

Building a Library in the Asian Division

Gene Stong

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Librarian, UMUC Asian Division, 1984-2001

Adjunct Faculty Member, UMUC European Division, 2002-2004

I became a Marylander in 1984 when I was hired by Dr. Julian Jones as the Librarian for the Asian Division. My experience with Maryland goes back to 1961 when I took a class while stationed in Japan with the U.S. Army, in an attempt to learn some Japanese. I was surprised that a state university from the U.S. even offered college-level instruction leading to academic degrees in so many distant locations. The base library where I was stationed was small and its resources were unrelated to my language instruction even if I did enjoy visiting it. Once out of uniform and years later, MLS in hand and working as a college reference librarian at Southern Oregon College (now University), my college buddy, Dave Glaser, a long-time Maryland professor in both Asia and Europe and at the time an administrator in the European Division, called me. David said that the Asian Division of the University of Maryland was interested in having a degreed librarian come visit to assess its Faculty Loan Library's (FLL) contents and practices. My wife, Marcia, came along with me to Yokota Air Base in Fussa, near Tokyo, where the Asian Division headquarters offices are located.

I found a collection of decent size that was nicely run by the small staff. My recommendations, however, consisted of a robust collection development effort tied more closely to the Division's programs. More outreach to distant faculty was in order. The FLL was arranged in the Dewey Decimal System, which is the public library cataloging standard. Figuring faculty members would better recognize cataloging as arranged in the Library of Congress's scheme, the cataloging system used in academic libraries, I recommended that conversion since it would, in part,

also aid in developing the collection. Dr. Jones asked me during that visit if I would like to stay on to become the Librarian for the Asian Division. This was a difficult choice inasmuch as both my wife and I were happy working in Oregon. However, the unique challenges offered by the Asian Division's library situation starting with the great distances to support teaching sites and base libraries, some rather unusual faculty, and just being in Japan (not our first time)--made us want to remain with the Asian Division. Somewhat to my surprise, I was later told I was the first "real" librarian either Division had ever hired specifically to manage one of the two overseas libraries. Marcia, a Special Education teacher, was immediately hired by the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS).

The position promised to be a challenge of a different order than I'd ever known. This excited me simply because the widely scattered faculty were offering college classes when an essential element of a normal campus back home, an academic library, did not exist. Yes, base libraries of decent size existed on many bases but were serving a variety of other populations, and were, in essence, functioning as public libraries. Such library collections were and still are geared toward meeting the varied interests and needs, mainly non-academic, of military base inhabitants, including active duty servicemembers, their family members, and U.S. Government civilians and their families. Both the European Division and the Asian Division over time had begun library collections which were necessarily modest in size and located at the headquarters of each Division near Tokyo, Japan and in Heidelberg, Germany. Contact and cooperation between UMUC's European and Asian Division libraries and the libraries located on military bases where our university classes were taught was often sketchy due to the distances involved. Motivated faculty did work hard at times to overcome some of the difficulties. Academic library support while dealing with this environment became my primary task.

Since there was no fast Internet connection at the time and cataloging software was not readily available online, I was able to get the entire collection recataloged

in fairly short order using the library cataloging software called BiblioFile. It used regularly updated CDs that included the necessary coding for my work. The existing videotape collection was fairly substantial and that I left organized by title. Computerized printed lists of books, videos, and other teaching materials were distributed to most field offices. But in a sign of the increasing digital age, UMUC was coming online during this period enabling it to provide access to academic databases in the United States through international telecommunication links. So began a rather interesting seventeen years as a librarian in the time when the physicality of "things" such as books and videotapes began morphing over to the digital. However, most faculty were still interested in the physical books, periodicals, and videotapes we could get out to them. Changing times indeed.



The European Division had a library of similar size to the Asian Division's and run by a degreed librarian, Denise Sokolowski, who I came to learn over time was also engaged in many tasks other than changing the cataloging of the FLL in Heidelberg from a broad, subject-based shelving system to the Library of Congress system. For example, her other tasks including producing the word-processed responses to the military's Requests for Proposals from 1983 to 2002. She also developed and taught, starting in 1983 and 1984, word processing

seminars and the library skills course (LIBS100, later LIBS150). She was also the Coordinator of the LIBS course for several years. In retirement in Germany as an adjunct faculty member from 2002 to 2004, I taught a few of those library skills courses online. Denise and I became collegial buddies over the years and distances. We traded good advice from afar about UMUC and information about the condition and situation of both Faculty Loan Libraries, which we both much appreciated.

Many Asian Division staff members and faculty members were very helpful toward the Faculty Loan Library, especially the three Directors under whom I served: Drs. Julian Jones, Paula Harbecke, and Joe Arden. They were interested in the general state of the Library but also left me to make the professional library decisions. Also very helpful was my supervisor for much of the time, Lorraine Suzuki. Bill Berglof always had a particular interest in the collection as did faculty members such as Frank Gualtieri and Dennis Doolin.

The really adventurous time in the Asian Division began for me in 1987 when a new contract with the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) added an innovative provision. Clause H-4 specified that one percent of the Asian Division's budget had to be spent on buying books, periodicals, and videotapes for all the base libraries in the Pacific Command at the locations where Maryland conducted classes. Year One of the effort provided \$75,000 but grew with subsequent contracts. The project became branded, for me, over time with that one clause, H-4 from 1987. While expressing myself to Dr. Jones and others quietly that this was rather inadequate to say the least, I recalled how interesting and educational it is to engage in what librarians call "collection development."

We began a subscription to the American Library Association's book review publication called *Choice*. I began reading many thousands of short book reviews and made different selections for each library at the far-flung locations. The

Library Journal was useful for periodical and video reviews and so I began a long list of recommended books, periodicals, and tapes. Every library where the faculty taught received the lists. The list was modified every succeeding year and increasingly absorbed more and more of my time. Ordering the materials requested by each of the many libraries also took significant time.

Occasional TDY travel took me to several base libraries where I met librarians to discuss their needs. One important person I got to know in this regard was the PACAF Command Librarian, Dr. Arlene Luster, who was located at Hickam AFB in Hawaii. She called the occasional general meeting of librarians all over the Command of the various military services. At those meetings, I was able to explain what the University of Maryland Asian Division could and would do to help out with their academic needs. Those H-4 library visitation travels were educational as I learned about conditions at the different bases, the problems the local librarian might have such as staffing, collection issues concerning the local Maryland program and, of course, budget. Our collection development efforts profited from those meetings and really did help to fill in gaps in base library collections.

Other travels in the service of the Asian Division could be very interesting at times. In the summer of 1988, my wife and I accompanied two Asian Division faculty, Barbara McCall and Chester Ditto, to Xian, China to offer English language classes to the local polytechnical college's faculty and staff. Marcia thought to bring along some elementary school materials and current events magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* which the students much appreciated. Then there was my 1990 TDY to Kwajalein Atoll to check out its library (very tiny). Did you know there is a Macy's store on Kwajalein where, I was told, some forty military personnel were then stationed, out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? I did not, so I had to ask when I saw the legitimate Macy's sign that had been approved by Macy's years ago on the front of a very modest building. Otherwise, per the staff, there was no longer any relationship.

In 1991, I was tasked with going to Irkutsk and Vladivostok in Russia to administer the College English Language Test, given in sessions in each city to dozens of Russians. Bill Berglof should have gone but was not able to go, so I was tasked to make the trip. The test was intended to assess students for a prospective overseas Maryland program to be offered in those locations. The Vladivostok test had "helpers" assigned for the event who kept sneaking out of the auditorium with copies of the test. And this with a very large Ho Chi Minh banner hung on the wall overlooking it all. Once back to Yokota I did report how the helpers had "helped".

Casey Grimmer, my successor as Librarian of the Faculty Loan Library when I retired in 2001, was more than capable of carrying on its mission. His advanced technological/digital abilities were suited for the challenges of the new century. My going off into retirement in 2001 meant following Marcia to Germany where she had gotten a DoDDS transfer to Frankfurt am Main. Coincidentally and happily, my Maryland employment got us to Japan, the land of her samurai ancestors, while her transfer got us to my ancestors' country, Germany.

University of Maryland University College and Drs. Jones, Harbecke, and Arden made for a wonderful, educational, and well-traveled era in Marcia's and my lives, for which we are profoundly grateful. Operating in truly unusual circumstances to offer quality academic programs makes me proud to have been any part of the university. We salute UMUC which made all of this possible for us!