



Council on East Asian Libraries' **(CEAL)** Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition
Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: In Collaboration with the North American Coordinating Council on
Japanese Library Resources **(NCC)** and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians **(SCSL)**

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The COVID-19 crisis has unleashed a new operational and budgetary ecosystem in which the sudden and complete lack of access to print and non-digitized materials, albeit temporary, has resulted in an increase in the need for provision of resources in electronic formats. Budget cuts are anticipated, and while many institutions have not yet released their budgets for the current, and or, upcoming fiscal year, the acquisition of resources in electronic formats has been prioritized, and libraries are increasingly implementing or reformulating policies that focus on the acquisition of digital content for the time being.

Based on the knowledge that the publication output in area studies is largely – and in some places exclusively – in print, concerns regarding equity, representation and access in collection development have been raised by peer library associations in the form of statements such as those of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials' (SALALM) [Resolution](#), the Middle East Librarians Association's (MELA) [Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19](#), and the Committee on South Asian Libraries and Documentation's (CONSALD) [Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19](#)

While we have observed the growth of electronic content over the years in East Asia, a large percentage of the overall publication output remains as print-only. It is also worth noting that there are enormous discrepancies in the availability of electronic contents among the individual countries and regions within East Asia (including Tibet), as well as within individual disciplines. In addition to the insufficient volume of scholarly content in digital format, technological limitations of the platforms present challenges to scholars' engagement with many of the resources, making print collections indispensable to the East Asian studies scholarly community.

The members of the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL), the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians (SCSL) are committed to maintaining the breath, diversity and integrity of collections by advocating for the implementation of collection development policies that are congruent with those principles. In addition to the shared concerns raised by SALALM, MELA, and CONSALD on the implementation of e-preferred collection development policies, we would like to express the following concerns:

- Whereas the focus on the acquisition of electronic resources has a strenuous impact on the overall acquisition budget of libraries of all sizes but putting particularly medium-size and small-size print collections at risk of survival and contributing to a greater knowledge divide
- Whereas East Asian countries' copyright restrictions, or varying vendors' business models, prevent the access of resources via interlibrary loan (ILL) and document delivery (DD), effectively decreasing the access to knowledge, particularly of those smaller collections that have to heavily rely on ILL/DD from larger collections

- Whereas the standard expectation for terms of use of e-books, as well as ownership of contents and perpetual access rights cannot be guaranteed due to the restrictions imposed by the publishing cultures and copyright provisions of East Asian countries
- Whereas the acquisition of materials in print is the only way to salvage knowledge and information that would be otherwise doctored, lost or unavailable as a result of censorship
- Whereas the integrity of collections and quality of scholarship will be negatively impacted due to the insufficiency of scholarly content available in commercial e-book platforms, as well as the lack of representation of regional and niche (specialized) collections in platforms that libraries are able to license
- Whereas the technological limitations in East Asian platforms curtail researchers' ability to engage with and manipulate data
- Whereas the lack of quality metadata that oftentimes not only becomes the largest impediment to the discovery of resources but also demands more attention from library staff of all levels to properly acquire, describe and make resources discoverable

With the above in mind, the CEAL, the NCC, and the SCSL urge libraries to:

- Reassure that e-preferred collection development policies implemented temporarily during the pandemic are not meant to be prescriptive for long-term collection development practices
- Exercise flexibility in the implementation of collection development policies to allow for balanced collection development practices that adequately address the needs for print and electronic formats
- Rely on the expertise and advice of professional librarians who are better informed of the conditions of the publishing environments of the areas and disciplines they develop and support
- Commit to protect the acquisition of print materials, as well as the personnel responsible for making them discoverable and accessible, as an effort to ensure the inclusion of non-traditional publications that are often regarded to offer the most poised critique of mainstream voices and perspectives
- Continue to support the work of vendors and smaller publishers who are vital to the building of diverse, specialized library collections and whose survival is critical to the academic enterprise
- Support and advocate for Open Access (OA) initiatives via the collaboration of North American and East Asian partners to bring to light our unique and specialized collections while minimizing the reliance on commercial entities to make them available
- Encourage a collaborative, cross-institutional approach in developing best practices for license negotiations of East Asian resources that systematically address the issues outlined in this document

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About the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL)

CEAL is a committee of the Association for Asian Studies. CEAL is the largest international professional organization in the field of East Asian Studies librarianship. It was founded in 1958 as the Committee on American Library Resources on the Far East, building on earlier organizations going back to 1948. The objectives of CEAL are to serve as a forum for discussions about issues of common concern relating to East Asian libraries and East Asian Librarianship, to formulate programs for the development of East Asian library resources, services, and systematic organization of all types of recorded information and knowledge, and to promote interlibrary and international cooperation in East Asian librarianship.