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The Oregon Fujian Library Connection

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The Oregon Fujian Library connection can be traced back to 1984, when Governor Vic Atiyeh of Oregon and Governor Hu Ping of Fujian Province, People's Republic of China, signed a sister state relationship agreement. By 1986, the Oregon State Library Foundation and the Northwest Regional China Council were sponsoring a project, the Oregon-Fujian Book Exchange Project, to supply books for the Fujian Provincial Library in Fuzhou. An appeal letter signed by Frances Lau, Chairperson, and Richard Nokes, Secretary, sought financial donations for a book purchasing fund. Donations of books were also to be requested from agencies and publishers. The Project was designed to provide substantive books about Oregon, by Oregon authors, or published in Oregon "as a means of providing English language material to our friends in China, and at the same time, giving them an opportunity to learn about our state."

The Oregon State Library was to select the titles and prepare the orders under the direction of the State Librarian, Wesley Doak. Guidelines for the type of books to be included were prepared and revised. The original goal was to send the first shipment by December 31, 1986. As is usual with such a project there was a delay, but the ten cartons containing 194 books, 18 pamphlets, 38 college catalogs, 5 college information booklets and 1 video cassette arrived in Fuzhou in June 1987. Each item bore a bookplate that read "To the People of Fujian Province Presented by the Oregon-Fujian Book Committee." The books were shipped courtesy of Percy Loy of Kubla Khan Food Co., Seaport Shipping Co., Nippon Cargo Airlines, and Fujian Enterprises Co. of Hong Kong. Committee members included David Bean, Wesley Doak, Terry Hill, Huang Jianhua, Jane Larson, Frances Lau, Paul Morris, J. Richard Nokes, Michael Powell, and Marge Wright.

In March 1987, Rosalind Wang, Education Librarian at Portland State University, was invited to Fuzhou to conduct a week-long workshop for the librarians, library workers, and information retrieval officers of the Fujian Province. The workshop was co-sponsored by Fujian Provincial Library and Fuzhou University. Since not many people could speak and understand English at the time, Rosalind was able to give lectures, conduct discussion forums and share her experiences in Mandarin Chinese. Workshop topics included: Personnel Management, Bookmobile and Outreach Services, Library Automation, Public Library Programming and Reader's Services, and Bibliographic Instruction in College/University Libraries. The attendees were very eager to learn and full of enthusiasm. Later on, Fujian Library Association honored and awarded Rosalind a lifetime membership.

After the workshop, the library director and associate directors requested that Rosalind Wang assist in the establishment of the sister library relationship between Oregon State Library and Fujian Provincial Library. Carrying this mission back to Oregon, Rosalind contacted Frances Lau concerning the request from our friends in Fujian. They worked diligently with other Book Exchange Committee members to promote this significant endeavor.

In June of the same year, a letter was received from Jian Ji, Director of the Fujian Provincial Library, inviting Frances Lau and Wesley Doak to visit Fujian Province in September as guests of the Province (excluding trans-Pacific transportation). Frances Lau was unable to accept the invitation, but Wesley Doak, accompanied by his wife, visited the Fujian Provincial Library in December. Frances Lau visited Fuzhou in August 1988. At this time, the Fujian Provincial Library presented The Proposal On The Cooperation Between Fujian Provincial Library and Oregon State Library: Two Sister Libraries. (Frances Lau was responsible for bringing the two libraries together by helping Jian Ji draft a letter in English to Wesley Doak during a previous visit to Fuzhou.) This proposal called for book exchanges, mutual assistance with reference work, and staff and technology exchanges, among other topics. "We hope that through correspondence, we will be able to form an initial agreement. Next year when we meet



Rosalind Wang (center), Portland State University Education and Social Science Librarian, with Fujian Provincial Library administrators at the Book Donation Ceremony, October 23, 1993.

in Oregon, we can discuss the details and sign our sister libraries agreement.”

Despite the political unrest in China, Mr. Shen Yang, Acting Director of the Fujian Provincial Library, and Mr. He Dingfu, Deputy Director, arrived in Portland on July 17, 1989, where they were hosted by Frances Lau, Rosalind Wang, and several area families. They visited local libraries, such as Multnomah County Library, the Oregon Historical Society, and book-related companies (Blackwell North America, Inc. and Powell's Bookstore). They also visited the new Silver Falls Library. On July 20, a formal agreement for a sister relationship was signed at a public reception at the State Library in Salem. Rosalind Wang and Frances Lau translated the Chinese version of the Agreement. Together with Sam Lin, they also served as the interpreters for the visitors. This visit had a lasting impact on many of those who were involved. Mr. He Dingfu sent greetings on the 10th anniversary in 1999 in which he mentioned the increase in library cooperation between Oregon and Fujian Province, and the mutual friendships that resulted from the trip.

In the next few years, small shipments of primarily reference books were sent from Oregon to both Fujian Provincial Library, which serves as a public library for the Province, and to Xiamen University Library. The membership of the Oregon-Fujian Book Exchange Committee shifted over the years, with additional librarians joining the group. Jim Schepcke, new State Librarian, replaced the previous State Librarian. Plans grew from shipping cartons of books to shipping a container of books. Frances Lau met with Sun Jinhua and Chen Jiannan of Xiamen University and Ke Shaoning of Fujian Provincial Library on April 14, 1992. This was followed by a Memorandum of Understanding which was signed in October by the Director of Fujian Provincial Library, Mr. Zheng Yi-Xian, and the new Co-chairpersons of the Committee, Kathy Greey and Rosalind Wang, both of Portland State University Library. This document provided for the distribution of the books within Fujian Province. Again, Rosalind Wang provided the translation work and was responsible for all the communication written in Chinese between the two entities.

An application for a Meyer Memorial Trust grant was rejected leading to more creative approaches to meeting the costs of a larger shipment. Jim Schepcke sent a persuasive appeal to the libraries of Oregon, which resulted in an estimated one hundred libraries across Oregon packing surplus books in boxes and sending them to the State Library for shipment to China. On October 29, 1993, an appropriate public ceremony was held on the steps of the Oregon State Library in Salem. The gift of 17,000 books, five microfiche readers, and two microcomputers was accepted by the visiting Fujian Economic and Trade Delegation headed by Mr. Chen Guang-yi and accompanied by State Senator Mae Yih. The bookplates accompanying the books read:

TO: the People of Fujian Province
FROM: the Libraries of the State of Oregon

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM: Oregon-Fujian Book Exchange Committee of the Northwest Regional China Council, Academic Book Center, Blackwell North America, Coutts Library Services, Danzas Corporation, Kathy Greey, Frances Lau, Oregon Economic Development Department, Oregon State Library, and Paul Y. Wong

A separate bookplate for Xiamen University Library also acknowledged the contribution of the Friends of Xu Yaoping (a deceased Xiamen alumnus).

At the same time, Rosalind Wang and her husband, David Wang, led a 10-person environmental group from the State of Washington on a visit to Fujian Province. Among the events of a busy schedule, Rosalind attended an official Acceptance of Book Donation ceremony in Fuzhou. During the ceremony, she presented books donated by the student body of Highland Park Intermediate School (Beaverton, OR) and her own folktale picture books. High officials of the Department of Culture, as well as directors and deputy directors from various city and county libraries of the Fujian Province were present. Television, radio, and newspapers gave rave reports of this special event. *World Journal of North America*, a Chinese language newspaper, also provided good coverage of it. Following the ceremony, friends in Fujian gave Rosalind a warm reception to show their appreciation for the book donation from Oregon libraries. Up to that time, it was very difficult to purchase foreign language books from abroad due to the lack of hard currency and the high cost of English-language books in China.

During her short visit, Rosalind Wang was able to persuade the then Deputy Director of the Culture Department, Mr. Zou Wei-zhi, to appropriate extra budget funds for Fujian Provincial Library's book collection and funding for an automation system for the new building. The new Fujian Provincial Library building broke ground in 1991 and the project was completed in 1993. Phyllis Lichenstein, chair of the then Board of Trustees of the Oregon State Library, was our representative at the dedication of the new library on October 1, 1995.

After the send-off of the books, a celebratory dim sum luncheon was held on January 20, 1994. Members of the Oregon-Fujian Committee at this time were: Mary J. Brown, Robert Felsing, Kathy Greey, David Kennedy Jr., Jan Larson, Frances Lau, Dana Levesque, Phyllis Lichenstein, Angela Mei, Richard Nokes, Harold Otness, Michael Powell, Jim Schepcke, and Rosalind Wang.

In April 1997, together with many other library directors, Mr. Zheng Yi-Xian (Director of the Fujian Provincial Library) was invited by the United States Information Service (USIS) to visit libraries in New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and San Francisco. Mr. Zheng made a special arrangement to visit Oregon. He brought us the good will and greetings from our friends in Fujian Province. His visit also further strengthened the sister library relationship.

See The Fujian Connection page 20

The Oregon Fujian Library Connection

(Continued from page 15)

From these beginnings, the current staff exchange program evolved. In August 1997 the Oregon State Library entered into an agreement with the Fujian Provincial Library to establish the Homer Library Staff Exchange Project, with the purpose of exchanging expertise in library and information science between library professionals in Oregon and Fujian. This effort was made possible through a generous gift from the late William Homer. Early in 1998, the State Library sent Ernest Perez to the Fujian Provincial Library for six weeks. In return, the State Library hosted Ke Shaoning, Head of the Foreign Literature Department, and Zheng Zhiming, Director of Library Automation at the Fujian Provincial Library. This was followed by a visit to two libraries in Fujian Province by Brian Williams of Multnomah County Library in 1999. Two librarians from Fujian, Mr. Xu Zhao-kai (Director of Quanzhou Municipal Library) and Ms. Xiao Hong (Head of the Audio-visual Department of Fujian Provincial Library), arrived in Oregon in early October and completed their six-week visit on No-

vember 10. An additional staff exchange program is under discussion. In November 2000 Kathy Greey, the Co-Chair of the Oregon-Fujian Book Exchange Committee, traveled to China and visited the Fujian Provincial Library.

The Oregon Fujian Library connection has benefited not only the patrons who have utilized the materials received under the program and the libraries who received new information, but most especially the staff members who have had personal contact with their opposite numbers from abroad. In Portland's new Classical Chinese Garden, one of the buildings is called "Painted Boat in Misty Rain". According to the Chinese designer, this represents a boat coming from China to dock here in Oregon with a cargo of friendship. The Oregon Fujian Library connection can be likened to this boat with the connection going both ways. **Q**



Fujian Provincial Library.