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Evaluating and planning for interdisciplinary collection development: a case of an East Asian collection at the College of Staten Island Library

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# Evaluating and planning for interdisciplinary collection development: a case of an East Asian collection at the College of Staten Island Library

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The purpose of this article is to examine the challenges of collection analysis and development in response to a new academic interdisciplinary program in East Asian Studies at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York.

**Design/methodology/approach** – First, the authors examined the needs of a new East Asian Studies program and its interdisciplinary nature. Next, an automated collection development tool was chosen that provides a snapshot of current monograph holdings and a comparison with other equivalent institutions. Lastly, the authors conduct an analysis of citations in key Asian Studies journals, library holdings in relevant top electronic resources and core journal subscriptions. For future collection building, vendor tools and patron-drive acquisitions are explored. **Findings** – Traditional methods of collection development can prove inadequate. A variety of tools and methods need to be used to guarantee adequate results.

**Originality/value** — This paper builds on prior research related to developing interdisciplinary collections by using traditional methods of collection development with critical judgments.

**Keywords** Benchmarking, Collection development, Citation analysis, Collection analysis, Interdisciplinary studies, WorldShare collection evaluation

Paper type Research paper

### Introduction

In 2014, the faculty at the College of Staten Island (CSI), City University of New York (CUNY) introduced a proposal for a new baccalaureate-level program in East Asian Studies. The authors of this study realized that they needed a way for the library to evaluate its current collection in East Asian Studies and to develop a plan for its growth. The interdisciplinary nature of East Asian Studies presented many challenges. This study is an examination of those challenges and how the authors met them. The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) WorldShare Evaluation service, formerly Collection Analysis, was chosen to maintain consistency with a prior study of the library's collections in 2010. Because the cost of this tool is often out of the reach of most libraries, the authors were able to reduce cost with a half-year subscription. The library also completed local catalog analysis, a citation scatter analysis, core journal list analysis and an e-resources comparison with other institutions. The authors of this study developed several

strategies for analyzing this collection that should be relevant for small to medium-sized college libraries interested in evaluating and developing an interdisciplinary studies collection. For smaller colleges, who will necessarily have less extensive collections and more limited resources, the question remains: how to analyze and grow collections to support programs that rely on a wide range of sources from a myriad of diverse disciplines?

# **Background/literature review**

The rise of interdisciplinary programs on university campuses has created a challenge for academic libraries striving to evaluate and support these programs' curricular needs. Adams (1996) acknowledged the issues faced by libraries in identifying core lists, book and journal holdings for these new programs. Dobson and Kushkowski (1996) recognized the growing importance and popularity of interdisciplinary programs in academia and that the tradition of dividing knowledge into subject disciplines reflected in the organization of academic departments is becoming outdated. Klein (1996, p. 134) conceded that there was "a lack of fit between interdisciplinary needs and existing taxonomy and classification schemes". Klein (1990, p. 196) also identified interdisciplinary education as "a means of solving problems and answering questions that

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Received 22 January 2015 Revised 11 February 2015 Accepted 15 February 2015 cannot be satisfactorily addressed using single methods or

library (approximately 250,000 volumes), CSI is currently

approaches". Klein (2010, p. 9) argued that this occurred in a climate of financial exigency, pushing academic services to continuously be streamlined due to ongoing campus budgetary issues. Interdisciplinary and area studies departments and programs have only grown in popularity and are likely to emerge frequently in colleges and universities of all kinds, making this kind of collection building commonplace for all libraries.

Dobson and Kushkowski (1996, p. 282) recommended evaluating an interdisciplinary collection through an initial analysis of the subject area which should "begin by building by an information model of the interdisciplinary area that reflects both the field itself and the unique qualities of a particular program". Wilson and Edelman (1996, p. 197) argue that:

[...] the intellectual migration of one discipline to another suggests that academic library collection development must increasingly address the fact that materials purchased and cataloged under disciplinary headings no longer serve the needs of particular disciplinary groups.

The importance of interdisciplinary academic programs has grown since Dobson, Kushkowski and Gerhard's studies in the 1990s, continuing to make these interdisciplinary collection building studies crucial.

During the 1990s, East Asian programs started appearing widely in smaller liberal arts colleges. Ye (2008) stressed that the recent implementation of East Asian programs in many schools is the result of the multiculturalism movement of the 1980s and the global impact of China's growing economic and political power. Until the 1990s, most East Asian materials were housed in highly specialized collections that tended to belong to large research institutions. Currently, most colleges have some kind of Asian, or East Asian, studies program. Certificate programs and degrees of all types are being offered by many colleges in Asian studies, South Asia studies, Southeast Asian studies, Central Asia studies, East Asian studies and Asian American studies. A review of all the multiple programs across the USA can be accessed on the Web site for the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) US Programs and Centers.

The CSI is a medium-sized, public, Master's-level-granting institution (about 11,600 FTE), one of the eleven senior colleges of CUNY system. It is the only public institution of higher education on Staten Island, making it geographically separate from the rest of the campuses in the CUNY system. All CUNY colleges share the same library system but are autonomous in their academic program design, budget and library collection development. CSI shares with other CUNY colleges many electronic resources acquired by a central library office and all of CUNY uses an inter-campus monograph-sharing system. The possibility of obtaining materials through internal and external inter-library loan system cannot be an excuse for not developing a collection that serves the CSI campus and the needs of CSI's students. The collection building that occurs in CSI Library ranges from minimal to research levels according to the Research Libraries Group conspectus. A Library Collection Development Committee, composed of three members at the time of this study, was formed in late 2013 to guide collection building at all levels. In terms of the size of the

financially and spatially unable to support a comprehensive collection. Therefore, the library must make difficult decisions about materials to maximize the use of available resources.

Following a self-study of its Modern China Certificate Program in the spring of 2013, faculty introduced a proposal for a baccalaureate-level program in East Asian studies to start in the fall semester of 2015. The proposed program's goal is to introduce students to Asian cultures and societies by studying literature, history and art of the region relying on translated historical documents and literary works. It also proposes studying, through a variety of methods, the social structure and political systems of East Asian countries, as well as the major East Asian languages: Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Additional support came from external evaluators' encouragement to develop an East Asian program on the foundations of the existing and successful Modern China program. The program is expected to grow due to the rising importance of the East Asia region in global affairs and the growing Asian community on Staten Island.

With new interdisciplinary programs continuously arising, the authors immediately identified that fields of study pertaining to cultural or geographical areas present a unique set of collection evaluation issues because subject content cannot always be confined to specific Library of Congress (LC) classification ranges or LC Subject Headings. Although the author's primary tool was the OCLC's WorldShare Collection Evaluation service to further approximate collection breadth and depth in East Asian Studies, a variety of methods and techniques needed to be used to guarantee adequate results.

The checklists method (one of the oldest collection evaluation methods) is particularly well-suited for evaluating interdisciplinary collections in non-specialized college library settings - provided that good checklists or bibliographies for the area exist. Dilevko and Dali (2004) used a technique called citation scatter analysis of two top journals across the LC ranges in travel and tourism and recreation and leisure. The more the "scatter", the more interdisciplinary the area (meaning that citations fall outside these LC ranges). The authors later used a similar methodology in their initial assessment of East Asian studies as an interdisciplinary area. Pettijohn et al. (2013, p.190) evaluated collection development within graphic design collections, an emerging interdisciplinary field. They discuss the use of WorldCat Collection Evaluation (CE) for regional and national accreditation purposes and for generating reports through library catalogs via call number ranges to be exported to spreadsheets. They also suggested monitoring new acquisition lists at peer libraries, using a similar technique.

### WorldShare collection evaluation

OCLC's WorldShare CE tool was used to evaluate the existing collection. WorldShare CE uses a library's own holdings data as reported to the OCLC WorldCat, and provides an interface (still in development) to visualize holdings data. The data can be represented in a table that summarizes the age, the size and the format of the collection.

Volume 34 · Number 2 · 2015 · 51-58

It also allows for comparisons with other selected libraries using a one-on-one analysis or comparing several libraries simultaneously. The CE tool provides a method of benchmarking a library's holdings against the holdings of other libraries with shared holdings indicated. The data is then retrieved 24 hours later through an file transfer protocol (FTP) server provided by OCLC.

WorldShare CE allows for a comparison of holdings with peer institutions and benchmarking against multiple libraries. Institutions were selected for comparison based on faculty suggestions, a list of peer institutions provided by Office of Institutional Research of the CSI, and a survey of institutional programs throughout the USA using the AAS listings. The authors found that initial faculty suggestions were not feasible for comparison due to the size of the institutions and the broadness of their programs. Three main sections were generated: CUNY, Northeast Institutions and National Institutions, which were further subdivided by Carnegie Institution level, Asian programs offered, degrees, total student body and the source of recommendation. The library focused on the following East Asian programs as being best-suited for comparison to CSI: Queens College and Hunter College (for a CUNY comparison), Union College, New York, and Wesleyan University (for a northeast comparison), and Western Washington University (for a national comparison). The main criteria used in selection were that an "East Asian" program with both a minor and a major be offered. In some cases, small schools like Union College and Wesleyan were chosen due to the strength of their collections (Figure 1).

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

Each subject unfolds into a dropdown menu of narrower subjects (three tiers). The important feature of CE is the possibility of obtaining a list of holdings on the title level. Complex Excel files with detailed information about titles can be generated for the library's whole collection or for selected subject areas. The authors found that shorter lists of titles generated using a narrower range of subjects are easier to manage. The snapshot of the collection or its parts can be further filtered by publication date, circulation date, format, language and location.

When analyzing interdisciplinary collections, one must keep in mind that the conspectus based on LC classification is discipline-oriented. Only several subjects provided in WorldShare CE are subdivided geographically, several disciplines or "divisions" (the term WorldShare CE uses) are further divided into geographical areas on the second or third level of subdivisions. The easiest divisions to separate in the East Asian area (corresponding to CSI's program's focus on China, Japan, and Korea) are history and language, linguistics and literature. The Language, linguistics and literature division naturally lists narrower subdivisions of languages and literatures of the world, including East Asian languages and literatures.

Figure 2 is a screenshot of the number of CSI print monographic holdings in Japanese, Korean and Chinese literatures and languages. This short list immediately tells us that our holdings in Korean literature and language are weak in breadth. Each country's literature is further subdivided by either genre of literature, or chronologically by literary period specific to a particular country and presented in the year of publication columns.

The CSI Library is a member of the CUNY library system that includes 23 libraries. The CSI Library also participates in a monograph-sharing program between campuses called CUNY CLICS. The system shares many electronic monographs acquired centrally by CUNY. This significantly impacts our purchasing decisions. According to OCLC holdings, the CSI Library holds 152 titles in Chinese Literature, while a search in our own catalog using the subject

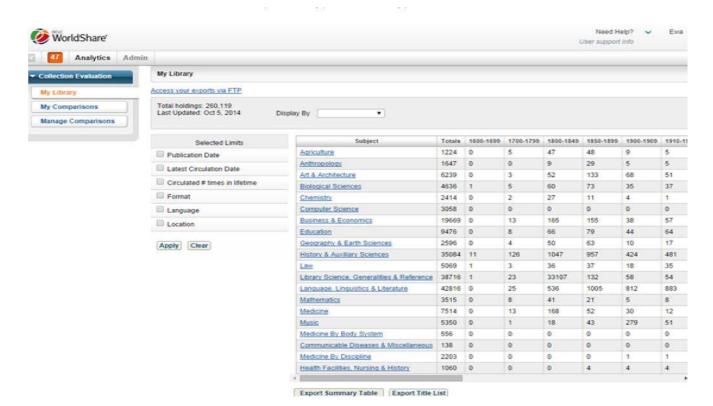
Figure 1 Snapshot of the 19 potential institutions used for peer analysis and benchmarking

CUNY Institutions	Carnegie Level	Asian Program	Cert.	Minors	Major	Grad. *PhD	Enroll.	Source
Hunter College- CUNY	Master's L	Asian Amer./ East Asian		<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	4	22,168	EAS
Brooklyn College- CUNY	Master's L	Asian Studies		<b>/</b>			17,094	EAS
Queens College- CUNY	Master's L	East Asian Studies		~	1		20,711	EAS
City College	Master's L	Asian Studies		1	1	[	16,212	EAS
Northeast Institutions	Carnegie Level	Program	Cert.	Minor	Major	Grad.	Enroll.	Source
Columbia University	RU/VH	East Asian Lang.		_	1	✓	24,230	EAS
New York University	RU/VH	East Asian Culture			~	~	43,404	EAS
Wesleyan University	Bac/A&S	East Asian Studies		<b>*</b>	1		3,148	AAS
Seton Hall University	DRU	Asian Studies			<b>✓</b>	1	9,616	EAS
Rutgers University-NB	RU/VH	East Asian Studies	✓	√.	~	<b>4</b>	37,366	EAS

Notes: \*\*CSI: benchmark institutions; EAS: programs reviewed East Asian proposal by faculty; AAS: Association for Asian Studies US Program and Centers\*\*

Volume 34 · Number 2 · 2015 · 51-58

**Figure 2** The screen shot of the Worldshare CE tool with subject and numbers of holdings in a table. List of 31 subjects is as follow: 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 and unknown classification



"Chinese Literature" produced 173 results. This higher number reflects titles, mostly e-Books, shared with other CUNY libraries. Due to the complications in analyzing CUNY consistorial data, we exclusively surveyed the CSI Library print holdings in OCLC and did not include CUNY e-book holdings.

Some of the divisions in WorldShare CE, especially narrower subjects, show subdivision by geographical terms scattered throughout the subject spectrum. For example, the Art and architecture division is as follows: architecture (China and Japan); arts in general (eastern (China, southeastern Asia); painting Japan southeastern Asia); visual arts in general (China, Japan, Korea and southeastern Asia). With these divisions it is easier to extract data about art collections related to East Asian countries. In Figure 3, CSI's visual art holdings are reflected, divided by years of publication and are color-coded for the three countries.

Other topics are subdivided "by region or country" only partially, or in specific, narrow categories. A good example of this 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 and etiquette. Only one division, Folklore, is further subdivided into six narrower categories: folklore, philosophy research

Figure 3 Number of holdings in language and literature

Japanese Language	13
Japanese Literature	94
Korean Language	1
Korean Literature	5
Chinese Language	35
Chinese Literature	152
Indo-Chinese, Karen, Tai, etc. Languages & Literat	10

general, and folk literature by form, folk literature by race or group, folk literature by subject and folk literature by region or country. To examine the titles that refer to East Asia, it is necessary to request a report of titles in this category. The report, as was mentioned earlier, was prepared by WorldShare CE in the form of an Excel file and it contained all of the titles in the sub-division folk literature by region or country. One needs to establish an LC classification range for the appropriate geographical area by consulting the LC classification scheme which is: GR330-336 for China and GR 339-342 for Japan and Korea. The Excel file, once downloaded, contains relevant titles that can be extracted using the sort feature to filter out those that correspond to the established call number range. The efficiency in

extracting the data depends on familiarity with manipulating spreadsheets and the size of the file.

CSI's limited holdings in Korean literature required immediate attention. This was illustrated in peer analysis with Union College, New York. We discovered that while they held 62 titles in this subject-area, we held only 6, with 1 title shared. We also compared ourselves to multiple libraries at once. In this case, it was more than worthwhile to generate the full title list from the FTP site to determine what titles we might add to our collection. A generated list of titles with different types of filters (like publication date) could be extremely useful in the future. The brief list in Figure 4 is an excerpt of a list obtained from an Excel file report generated by using three other schools' holdings in Korean literature as a benchmark against our own holdings in this subject. Titles listed that are not held by us, but are held by at least two other institutions are candidates for acquisition. Titles held by three schools are considered a definite for purchasing (Figure 5).

Sociology is one of those general subjects that are not subdivided geographically. To find titles related to a specific geographical area one needs to consult LC classification. For example, the social history, social problems and social reforms subjects are not subdivided by region. The call number range of HN50-995 is given as the range for all other regions and countries. One can establish that the call number range for East Asian countries of interest is HN720.5-HN755 by consulting LC classification tables. Titles with those call numbers can be generated and used for comparison and selection purposes.

# Journal citation analysis

Despite the comprehensive picture provided by the methods of analysis already discussed, a citation analysis study was completed to develop a general sense of how many widely cited monographs in key Asian studies journals would not be discovered in analyses that use LC subject headings. In total, 4,913 citations in the following three journals were analyzed:

Figure 4 Visualization of CSI's visual art holdings

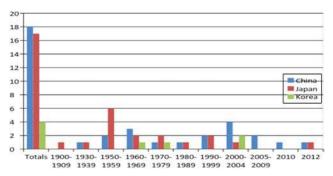


Figure 5 Titles extracted from a generated benchmarking file

From Wonso Pond/	PL991.38.K6	2	notHeld
And so flows history /	PL992.26.M8	2	notHeld
Modern Korean fiction : an anthology/	PL984.E8	2	notHeld

Volume 34 · Number 2 · 2015 · 51–58

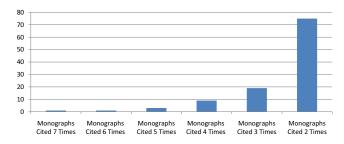
- The Journal of Asian Studies;
- 2 Critical Asian Studies; and
- 3 Asian Studies Review.

The citations come from an analysis of 15 issues of the three journals examined (five issues of each journal) published in 2012 and early 2013. In total, 108 monographs were cited more than once in this sample (n = 4,913). Of the 34 monographs that were cited, three times or more in this sample 12 (35 per cent) contained no geographical subject headings relevant to Asian studies, while 22 (64 per cent) contained geographical subject headings relevant to Asian studies. This initial sample suggests that a small, but substantial portion (in this sample 35 per cent) of the monographs used in Asian studies will not be identified based on LC subject heading analysis alone. This suggests the need to identify titles essential to the variety of Asian study programs through other means (e.g. course syllabi and faculty consultation) in addition to a core list of titles and/or bibliographies generated for collection development purposes in Asian studies (Figures 6 and 7).

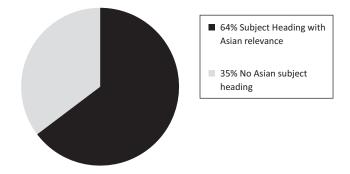
# Journal title and core list analysis

An initial evaluation revealed that CSI Library held 23 relevant journal titles, in either print and/or electronic format that related to the geographic region of East Asia: 20 related to China, two to Japan and one to Korea. This did not include large publishing packages purchased directly through a publisher nor central CUNY journal acquisitions. Nonetheless, this small sample indicated that journals with content referring to Japan and Korea were areas of weakness in our current collection. Next, we completed an evaluation of a "fast-track journal list", which contains over 100 of the most

Figure 6 Monographs cited more than once in sample



**Figure 7** Comparison of monographs with and without subject heading relevant to Asian Studies



Volume 34 · Number 2 · 2015 · 51-58

important journals titles in the field of Asian studies selected by the Advisory Committee for the Bibliography of Asian Studies (2014). From that "fast track" list of 100, 35 titles were selected and searched across e-journal and database holdings at CSI-CUNY. The authors discovered that CSI held 70 per cent of all titles (n = 24), of which 50 per cent were current and 20 per cent had a one to four-year delay. We did not hold 30 per cent of all titles (11), from which a quarter were Korean-related, a quarter related to Asian religious studies and a quarter related to early Asian historical studies. The rest were a mixture of cultural- and language-related journals. In this case, the most significant weakness was again in journals with Korean-related content.

# **Electronic resource analysis**

CSI-CUNY electronic resources holdings were compared against the holdings of peer institutions identified earlier for analysis in WorldShare CE. The authors found it useful to survey subject area study guides in Asian studies, which highlighted top databases in Asian studies at each institution. The most prominent of all the electronic resources was the Bibliography of East Asian Studies. The snapshot below is by no means inclusive of all the databases listed. Some heavily used interdisciplinary databases (e.g. Humanities International Complete, Academic Complete, Ethnic Newswatch, Art Full Text, SocIndex, Social Sciences Full Text and Anthropological Index) were not included. There were also a number of freely available databases surveyed (e.g. the Bibliography of Oriental Studies, the China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database, the National Diet Library-Japan and the Korean History Database), majority of material in which is in Asian languages. The CSI Library is not going to pursue any direct databases subscriptions outside of the CUNY system at this time. With five CUNY schools having established programs in Asian studies, a consortia deal with vendors would be ideal. Also, feedback from the East Asian studies faculty on possible new acquisitions as the program develops will be solicited (Figure 8).

# **Conclusions and recommendations**

During the course of analysis, the authors found that there is no ideal tool or technique to use to conduct an interdisciplinary collection evaluation in the area of East Asian studies – this type of analysis is an open-ended, ongoing project. Ultimately, the collection development

**Figure 8** Snapshot of electronic resources held by libraries to support East Asian studies

Core Databases	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

decisions at the CSI will necessarily be informed by the further growth of the program and by the local concerns of the faculty and students pursuing scholarship in this program. Although the approach detailed above is specific to a particular campus, our efforts serve as a case study in interdisciplinary collection building methodology that can be adopted by other libraries and institutions in similar positions.

In the course of our analysis, we found that our collection of Chinese materials – although generally adequate for the requirements of the program – needs to be kept current more diligently and Japanese and Korean materials need serious attention. Subjects such as political science, economics, cinema and modern art need attention throughout the geographic region (Figure 9).

Lawson et al. (2012) explored how vendor and publisher platforms can aid librarians in the identification of interdisciplinary monographs for future purchase, thus assisting in future-oriented collection building. Currently, the CSI Library uses Choice Reviews Online and Yankee Book Peddler's (YBP) GOBI online acquisition and collection management platform. Lawson et al. (2012) explore both of these tools in their publisher and vendor online tool survey. They identified Choice Reviews Online's Advanced Search feature which contains 15 interdisciplinary categories, one of which was the category "Asian and Asian American Studies." Likewise, they reveal that GOBI's search feature allows for creating complex searches targeting titles related to Asian studies. The authors have also been in contact with vendor representatives about how to send notifications to area studies selectors and using GOBI's peer analysis tool.

Lastly, a pilot patron-driven acquisition (PDA) program is being established with the assistance of YBP. So far, over 7,000 titles have been identified across the disciplines. Libraries can use patron-driven programs, as supplementary tool for collection development or as the primary tool for collection development. The authors opted to use PDA as a supplemental collection building tool to satisfy the immediate needs of patrons, while a collection is in the process of being built. Another area of future development will be in the area of how to best develop a fund structure to support East Asian Studies. As Lenox (2013, p. 171) states, "the traditional apportionment for acquisitions that mirrors departmental structure does not stretch enough to accommodate new programs". Currently, library funding is provided through an annual state grant applied for by the library for new collection development opportunities. The authors expect to spend the full amount

**Figure 9** One = Minimal level; 2 = basic information level; 3 = institutional support level at 3a = basic, 3b = intermediate and 3c = advanced

LC Call Number Ranges	Subject Area	Collection Depth Levels Current   Future
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

of \$14,000 the first year for initial collection building and for the PDA pilot program in East Asian studies. The dilemma of potentially reallocating funds, or cutting back on collection building in this area, will need to be reassessed on an annual basis. The authors philosophically discovered that there must be a balance between past and future collection development as well as a thorough evaluation of the new program, to create a unique library collection.

The authors plan to draw on the decisions of others while simultaneously developing a collection that meets the specific needs of CSI's students and faculty. CSI's East Asian studies faculty has interests that are specific to CSI, but they will also continually engage in the wider discipline. This means that CSI's collection development philosophy will use other East Asian studies collections as a lodestar while making adaptations to fit the collection to local circumstances. Although this project was initiated in response to a faculty proposal, it provided the library with an opportunity to think systematically about how to build an interdisciplinary collection using the limited resources of a small to midsized college library.

Although the CSI has a general collection development policy, one result of this project has been the development of one for East Asian studies. Monographs have been purchased that focus primarily in all areas of Korean studies to increase the immediate breath and later depth of that collection. This study also identified that small areas of the Japanese collection needs to be strengthened and updated. Our holdings related to China need to be improved to maintain currency and were helped by prior collection development efforts that supported the Modern China certificate program. The library must also focus on the college's long-range plan to develop a Master's Program in East Asian studies in the next few years once the baccalaureate program is fully implemented in the fall of 2015.

Do we eliminate the use of all traditional collection development tools? Or, should we modify the use of these tools to best fit our needs? The authors agree that the latter approach works best, based on our own investigations and prior research on the topic. Overall, the evaluative framework developed in this study can be used and refined by institutions for their collections as collection development efforts in interdisciplinary studies continue.

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Volume 34 · Number 2 · 2015 · 51-58

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# **Further reading**

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### Interdisciplinary collection development

Ewa Dzurak, Kerry A. Falloon and Jonathan Cope

**Collection Building** 

Volume 34 · Number 2 · 2015 · 51–58

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