Tracing East Asian Librarianship in Correspondence

A Preliminary Data Analysis of Eastlib Messages from 1995 to 2020

Task Force Members

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Background

** When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.*

This project is a research effort extending from the CEAL Eastlib archive rebuilt project.

- **Lemons:** In 1999, Eastlib's functionalities were upgraded to allow listserv subscribers and the general public to browse and search through email discussions. However, due to unexpected system setting changes in March 2020, access to the Eastlib archive was found to be limited to postings for the previous 90 days, resulting in the loss of past Eastlib messages posted between 1999 and December 2019.

- **Action:** In the summer of 2020, CEAL initiated the Eastlib archive rebuilt project appointing a new Task Force chaired by Tang Li to begin rebuilding the lost Eastlib postings from 1999-2019.

- **Outcome:** With active response & support from many key CEAL members, the task force collected over 9000 emails posted on Eastlib between 1995 and 2020.

Goals

** Making lemonades*

With the massive freshly recovered old Eastlib emails, the Task force takes the opportunity to study a few key issues.

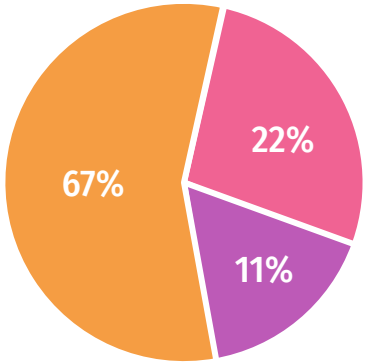
A. Tracing the evolution of East Asian librarianship impacted by the rapid growth of digital technology, discipline scholarship and societal changes both in the U.S. and East Asia, through these unstructured correspondences by CEAL members and East Asian library counterparts around the globe.

B. Employing current digital humanities tools and methods to examine trends, challenges, and changes in the field and envisioning future directions of East Asian librarianship

C. Reviewing the use and effectiveness of the listserv as a primary communication tool for the CEAL community, with a particular focus on how the global pandemic may have affected East Asian librarians' communications.

Data Processing

- **Data Collecting** (10/2020-06/2021)
  - ❏ Collected **9,436** emails
  - ❏ Dated from **1995-2020**



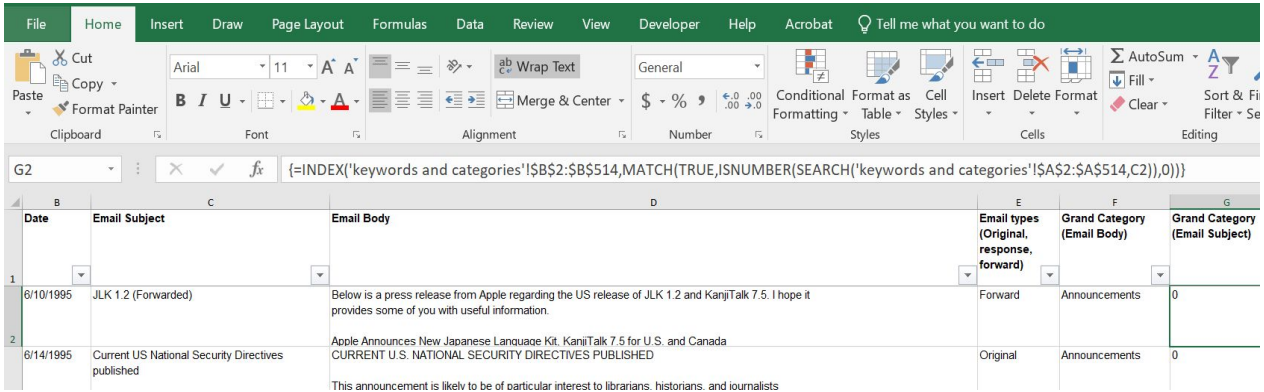
- ➔ **6,349 (67%) Original**
- ➔ **2,101 (22%) Responses**
- ➔ **986 (11%) Forwarded**

- **Data Cleaning** (08/2021-01/2022)

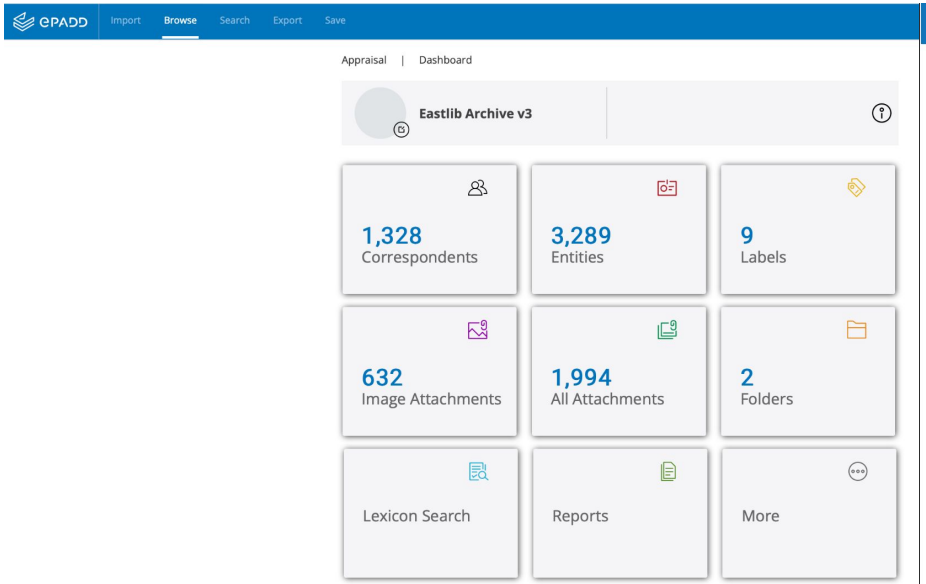
Removed:

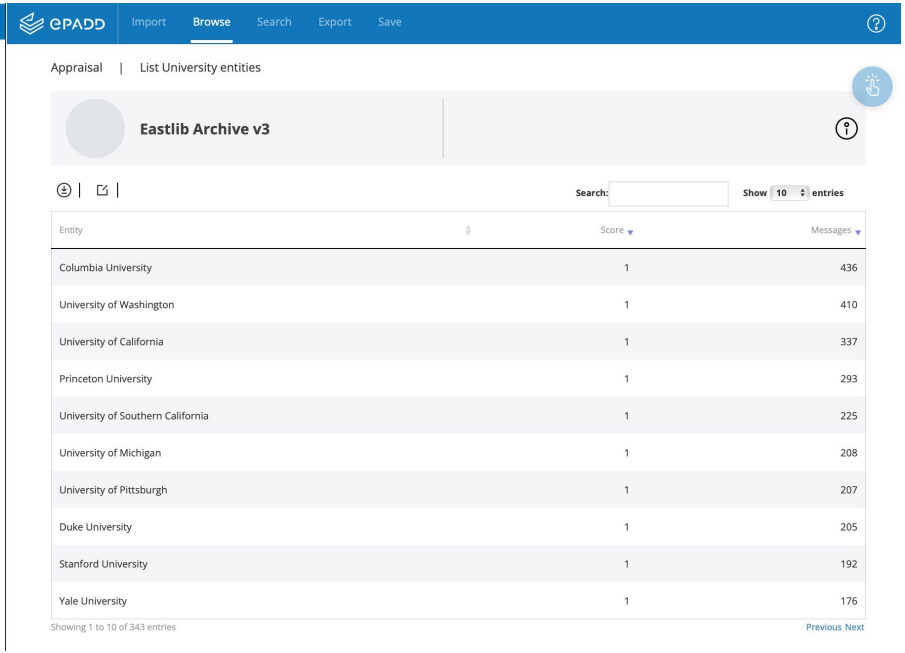
- ❏ Email headers and footers;
- ❏ Greetings, signatures, names, and other non-essential texts;
- ❏ Duplicate, congratulatory, and other less meaningful messages.

Data Analysis Tools



Preliminary Findings





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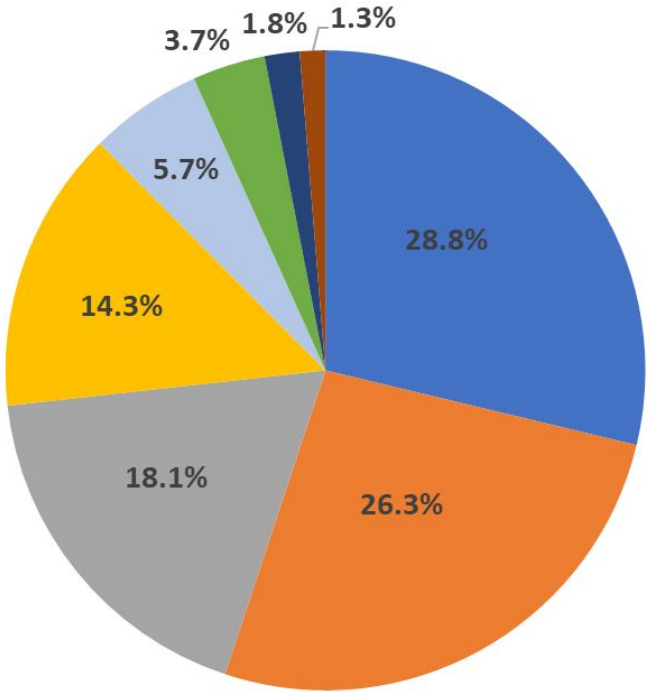
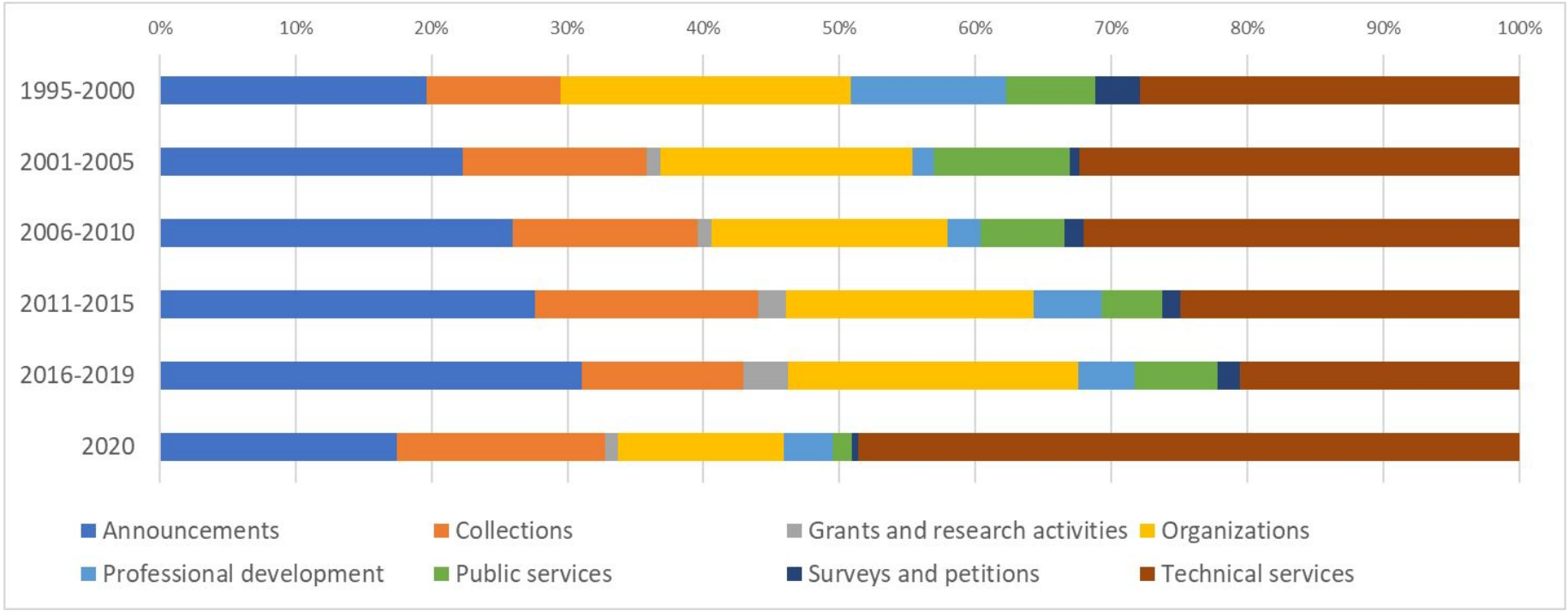


- Technical services (Cataloging, Acquisitions, Romanization, Unicode ...)
- Announcements (Job postings, Exhibits, Programs, Projects ...)
- Organizations (CEAL, AAS, NCC, OCLC User Group, NDL ...)
- Collections (Gifts and donations, Shelving, Digital collections, E-resources ...)
- Public services (References, Instructions ...)
- Professional development (Training, Workshops, Conferences ...)
- Grants and research activities (Grants, Fellowship, Publications ...)
- Surveys and petitions

Preliminary Findings



Literature Review and Next Steps

1. **Listservs as a valuable resource for investigation**

- There is a growing body of research looking at how and why groups of professionals such as librarians use listservs and topics they discuss

2. **Benefits of Listserv**

- Information gathering/sharing
- Professional development
- Organizational efficiency/effectiveness

3. **Next Steps**

- We will continue to analyze the collected Eastlib messages by classifying into predefined and secondary categories
- We will present our findings to and beyond CEAL community