

amused to see long runs of the *British Medical Journal* (and countless others) in libraries everywhere, photocopied (presumably from a single edition acquired through ‘international exchange’) and bound in grey sugar paper.

Our long co-operation with the Academy of Social Sciences and the Sichuan People’s Publishing House resulted in 15 volumes of newly photographed manuscripts which, in those days of foreign exchange control and the (then) relative poverty of Chinese universities, meant that the non-canonical Dunhuang texts were finally available to students and scholars all over China. For many Chinese scholars, such publications in book form remain primary sources for, even in the age of digitisation, Dunhuang collections from all over the world have been published by the Shanghai Guji Publishing House and 150 volumes of the complete Dunhuang corpus in the British Library are in preparation by Guangxi Shifan Daxue Publishing House.

But at the same time, the International Dunhuang Project, led by Dr Susan Whitfield at the British Library, is pioneering the digitisation of the international Dunhuang corpus, including the collections of the British Library, the National Library of China, many Japanese collections and smaller collections from the United States, Scandinavia and Ireland, for example. Clearly digitisation is a major way ahead, although the process is necessarily slow and requires considerable curatorial input to avoid errors. I heard recently of an expensive project in America where a 12th century edition of the *Shi Ji* (Records of the Grand Historian, compiled in the 1st century AD) was digitised in its entirety. This seems to me to show a confusion between content and object, for few now would consult this edition, favouring modern scholarly editions, but they would certainly admire it as an object, a real concrete survivor. Digitisation and availability through the internet have vastly opened new possibilities, but quality needs to be associated with quantity.

Recent positive developments in China have included a new interest in the historical tradition of woodblock printing and its contemporary potential, seen in the work of Xu Bing, Wang Chao and Heather Chou, and examples of their prints and artist’s books have been added to the British Library collection. The Library acquired a portfolio of contemporary prints compiled by the Muban Foundation (www.mubaneducationaltrust.org, itself an important new contributor to the field) and held a major exhibition, *Chinese Printmaking Today*, in 2003–4, when some of the blocks cut by artists contributing to the portfolio were also acquired.

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Editor’s note

Editing this special issue of the *Art Libraries Journal* on Chinese art documentation has been a challenging but enjoyable journey that would not have been possible without the generous advice of several people. I am deeply indebted to Rachel Marsden, Curator at the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art (former Chinese Arts Centre), Manchester; Susan Xue, Chair of the Committee on Chinese Materials, Council on East Asian Libraries, USA; Dr Frances Wood, former Curator of Chinese Collections, British Library; Pamela Kember, Head of Arts & Learning, Asia House, London; Chantal Wong, Head of Strategy and Special Projects, Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong; Jiyeon Wood, Subject Librarian (Arts & Multi-Media), SOAS, London; and all contributors. I would also like to mention the specialist professional organisations that play an important role in fostering awareness and collaboration within and outside libraries, including the European Association of Sinological Librarians (EASL) <http://www.easl.org>, the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) and its Committee on Chinese Materials (CCM) <http://www.eastasianlib.org/ccm/index.shtml> and the East Asian Library Resources Group of Australia (EALRGA) <http://www.ealrga.org.au>.

Regular ALJ readers would be surprised that a *Bibliographies update* for 2013 is not included in this issue. The annual *update*, compiled for many years by the previous Deputy Editor, Barbara Polowy, to provide regular notices on the availability of art bibliographies in all formats, will continue as a digital resource available on the ALJ web page. Keep an eye on the ARLIS/UK&Ireland website: <http://www.arlis.org.uk> for this and other developments, or follow the ALJ on Twitter @ArtLibJournal for up to the minute news.

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