

Plenary Session: *Interdisciplinary and Border-Crossing Research in a Digital Age*
Wednesday March 25, 2009 4:00-5:50 pm
Chicago Ballroom 10, Sheraton, Chicago

Kristina Troost, CEAL President, welcomed everyone. She noted that this is the first plenary to be co-sponsored by CEAL, CORMOSEA and CONSALD.

Format: Kris will give an overview of the charge to the panelists and introduce each speaker. Panelists will talk for 15 minutes each. If there is time, the panelists will first ask questions of each other or discuss each others' presentations. The floor will then be opened to the audience for questions and comments.

Panel Charge: Libraries, scholars and presses are all changing in the face of growing interdisciplinarity . How do libraries, faculties, and publishers face this challenge? How do scholars do research? How do presses publish, find reviewers, and market books? How do libraries support this, given budget constraints and budgets planned around separate languages and disciplines?

Panel participants:

Prof. Jeffrey Wasserstrom, History Dept., University of California, Irvine. Prof. Wasserstrom has been the editor of the *Journal of Asian Studies* since July 2008. He co-founded the blog The China Beat (<http://thechinabeat.blogspot.com/>). He has also published extensively.

Ken Wissoker, editorial director, Duke University Press. Mr. Wissoker oversees publications in cultural studies, anthropology, film studies, media, arts, etc.

Michael Duckworth, Associate Publisher for Humanities, Cultural, and Film Studies, Hong Kong University Press. As of April 1, Mr. Duckworth will be Publisher.

Dr. David Magier, Associate Librarian for Collection Development, Princeton University.

Panelist comments: Jeffrey Wasserstrom noted that he also teaches and is married to a librarian. He sees different styles in publishing. He likes online, but also books. Making journals matter across specializations is important to him as an editor.

Ken Wissoker has been concerned for a long time about how to bring materials from

other parts of world to the US, UK, and Australia.

Michael Duckworth echoed many of these comments, especially deimperializing knowledge. He thinks a lot about how to please users and how best to serve Asian scholarship and ideas. He doesn't believe that librarians realize how powerful they are as a group to shape global scholarship, at least hardcover sales. For example, a UK press needs to find a US partner for a US edition before publication can go forward. Of overall revenues, about 24% are from North America, but for hardcover sales, it is more like 50%. Is this due to budgetary differences, or different interests, etc.? He also noted the growing emphasis on digital access to books

He is envisioning a cultural space for multinational creators. Southeast Asian studies are almost invisible in Hong Kong; they have more dialogue with publishers in Australia and to some extent South Asia than they do with Southeast Asia. The choice of simplified vs. traditional characters is seen as affecting sales. Texts in simplified characters are seen as being easier to sell in Taiwan than texts in traditional characters are in China. Traditional character books may also be seen as more scholarly. Government-directed research influences what is written and published.

Some presses rarely give a contract if the peer review process is not finished, but others will.

David Magier contrasted the idealized scenario in relationships between research institutions and libraries with what he sees in practice. One cannot focus on content solely, but must also look at what kind of content is needed for interdisciplinary work. Both breadth and depth are required. The university is structured around discipline-based departments, but there is a proliferation of interdisciplinary studies.

Staying on top of acquisitions is imperative. If materials are not purchased at the time, the collection suffers in the long term. Libraries have thought long-term about what it means to share collections. Earlier experiments to do it on a national level (e.g. RLG ILL) had problems, but regional groups have done well (e.g. BorrowDirect). Now space issues have led increasingly to off-campus storage, which in turn promotes collection sharing and collection collaboration. He supports this development. For example, at Columbia University, five students were working on a collaborative project on social and medical outcomes for children born at different times of the year in the Islamic world depending on when the month of fasting fell. They needed unit-level statistics whose purchase involved library funds, the professor's research funds,

etc. These were put in a databank (which involved translating guidelines and data structures from Bahasa to English, etc.), but then they had to wait for approval from the institutional review board. In the current economic scenario, universities will have to discuss with their administrations how to keep building collections. What do you trade off? One option is to count dollars per use, in which case we should buy heavily used materials. But then are we still research libraries? Or could some mainstream, published materials be shared among institutions? We might spend less on access to those. This argument would have to come from faculty.

Discussion:

Jeffrey Wasserstrom was delighted that David Magier thinks that faculty have so much power! David qualified to say that this is compared to librarians. Jeff noted that is already hard to get specialists who work on other parts of the world and write in English to be read by “imperial centers of scholarship.” It is not an even playing field even within the imperial center. He felt that we need less fetishization of the academic monograph. Journals and books written for a more general educated reader rather than only for the hyperspecialized might distribute the burden.

Ken Wissoker commented that if it is true that too many books are being published, the presses represented here are not the source of the problem! Duke University Press does about 150 titles a year; Michael Duckworth agreed that Hong Kong University Press publishes about 50). Bigger academic presses, such as Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press publish about 3,000 titles a year, Taylor and Francis fewer. If libraries need to save money, they can cut expensive serials titles or repackaged reference works. The challenge is to publish books that matter; paper vs. digital matters less than scholarly logic – an extended argument that unfolds over a set of chapters is different than a journal article. We need to take risks. Another question is how to distribute publishing? Do you publish so many books per year from Indonesia, Thailand, etc.?

Michael Duckworth added that there is currently a big wealth transfer from universities to commercial combines which he fears will disaffect and disenfranchise universities over time. The University of Michigan will be moving in a year or so to digital only. He noted the hidden costs of ILL; it may serve readers but also breaks the model further. Some kinds of interesting publishing may be abandoned. For example, a lot of US publishers have decided that edited volumes are too expensive; quality control and language issues present more challenges, and they typically require more editing. But they are collaborative endeavors and in his opinion worthwhile.

Comments from the audience:

Dianna Xu (University of Wisconsin) brought up differences in ILL practices. In China, users pay for the shipping, while here we pay it for them. The models are very different. She also noted that approval plans through big vendors (Blackwell, Yankee, etc.) have a number of issues. Vendors program the profiles using terms, etc., that librarians don't understand, and it is essential to work closely with the vendor and check to make sure that you are getting what you want without unnecessary items being included. She was very glad to hear about the influence of libraries' purchasing power. Finally, students and others don't always have money/opportunities to come to conferences, meet people, etc. She hoped there will be digitized versions of conferences and presentations of work.

Peter Zhou (University of California, Berkeley) commented that lots of interdisciplinary research is going on, but there is no parallel dismantling of departments. The university is still discipline-centered. International studies is not replacing history, political science, East Asian studies, or Latin American studies departments; but this is happening on the library level, especially at smaller and / or non – research institutions. He felt that border-crossing is seen as a way to cost-savings but is short-sighted. Foreign-language collections are threatened in particular. He asked the panelists to comment.

David responded that premier foreign language collections will continue to collect, but on the national level we will suffer if smaller places don't collect. This is because historically smaller libraries have collected other kinds of material without as much overlap as you would expect. As universities build Asian studies fields, often no library support is being factored in; they don't hire full-time library specialists, etc.

Jeffrey added that, apart from economic constraints, this would be a good moment – at least now we don't have to justify being interested in Asia, especially China and India. We need to find a way to speak in multiple registers to get people interested. Please be aware that we do have an opportunity here.

Yan Lu (Library of Congress) buys books published in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao and was interested in Michael Duckworth's talk. For the past two years it has been hard to purchase books published in Hong Kong. There is a lack of catalogues and information, problems working with vendors, and a decline in service. Could Michael comment on Hong Kong publishing and these issues? Also, there is a

separation of duties in the Library of Congress and many other libraries such that a given librarian purchases books from particular parts of world. But dual publication is common since e.g. Hong Kong University and University of Washington publish the same works. This can easily lead to duplicates, and extra measures have to be taken to make sure that different sections haven't bought the same book.

Michael emphasized that Hong Kong University Press does want to sell here; please come to the booth for catalogues! He agreed that there are some market barriers – shipping is a big cost; there are also lags in customs and receiving due to security measures; shipping requirements can be complex. If we can get visionary foundation support, maybe we can look into remote publishing so that the US edition of a title is published here, the Hong Kong one in Hong Kong. Also, since books are published for multiple markets, they have different prices. University of Washington is the US distributor for Hong Kong University.

Sharon Domier (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) spoke up to represent small collections. Her total budget is \$10,000 for Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and English; she purchases for a consortium of 4 liberal arts colleges and 1 state university. In her case, the fact that their president has said only 1 copy of a title may be purchased has been helpful, because faculty have to accept it. The colleges no longer have duplicate purchases, so she can buy a greater range of books. The consortial purchasing approach does work for access although there are delays.