

Media Reviews

History of Western Medicine in China, Resources Portal

When many historians of medicine think of China, the first thing that comes to mind is traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Yet the dominant form of medicine in China today is Western medicine (*xiyi*), and TCM as practiced in China has adopted many concepts and therapies from biomedicine. In other words, biomedicine is by far the most important form of medicine in China, as can be seen in the decline of interest in TCM medical schools, or in the *biomedical* analysis of an ancient Chinese drug that resulted recently in a Nobel Prize for Tu Youyou. Yet although digital sources for scholars and students of the history of medicine in the US and Western Europe are widely available in most research libraries, sources for the history of medicine in China have lagged behind.

In 2009, Daqing Zhang of Peking University and William H. Schneider of Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI) conceived a plan to help make the plentiful sources in the US and Europe more available to scholars of modest means in China and to make digital sources available to students and scholars around the world. This resulted in a major grant from the Luce Foundation (2011–14), which, in addition to two international conferences plus one volume of selected papers in English and one in Chinese, produced a research portal that combines library and archive guides with a wide array of digital sources that were digitised by the project or were already available (<http://ulib.iupui.edu/wmicproject/>).

For example, scholars interested in the history of cholera in Chinese ports would do well to begin by clicking on the *General Reports and Guides* section and scrolling down to the medical reports of the Imperial Maritimes Customs. Many of these reports were written by medical missionaries, and a second step for a researcher might be to determine which physicians wrote about outbreaks of cholera in China, then to follow the mission agency and look for digitised books by that missionary available through the *Selected Electronic Texts* section, photographs and archive guides to enable onsite or (in the case of generous archivists) remote research.

Research on the Rockefeller Foundation's oversized investment in health care in China should begin with the digitised report of the Rockefeller Medical Commission of 1914 that included members William Welch, Simon Flexner and Peabody, president of Harvard; then consult the archive guide for the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), updated specifically for this project, to get a sense of the massive scope of medical projects undertaken by the foundation, its China Medical Board and its International Health Board. This would then lead to the RAC website, which has digitised sources such as the annual reports, with full text search capacity, and has set up an online exhibition for its centennial.

Yet, like many digital humanities projects, the resource portal is essentially a web 1.0 project that requires the sustained interest and intuition of the user that is normally found only among graduate students and scholars. For this reason, I have teamed up with a team of digital humanities librarians and archive scholars to apply for funding to extend the portal. The goal is to pull together the heterogeneous content collections containing scanned books, newspapers, digital photographs and other historic archival material using the model of linked open data. This would transform the existing 'objects' into normalised data within a main digital portal where scholars could create and access

materials as coherent works, themed collections or virtual exhibits. Linked open data models are increasingly used by libraries, archives and museums to provide access to their catalogues and digitised collections using Open Web Platform standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium. The final product would be a dynamic system that would allow the user to enter the search term 'cholera' and view all sources without leaving the platform. Historians would be encouraged to expand the audience of their published work by curating themed exhibits that would seamlessly present a brief synopsis of their argument and a basic narrative interspersed with medical reports, photographs and clickable links to the bibliography. Essentially, this would be an endlessly expandable online medical history museum, and once the model has been created for the Chinese material, further funding and collaborations would lead to projects on other parts of the world. With such expansion and its inherent ease of use, the new digital platform could become a point of contact between historians, clinical researchers and even enlightened policy makers.

In the meantime, the resource portal has seen significant use since its launch in 2013, with an average of over seven hundred page views per month in 2014 and 2015 – about half from the US and one-third from China and Hong Kong. As a general rule, most digitised sources available here are in English, as are physical sources described in North American and British archives, while those in China are in Chinese. The website layout was designed for simplicity of appearance and use on computers, tablets or mobile phones, by Aaron Ganci of the Herron School of Art and Design at IUPUI. Given the predominance of English language sources, it will be also be a useful tool for historians of medicine in other parts of the world seeking to write more balanced accounts of the history of disease and human responses to it.

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Review of Setouchi International Art Festival/Setouchi Triennale 2016

Hansen's disease, as survivors prefer to call the illness known more pejoratively as leprosy, has a history that is deeply connected to its visibility. Scholars such as Zachary Gussow have connected the visibility of the disease and the disfigurements it causes to discrimination against those who suffer from the illness.¹ Indeed, the visibility of the illness has meant that bodies affected by Hansen's disease, abject as they are, have long been objects of public display, consumption and metaphor-making. As an example, Christine E. Boeckl, in her work *Images of Leprosy: Disease, Religion, and Politics in European Art*, has traced the political theology of Hansen's disease sufferers in western art from the fourth century AD, arguing that, historically, the depiction of the body of the afflicted was used as a metaphor for political problems and social messages.²

¹ Z. Gussow, *Leprosy, Racism, and Public Health: Social Policy in Chronic Disease Control* (Westview Press, 1989).

² C. M. Boeckl, *Images of Leprosy: Disease, Religion, and Politics in European Art* (Truman State University Press, 2011).