Martina suggests? Delphine has suggestions: More time for vendors. Omit the second visit on Thursday afternoon and extend the members' presentations.

Regarding the website: everyone is responsible for updating the website directory and the mailing list.

Venue for the next meeting:

The British Library (BL) will organise it, but because of next year's calendar the meeting will have to be from 10 to 12 September.

A topic for an afternoon session? "Chinese Special Collections in Europe" or something of that general nature. The topic should last for a panel session, and other papers can be free.

Election of secretary, treasurer, chairman:

All "officials" are willing to serve for another year. They are therefore elected for another year: Delphine as president, Cathleen as treasurer, Marc as secretary.

The meeting ended by thanking the Stabi colleagues for their efforts in organising this year's meeting. As Marc G. was also present in person this year, the members thanked him for his services as secretary and later as president until 2023.

19:00– Farewell dinner at Feast, Meierottostraße 1, 10719 Berlin

Since there are not receipts being issued, Marc W. writes a confirmation in its stead and

sends it to all participants.