

What Does the New *Cataloging Guidelines for Chinese Rare Books* Mean to You?

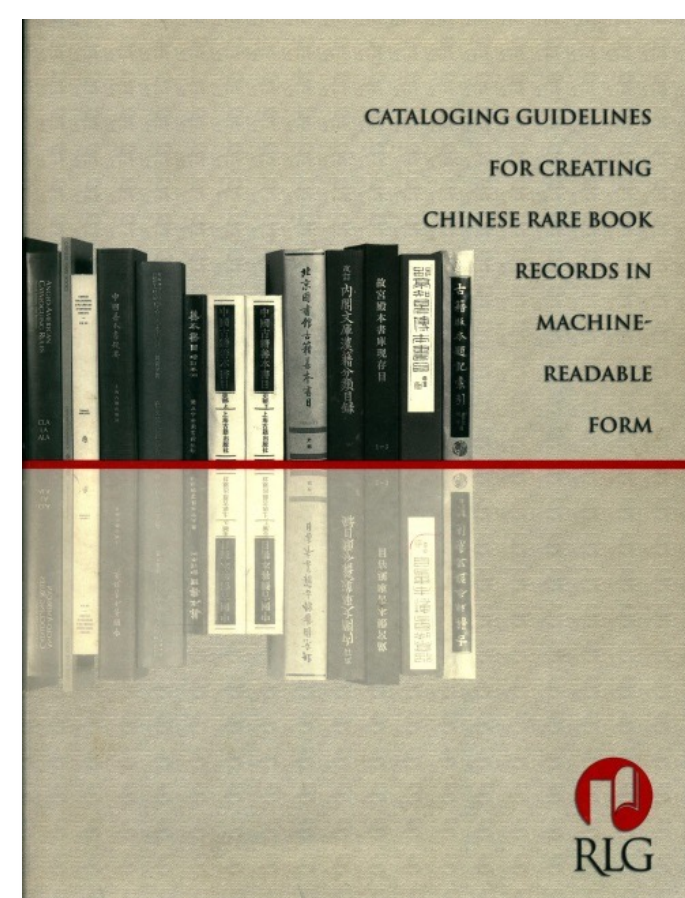
Yuzhou Bai, Harvard-Yenching Library

Background

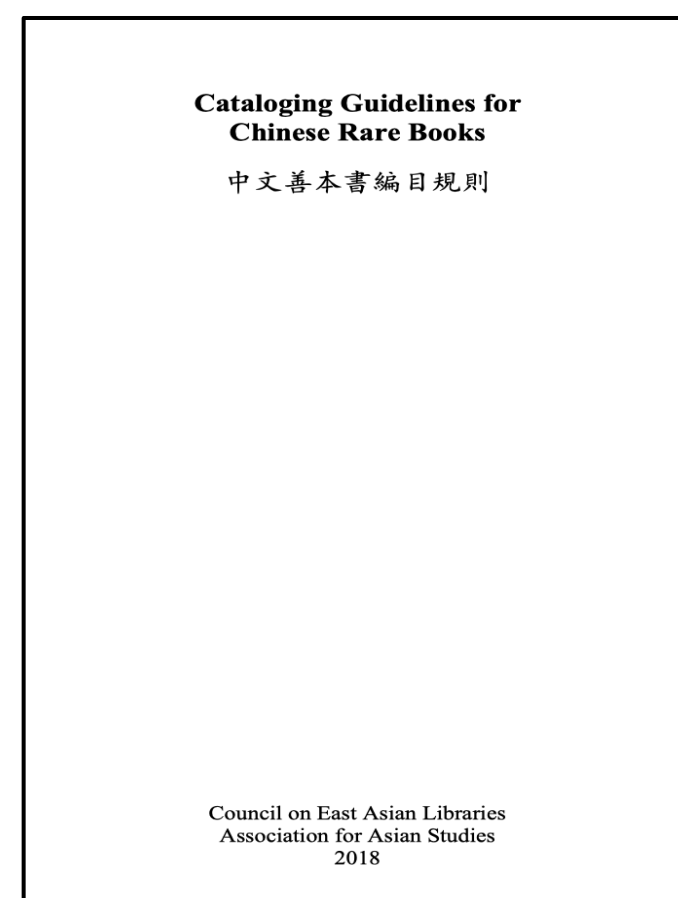
The *Cataloging Guidelines for Chinese Rare Books (CGCRB)* is an English metadata standard for cataloging pre-1911 Chinese books and manuscripts. It is based upon the “Chinese Rare Books Project (CHRB),” a union catalog for Chinese rare books held by institutions in North America. The current edition, released in 2018, harmonizes the cataloging of Chinese rare books with RDA, and has been included on the Library of Congress website for descriptive cataloging:
<http://loc.gov/aba/cataloging/policy/>.

Since 2021, a working group under CEAL CCM & CTP has been revising CGCRB to further align the cataloging standard with contemporary library systems and user needs. The new edition is set to publish in 2025-26. This poster will discuss how CGCRB will impact public services related to Chinese rare books.

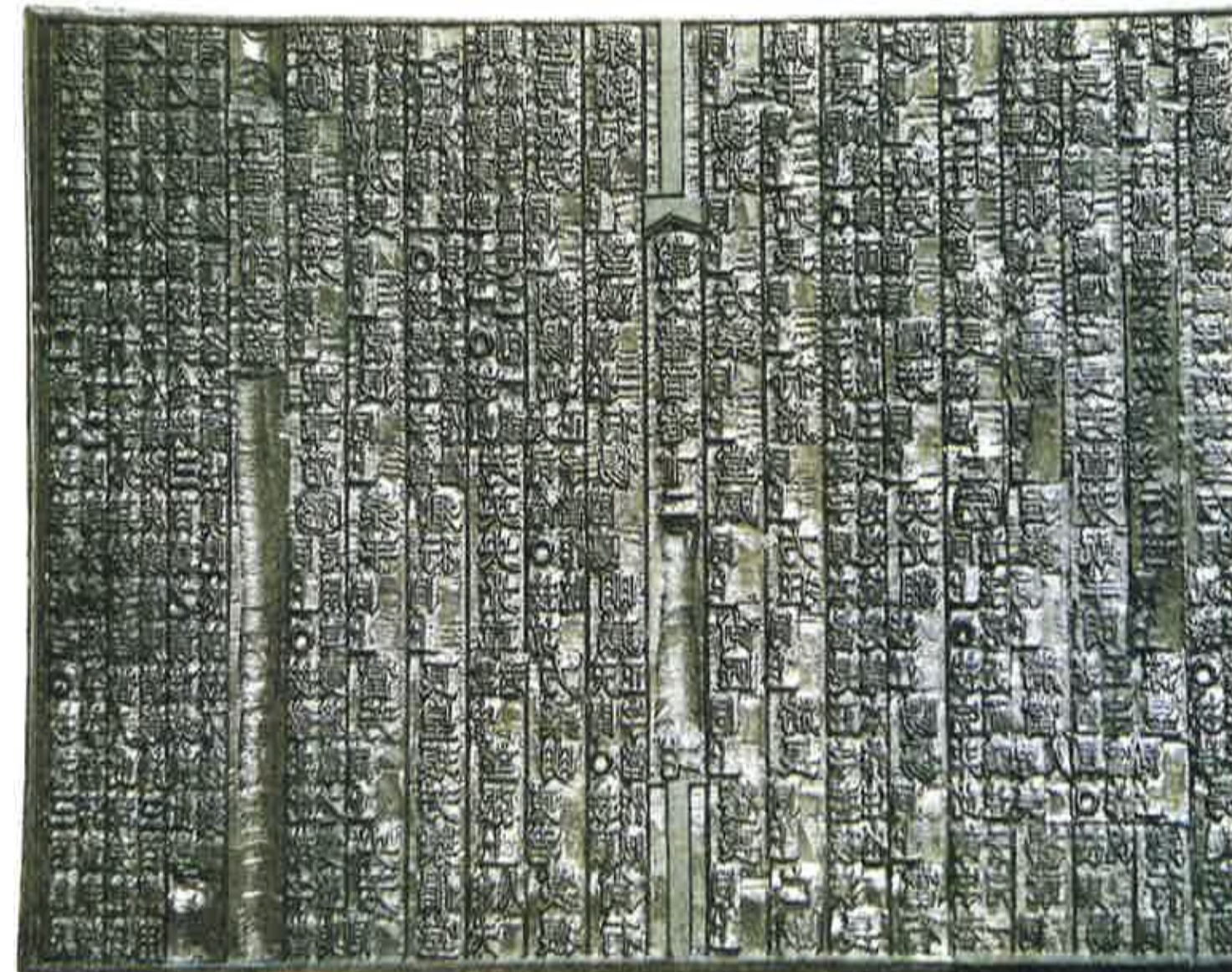
Printed Edition (2000)



Current Edition (2018)



Features of Chinese Rare Books



A Chinese woodblock

CGCRB strives to honor the unique features of Chinese rare books and the needs of their researchers.

Chinese rare books were produced predominantly by woodblock printing technology. Unlike Western rare printed books, they tend to have more variations resulting from the printing, reprinting, and distribution process: woodblocks deteriorate quickly, so do thread-binding and paper. The repairing of woodblocks, rebinding of books, and literati's inscriptions and annotations on the book were common. Later “reprints” frequently incorporated these changes selectively, which contributed to the number of variations and the complexity for scholars to trace different editions.

Strategies to Facilitate Discovery of Chinese Rare Books

One Record per Item on WorldCat

Catalogers should make a *new* record following CGCRB for the book at hand, even if there are existing WorldCat records that appear to be of the same edition. Due to the complexity of editions, it is always safer to assume that your institution's copy is unique.

Include Bibliographic Details in Chinese

Researchers of Chinese rare books expect to see more details in the catalog records, as they could help identify variations among different editions. Although an English standard, CGCRB encourages catalogers to provide such details in Chinese in the Edition Statement and Note fields, in addition to standard RDA practices.

Provide Rich Access Points

CGCRB encourages catalogers to include more access points to help researchers discover rare books in a linked data environment. Individuals and institutions affiliated with the book should be registered, such as makers and holders of woodblocks, scribes, publishers, booksellers, former owners. In addition to standard controlled vocabularies, CGCRB also adds traditional *siku* (four categories of Chinese texts) as subject headings.

...I'm not a cataloger, what can I do?

Great question! We all interact with library metadata. Therefore, you don't need to be a cataloger yourself to have opinions about what the metadata and online catalog *should* look like. The CGCRB team would love to hear from you on what may help people discover Chinese rare books at your institution, so that we could think of ways to meet your needs in our revision.

In addition, you can encourage your library's cataloging staff to adopt CGCRB and forward the questions they may have to us. That alone would be very helpful!



More Questions? Connect with me!
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