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Letter from the Chair

Welcome to another exciting year of Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Section activities. I would like to reiterate that the impressive mission of this section is to provide a rich forum for library professionals to share, network and publish about information resources from the various countries of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. As members of this section, we have taken on the responsibility of communicating; collaborating and bringing forth issues that enlighten as well as build access to information about these regions of the world. Indeed we work with information about some of today's fastest growing countries and incredibly these regions make up over "50 per cent of land on this Earth!" (Sharma, *AAMES Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2003, p.1). AAMES leadership's motto has always been to encourage everyone who is affiliated or interested in these regions to share their talent and creativity by participating via a variety of roles in programs, projects, publications and activities (real and virtual) of this section.

ALA annual conference in Washington DC was stimulating with two highly productive meetings and a well-attended, exciting conference program (see page 5). I would especially like to thank Past Chair, Anjana Bhatt, and co-chairs Chellamal Vaidyanathan and Qian Liu of the conference planning program for their hard work, time and effort to produce such a great program. Next year, 2011 AAMES conference program is also shaping into yet another fantastic program under the leadership of Deepa Banerjee and committee members and we are confident that you will be compelled to attend and share your feedback with us. More information will be shared via the listserv as well as via the Spring AAMES Newsletter. Stay tuned!

AAMES' committees for 2010-2011 are well stocked with many diligent librarians as well as students of library and information science. As you know, AAMES functions via a structure of standing committees: Conference Program Planning Committee, Constitution & Bylaws Committee, Membership Committee, Nominating Committee, and Publications Committee. The Executive committee consists of the leadership from these committees in addition to the section chair, vice-chair, past chair, secretary and members at large. Remember however, that even if you are not serving on a committee, you are not precluded from attending AAMES meetings or communicating via the listserv since the section's meetings are open to all. We need you and your talent! Please do not hesitate to check us out *virtually* at our online midwinter meeting or stop by at our face-to-face ALA Annual meetings. More information about the virtual midwinter meeting will be shared in December.

It is very encouraging to see that as of August 2010, our section membership has increased by more than 7% from 311 to 335. However, AAMES continues to remain amongst one of the smallest sections within ACRL. AAMES budget is directly affected by the number of members in the section. The more we can create programming of interest and professionalization opportunities for librarians and students of library information studies, the more we can encourage interested persons to join. Members, we are relying on your participation and creativity. If you are new member of AAMES, I would like to extend a special warm welcome to you and request you to contact our Membership committee chair Qian Liu for more information. Members at large Tao Yang and Hong Cheng may also be contacted. Login and access our membership rosters at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/resources/leadership/sections/aames/acr-aamec.cfm>. Whether you are a new member or not, we need your creative ideas, experience and expertise to keep AAMES lively and focused on objectives and interests of the section. Please consider volunteering – Fill out the form <http://aamesacrl.wordpress.com/volunteer/> and Binh Le the section's vice-chair/chair elect will get in touch with you. I welcome your comments about any matters related to AAMES and am looking forward to meeting you online for our midwinter meeting in January 2011!

Triveni Kuchi, AAMES Chair, 2010-2011

Digital East Asia

Robert Felsing is the Asian Bibliographer at the University of Oregon Libraries.

The e-Asia Digital Library can be found online at <http://e-asia.uoregon.edu>

As libraries strive to adjust to the twin demands of a transformed information environment and new economic realities, it is reasonable to anticipate a number of responses that are likely to involve area studies collections. First, the accelerated acquisition of electronic information – often as “packages” – is likely to reduce the role of *all* selectors and bibliographers. Second, area studies librarians in particular are likely to come under scrutiny. Why? Area studies information, especially if it is written in non-Roman scripts, tends to be more costly in terms of processing and support. Collections of nonwestern language materials are almost certainly less used than the English language general collections, and, understandably, collections that provide less bang for the buck are not likely to generate enthusiasm from library administrators in tough economic times.

Despite vendor-driven collection development and the need to contain library costs, the marginalization or elimination of area studies would be a particularly grievous mistake for a mountain of reasons (that can't be enumerated here). The more measured and rational response is – if necessary -- to flow area information into generic selection areas such as history, the social sciences, music, etc. and contract out or rely upon consortia for highly specialized information needs. In this scenario, Korean history and Victorian Britain are equally a part of the history selector's realm.

As a case in point, the number two and number three

economies in the world (China and Japan) are in East Asia, and the number one economy – the United States – is a Pacific Rim country and arguably itself an Asian power. The im-

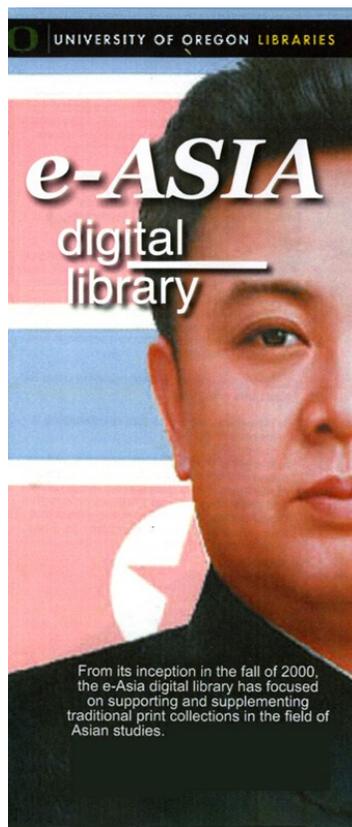
selectors who are beginning the process of acquiring East Asia expertise.

One very useful “border crossing” is a long-term digital library project called e-Asia, which is maintained at the University of Oregon. Now in its eleventh year, the digital e-Asia library (<http://e-asia.uoregon.edu>) holds approxi-

mately 5,000 e-books and documents, the majority of which are in English and are free to all users. Although some contemporary materials were gifted to e-Asia by their authors, the majority of books and articles in this library is out-of-copyright or U.S. government publications.

What differentiates e-Asia from large digital projects such as Google Books, the Internet Archive, and Project Gutenberg is, most certainly, its area focus and its mission to comprehensively collect foreign-published books and articles written in English. These materials are generally not available or are well-buried in larger projects of mass digitization. Going a step further, e-Asia frequently draws serialized articles together into a single publication; similarly, e-Asia will break out chapters and articles from large, digitally unwieldy, publications and repackage them as a coherent single “publication.” Simply by adding value to digitized materials, whenever possible, e-Asia materials often end up being unique.

Aside from the general materials that can be used for overviews and introductions to the cultures and histories of China, Japan, and Korea, e-Asia offers a number of specialized collections.



portance of this part of the world should go without saying, and, of course, developing a knowledge of information resources relevant to this region is a “good practice” for anyone with general selection responsibilities.

But grappling with the enormous amount of electronic information relating to East Asia is a daunting task even for area specialists; hence an entry point – a border crossing as it were --- is of particular value to

Digital East Asia (continued from p. 2)

One quite interesting sub-collection consists of English-language novels and fiction that present popular Western views of East Asia; these novels are as much a fascinating artifact of Western culture as they are presumed portrayals of Eastern life. These popular works range from the blatantly racist (“yellow peril”) to the outrageously romanticized. One astonishing example, a novel called “*Banzai!*” published in 1909, presents the scenario of a Japanese sneak attack on the American Pacific fleet; ultimately, however, Japan is defeated by an American general named McArthur. In contrast, a 1905 novel called “*Kobo*,” written by Herbert Strang, romanticizes and celebrates the Japanese warrior in a fictionalized account of Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905.

e-Asia holds important scholarly resources on medieval Chinese history including a detailed and very extensive bibliography compiled by an accomplished scholar. Working with another historian over a period of years, this same scholar has provided e-Asia with over 1,000 pages of original material relating to the Chinese Han Dynasty

The e-Asia library also holds other important sub-collections such as:

Transcripts relating to language acquisition by children in Taiwan;

Materials from and about North Korea, a country which produces little print and electronic information;

Hundreds of documents, reports, and analyses culled from the public archives of the CIA. Cold War materials that relate to East Asia are especially plentiful and include a well-

regarded CIA translation of Mao Zedong’s collected works up to 1949.;

Third Reich monographs (in German) on Japan in the early 1940’s;

Korean War safe conduct passes (some directed to UN troops) offering the option of survival through surrender;

The works of the American-Japanese writer, Lafcadio Hearn;

A complete digital copy of the 168-volume Buddhist canon, the Qianlong Tripitaka 乾隆大藏經;

The writings of the amazing Victorian traveler, Isabella Bird, who attracted attention wherever she went;

Writings of the wartime Japanese politician, Matsuoka Yosuke 松岡 洋右, whose China policies would mark him as a major war criminal;

Extensive holdings of a Cultural Revolution magazine aimed at children, the 红小兵 (Hong xiaobing);

Current day development project reports, dictionaries, scholarly works, music, and video directly from the Tibetan areas of Qinghai province, China;

e-Asia also offers selected images, maps, audio, and video files, which are largely a by-product of the digitalization process.

The e-Asia library is a continuously growing collection with points of emphasis that change with the availability of source materials. Current and project-

ed areas of growth include: catalogs of Chinese traditional drugs, John Dewey-influenced Chinese textbooks, Chinese language pulp fiction from the early twentieth century, and collected documents of the Korean War.

While e-Asia cannot pretend to compete with print libraries (which, of course, can offer copyrighted books and periodicals), it can – together with Google Books, the Internet Archive, and Project Gutenberg – offer a significant library of East Asia materials that until recently was just not imaginable.

“What differentiates e-Asia from large digital projects such as Google Books, the Internet Archive, and Project Gutenberg is, most certainly, its area focus and its mission to comprehensively collect foreign-published books and articles written in English.”

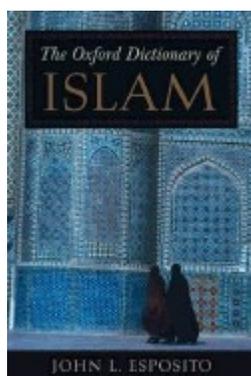


New to AAMES?

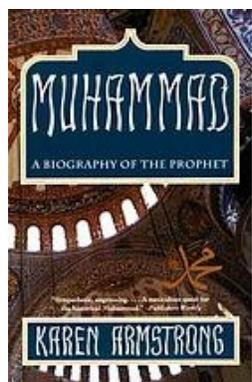
Make sure that you’re subscribed to the AAMES listserv. If you are not already subscribed, you can do so by sending SUBSCRIBE AAMES-L [your name] in a message to sympa@ala.org (leave the subject line blank).

Visit AAMES online at:

<http://aamesacr1.wordpress.com>



Blake Robinson is a library science student at Florida State University and works in Circulation Services at the University of Central Florida Library. He holds a master of arts in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Sydney, Australia, where he completed his thesis on the historiography of Islamic Spain.



World Beat

Welcome to the first edition of World Beat! In this column, I am “on the beat” for current news stories relating to Asian, African, and Middle Eastern studies. Each issue, I will focus on some current events and highlight some titles for librarians so that librarians might help patrons conducting research or doing assignments on these topics. This issue, I focus on introductory books on Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. For currency’s sake, I limit my selection to works published since 2002.

During the 2010 midterm election cycle, Islam’s role differed from past election cycles since 9/11. Whereas previous news coverage focused primarily on Islam’s role vis-à-vis American foreign policy, this year’s coverage highlights Islam on the home front: namely, the Qur’an burning incident in Florida and the “Ground Zero mosque” controversy in New York City. Consequently, librarians can serve as purveyors of reliable, unbiased information on Islam and the Middle East in order to protect their patrons against the unrelenting tide of yellow journalism that too often motivates such reporting. What follows are several relatively accessible titles that will provide patrons with an excellent starting point for assignments and further research.

Several reference books fit these criteria. First and foremost is *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. Spanning six volumes, it encompasses topic ranging from history to economics and is especially useful for its profiles of specific nation-states; readers familiar with its precursor will feel right at home. Useful companion

works are *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* and *Key Words in Islam*, as both are slim, compact, and easy to use while working on a paper. The *Encyclopedia* employs more rigorous translation of foreign terms, while the dictionaries are less so. In Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, as in many disciplines, more specialized books tend to contain more exact translations, while more general books are less thorough; although not foolproof, this trick is an easy way to gauge a work’s target audience.

Savvy readers will note that John Esposito is the editor for both the *Encyclopedia* and *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, which is hardly a coincidence. In my professional opinion, Esposito writes some of the most lucid, unbiased, and accurate books in the field, and I include several of his most pertinent books here. *Islam: The Straight Path* (currently in its fourth edition) introduces the reader to Islam’s history and beliefs, and it includes a chapter devoted to the religion since 9/11. In the same vein, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam* uses a question-and-answer format to impart basic information about the religion, while *The Future of Islam* discusses the topic from a more explicitly political standpoint. Karen Armstrong, who wrote the forward for *The Future of Islam*, offers a compact yet dense account of Muhammad in an update of her previous work on Islam’s founder. Other books by Esposito and Armstrong will provide students with a solid foundation on these topics.

Nonetheless, it would be unfair to neglect more controversial works on Islam. Daniel

Pipes, in particular, provides a scathing critique of the religion in *Militant Islam Reaches America*; yet, since his ideas are so influential in the pro-Israel and neoconservative movements, it is important for students to be aware of his views. Bernard Lewis, while hardly as strident a critic of Islam as Pipes, nonetheless tends to portray Islam as suffering from an inevitable decline in its fortunes due to the rising hegemony of the West. This portrayal takes shape in titles like *What Went Wrong?* and *The Crisis of Islam*. Indeed, even his recently published collection of essays contains chapters such as “License to Kill: Osama bin Laden’s Declaration of Jihad” and “Gender and the Clash of Civilizations.”

If students choose from a broad selection of these works and consult the bibliographies in works they find helpful, they will be well on their way to producing thought-provoking and high-quality assignments for their professors. Similarly, affiliated and unaffiliated users alike will be able to come to the library and obtain accurate information on this subject without the distractions of the 24-hour news cycle. Indeed, to help a patron leave the library with a more informed attitude about the world’s second-largest religion is a great accomplishment for an institution dedicated to education for all.

References:

1. John L. Esposito, et al., eds., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, (New York: Oxford, 2009).
2. John L. Esposito, et al., eds., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern*

Report on the AAMES 2010 Annual Conference Program

The AAMES conference program at ALA Annual was on "Teaching AAME Resources by Using Primary Source Materials from Special Collections: An Innovative Approach to Library Instruction." The session was co-sponsored by the Rare Books & Manuscripts Section of ACRL.

The first presentation was by David Easterbrook, Curator of the Africana Collection at Northwestern University, and he gave an overview of some of the online collections relating to Africa as well as his library's instruction work with undergraduates. One of the major collections at Northwestern is the Africana Poster Collection: <http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/africana-posters/>, but there are also wonderful collections of maps and East African photographs.

Mary Jane Deeb from the Library of Congress then spoke about the many African and Middle Eastern resources and digital collections available from the LoC, many of which you can access from the Division's website: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/amed/>. She pointed out that there are relevant resources in many of the Library's digital collections (for example, Maps and Photographs), so don't limit yourself to just the African and Middle Eastern Division site.

Shuyong Jiang (Illinois) and Tao Yang (Rutgers) discussed uses of Web 2.0 technologies to promote East Asian resources. In particular, Mr. Yang has set up the FOREAST Discussion Forum: <http://foreast.wordpress.com/> to provide a more interactive, community-driven guide to resources. Ms. Jiang reported on the results of her survey to see how much Web 2.0 technologies have been adopted by East Asian Studies librarians. Interestingly, for her respondents, instruction was not a major part of their job responsibilities, but many used these technologies in their instruction as well as for outreach.

Triveni Kuchi (Rutgers, and our new Chair), emphasized the importance of value-added marketing for librarians as a way to maintain our relevance with students.

You can see some of the PowerPoint and a handout from the session at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/events/acrlannual.cfm#aames>

Many thanks to the Co-Chairs of the Conference Planning Committee, Chellamal Vaidyanathan and Qian Liu, for all of their hard work!

Retirement

Best wishes to our colleague and friend Bindu Bhatt who will be retiring at the end of this year to pursue her endeavors in India. Bindu has served for AAMES in various capacities: she organized a lively conference program for AAMES in 2009 and most recently recommended leadership nominations as chair of the AAMES nominations committee. She will be missed sorely and we hope that she will continue to share her enthusiasm, wisdom and experience with us. Good luck for your future and best regards!

World Beat (continued from p. 4)

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| 3. John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, eds., <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Islam</i> , (New York: Oxford, 2003). | 6. John L. Esposito, <i>What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam</i> , (New York: Oxford, 2002). | HarperSanFrancisco, 1993). |
| 4. Ron Greave, <i>Key Words in Islam</i> , (Washington: Georgetown, 2006). | 7. John L. Esposito, <i>The Future of Islam</i> , (New York: Oxford, 2010). | 10. Daniel Pipes, <i>Militant Islam Reaches America</i> , (New York: Norton, 2002). |
| 5. John L. Esposito, <i>Islam: The Straight Path</i> , 4th ed., (New York: Oxford, 2011). | 8. Karen Armstrong, <i>Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time</i> , (New York: HarperCollins, 2006). | 11. Bernard Lewis, <i>What Went Wrong?: Western Impact and Middle East Response</i> , (New York: Oxford, 2002). |
| | 9. Karen Armstrong, <i>Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet</i> , (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993). | 12. Bernard Lewis, <i>The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror</i> , (New York: Modern Library, 2003). |

From the Editor:

Dear AAMES Members,

Welcome to the first newsletter of my editorship. Much of the editorial production process is new to me, so I hope you will forgive me if this issue contains infelicities or otherwise falls short of your expectations.

I would like to draw your attention to the "World Beat" column that begins on page 4. I sent out a message to the members of the Publications Committee asking how folks would like to contribute. Blake Robinson chimed in with the suggestion for a regular column connecting area studies resources to current events, and I gratefully accepted his offer. As Triveni notes on page 1, AAMES, in all its facets, is dependent on the creativity and energy of its members, and Blake's column is ample evidence of this.

To you, dear reader, I now direct my plea: do you have something you would like to express to your fellow AAMES members? A resource you would like to review? A project that you would like to promote? A well-considered opinion you would like to express? Please get in touch with me soon!

John Russell
Editor and Co-Chair,
Publications Committee

Section News

AAMES will not be meeting during ALA Midwinter. The section meeting will be held virtually on January 18 at 2:00pm (Eastern). More details to come via AAMES-L (and if you haven't signed subscribed to AAMES-L, see page 3 for details on how to do so).

Binh Le, AAMES Chair Elect, has put out a call for volunteers for 2010-2011 committee members. Please take this opportunity to help shape our section and get more involved in our profession. The different committees and their respective charges can be found on our AAMES website: <http://aamesacr1.wordpress.com/committees/>. If you have questions, email Binh at BPL1@psu.edu [that's the number 1 after the BPL; sans serif faces are so handsome, but sometimes cause problems with numbers]. The ACRL volunteer form is online: <http://www.acrl.org/volunteer>.

The 2010 ALA Annual Meeting minutes are available online: <http://aamesacr1.wordpress.com/ala-meeting-minutes/2010-ala-annual-meeting-minutes/>

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