

Report of the “2008 Sino-U.S. Forum on Library Practices,” Part of the CALA 21st Century Librarian Seminar Series

Haiwang Yuan
September 22, 2008

As part of the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA) 21st Century Librarian Seminar Series, the 2008 Sino-U.S. Forum on Library Practices was held from July 11 to 13 at the Yunnan Dianchi Lake and Hot Spring Hotel in Kunming. The forum was co-sponsored by CALA and the Yunnan Province Library Work Commission and was organized by the Yunnan University of Science and Technology Library.

Attending the forum from the U.S. side was a delegation of seven, including Haiwang Yuan, (Board Member of CALA and Leader of the delegation, Western Kentucky University Libraries), Xueming Bao (Seton Hall University Library in New Jersey), Robert Fernekes (Georgia Southern University, Zach S. Henderson Library), Hong Miao (Marywood University Library, PA) and Liana Hong Zhou (Indiana University Kinsey Institute Library). With the delegation were President of American Library Association (ALA) James Rettig and his wife.

A hundred ninety librarians from as many as fifty institutions in China attended the forum. They included Beijing University, Tsinghua University, Zhejiang University, Tongji University, East China University of Science and Technology, Kunming University of Science and Technology; Yunnan Normal University; and Yunnan University, to list a few (*Appendix: complete list of the institutions*).

On the morning of July 11, 2008, the forum convened in the auditorium of the International Conference Center of the Yunnan Dianchi Lake and Hot Spring Hotel. He Fusheng, Associate Director of the Yunnan Province Office of Education, and Luo Lihui, Vice Chairman of the Yunnan Province Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Provost of Kunming University of Science and Technology, gave their opening remarks to welcome the librarians from both countries and wish the forum a success. After them, James Rettig, ALA President, gave his presentation titled “Challenges that Academic Libraries Face in a Networked Environment” and Zhu Qiang, Director of the Beijing University Library, presented his “Development and Transition of Academic Libraries—A Thought on Google Print.” After the lunch break, the forum resumed in the afternoon with Robert Fernekes presenting his topic “The Genius of US Academic Librarians: Collaboration, Creativity and Drive for Success.” He was followed by Jiang Airong, Associate Director of the Tsinghua University Library, whose topic was “The Environment of Technologies and Their Trend of Development: Our Thoughts and Measures to Face the Challenges” and Wan Yonglin, Director of Yunnan University Library, who dwelled upon the “Preservation and Development of Ethnic Minorities’ Intangible Heritages.”

The forum continued on the morning of July 12. Liana Hong Zhou first talked about how to “Secure Financial Future for Libraries and Special Collections: Building Endowments for the Kinsey Institute Library, Film and Archival Collections;” then Zhu Haikang, Executive

Associate Director of Zhejiang University Library, discussed “Challenges and Expectations: Prospects of the Development of Libraries in the Age of Information;” and lastly Shen Jinhua, Director of the Tongji University Library, explored “The Path that University Libraries Take to Serving Businesses.” The entire afternoon was devoted to a visit to the Ethnic Village in Kunming.

Haiwang Yuan began the third-day forum on July 13 with his presentation titled “The Requirements for Being Qualified Librarians in the 21st Century”. Following him were Sun Jiqing, Director of East China University of Science and Technology Library, whose presentation was named “Digital Resources: Planning, Evaluation, and Selection;” and Zhu Xi, Director of Yunnan Normal University, who theorized “The Significance of Special Collections in the Perspectives of Cultural Studies and Semeiology.” Hong Miao started the afternoon session by telling the attendees about “The Practice of Hiring in the U.S. Academic Libraries.” She was followed by Xueming Bao, who presented “The Architectural Requirement of Contemporary Libraries to Satisfy Their Needs for 24/7 Services;” and Yu Kexin, Director of Yunnan Finance University Library, who expounded “The Changing Trend of Institutional Organization in Relation with the Building of University Libraries.” The forum was concluded around 5 o’clock in the afternoon, when Zhang Zhonghua, Director of Kunming University of Science and Technology Library, gave his closing remarks.

Being present and speaking at the forum were several business representatives, including Wanfang Data, Beijing Adks Inc., Beijing Shushen Co. Ltd., Beijing Founder Apabi Technology Ltd., Tongfang National Knowledge Infrastructure, and Beijing Century SuperStar Electronic Ltd.

Led by Zhang Zhonghua, staff from the Kunming University of Science and Technology Library did a marvelous job in the forum’s organization and publicity. Posters of speakers’ portraits and biographies were visible at the conference site, the library and the hotel. Members of the CALA delegation were able to bring home their own posters respectively. The organizers invited several media from the Yunnan Province and Kunming. The forum planners arranged for the Yunnan Province TV channel to interview James Rettig, Robert Fernekes, and Haiwang Yuan before they left Kunming.

All the attendees of the forum had submitted their papers, which, along with the speakers’ presentations, were slated for publication in the form of a collection following the forum. Zhu Xi and Yang Lijun, both from Yunnan Normal University, the organizer of the 2007 forum, gave Haiwang Yuan five copies of a book they had published. The book contained the presentations given to that forum by Barbara Ford, Guoqing Li, Haiwang Yuan, Shuyong Jiang, and Lisa Zhao. Haiwang has brought the books back to the U.S. for distribution among the presenters/contributors.

Director Zhang Zhonghua had planned for the CALA delegation to visit the Honghe Prefecture in southern Yunnan, where the local government would expose them to a series of ethnic cultural events. Due to short notice and conflict of schedules on the part of the CALA delegates, the plan was aborted. The organizers took some of the delegates on a tour of the Stone

Forest on July 14 while some others were invited to the campus of Yunnan Finance University, where they were entertained by several of their librarians in one of their homes.

Accompanying Xue Mingbao was his father and Liana Hong Zhou, her mother and sister. Along with the CALA delegates, they all had a good time in Kunming. As the members of the delegates said in their reports, they all had an exceptional experience. Not only did they learn from the librarians in China, they also benefited from events such as sightseeing and visits to ethnic museums (with one in an ethnic restaurant). With the help of her friend, Liana Hong Zhou managed to purchase tickets for the interested delegates to see the “Impression of Yunnan,” show directed by the famed dancer Yang Liping.

As an important part of the forum, the CALA delegates met formally the representatives of the Chinese sponsors and organizers of the forum immediately after its conclusion. Representing CALA were Haiwang Yuan, Xueming Bao, Liana Hong Zhou, Hong Miao, and Robert Fernekcs. The Chinese side included Zhang Zhonghua, Director of Yunnan University of Science and Technology Library, Zhu Xi, Chair of the Yunnan Province Library Work Commission and Director of Yunnan Normal University Library, Wan Yonglin, Director of Yunnan University Library, Yu Kexin, Director of Yunnan Finance University Library, Wang Fawen, Associate Director of Yunnan Agricultural University Library on behalf of Director Lai Yi; Li Qun, Yunnan Dali College Library, and Yang Lijuan, Secretary of the Yunnan Province Library Work Commission. The Chinese representatives unanimously hailed the forum a great success and expressed their desire to continue the program. They also suggested that future forums would be held every other year to guarantee better organization and attendance. At the same time, they expected CALA to provide what help it could to facilitate Chinese librarians’ visit to the United States in the future. The CALA representatives agreed with their assessment of the forum and expressed their support for the continuance of the program, and promised to bring their request/wish back to the administration of CALA. At the meeting, the Yunnan Finance University Library, the Yunnan Agricultural University, and the Yunnan Dali College Library pledged to hold the next three forums in the following six years. These had been written into a letter of intent.

After the meeting, Haiwang Yuan visited Yunnan Nationalities University Library. Only then did the library's director Zhao Shilin realize that his library was left out in the letter of intent due to communication problems. It turned out that Zhu Xi and Wan Yonglin had tried to contact him during the forum but failed to get his response as he was busy relocating his library to a new campus. Zhao Shilin immediately contacted Zhu and Wan and straightened things out. Consequently, the letter of intent was revised to include Kunming Nationalities University Library in place of the Yunnan Dali College Library to be one of the planners of future Sino-U.S. library forums. The Chinese side signed the letter while the signature from CALA was pending.

All in all, the 2008 Sino-U.S. Forum on Library Practices in Yunnan was a great success. This is reflected from the survey done at the end of the forum. Unfortunately, by then, many of the key attendees such as Zhu Qiang, Director of the Beijing University Library, had left due to their busy schedules. Only 71 of the 190 attendees were present to fill out the questionnaire (*Appendix II: the questionnaire*). In summery, all the 71 subjects of the investigation agreed that the forum should continue. Over 70% of the subjects were professors/research librarians and

associate professors/research librarians. 45% worked 20 years or more in their libraries; 12% worked over 15 years but less than 20 years; and another 53% worked less than 15 years. Almost all the subjects thought of the forum as informative. Over 90% considered it to be relevant to their jobs, comprehensive in content, legible, well-paced, and of the right length. Eighteen percent of the attendees surveyed wished that the forum could be more interesting and applicable. And 17% wanted it to be more interactive. Of the 71 subjects in total, 35 gave the forum the highest rating (5 or highly satisfactory) under the category of "Overall impression." Another 34 gave it a 4 rating (satisfactory). And 2 rated it as mediocre (3). In answer to the open-ended questions, many of the subjects suggested that printouts of our presentations be distributed before the forum. There were a number of complaints about the lack of interactivity during the forum. Some proposed having separate sessions at the same time so that more people could speak. A number of people would like to see more activities in the evening so that librarians could have a chance for socializing and networking. One asked that no repeats of CALA members appear in the future forums. Most, of course, spoke highly of the forum. One, for example, commented, "Very successful forum! Speakers are all well-known, capable of representing the best in their fields." The buzzword in the comment is "eye-opening."

As leader of the CALA delegation to the 2008 Sino-U.S. Forum on Library Practices in Yunnan, I would like to thank CALA for giving me the opportunity to lead a wonderful team of experts in their respective fields, with President James Rettig included. I am very thankful to the team members for their understanding, cooperation, diligence, wisdom, and excellent performance, without which the forum wouldn't be such a success. All the members of the CALA delegation, including James Rettig, remained throughout the speeches at the forum from July 11 through 13. Although it was mentally and physically demanding to undertake the task of simultaneously translating all the speeches (except mine) for three days running, I still felt spirited. My enthusiasm was attributed to the wonderful team I was leading and to our superb hosts who had gone to great length to make us feel at home. Like all the other members of the CALA delegation, I do appeal to the administration of CALA to consider the desire of the Yunnan partners so that our forums will continue and succeed in the future.

While the Chinese Librarians went to visit their homes in China, Robert Fernekes returned to Beijing, and James Rettig and his wife went on the tour of China that James claimed had left them a deep impression.

Appendix I. Complete List of the Institutions Attending the Forum:

Beijing University
Tsinghua University
Zhejiang University
Tongji University
East China University of Science and Technology
Kunming University of Science and Technology
Yunnan Normal University
Yunnan University
Yunnan University of Finance and Economics
University of Science and Technology Beijing
East China Normal University
Northeast University
Xiamen University
Central South University
University of Shanghai for Science and Technology
Chongqing University
Guizhou University
Inner Mongolia University for Science and Technology
Guangxi Nationalities University
Henan University for Science and Technology
Dalian Medical University
Nanjing Normal University
Chongqing Medical University
Lanzhou Communication University
Capital Institute for Physical Education
Chinese Opera Institute
Guangdong Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute
Pingdingshan Institute of Technology
Xichang College
Dongguan Institute of Science and Technology
Jiaxing College
Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences
Yunnan Province Science and Technology Information Research Institute
Yunnan Agricultural University
Yunnan Nationalities University
Kunming Medical College
Southwest Forestry College
Yunnan Police College
Yunnan Arts University
Kunming Army Academy
Yunnan University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
Party School of the Yunnan Committee of the Communist Party of China
Kunming Metallurgy College
Kunming University, Kunshi Road Campus

Yunnan Radio & TV University
Honghe Prefecture Library
Qujing Normal University
Dali University
Yuxi Teachers University
Honghe University
Chuxiong Normal University
Chuxiong College of Applied Technology
Yuxi Municipal Library
Gejiu Municipal Library
Yunnan Vocational and Technical College of Agriculture
Yunnan College of Business Management
Yunnan Medical Vocational College
Yunnan School of Finance and Economics
Yunnan Vocational and Technical College of Forestry
Yunnan Vocational and Technical College of National Defence
Yuxi Vocational and Technical College of Agriculture

Appendix II. The Questionnaire:

2008 中美图书馆实务论坛美方代表团讲演满意度调查表

2008 Sino-U.S. Libraries Forum—Evaluation of the Speakers from CALA

2008年7月11日—13日

感谢您能够抽出您宝贵的时间参加本研讨会，希望您能有所收获。如果您能再花费几分钟填写以下表格，我们将不胜感激。您的评估有助于我们扬长避短，把今后类似的活动办得更好。

您的情况

从 日到 13 日参加了研讨会 Attended from July to 13th	职称： Position:	工作年限： Years at Job:
-----------------------------------------------	------------------	------------------------

5 分为最满意；0 分为最不满意。请打分：

5 stands for most satisfactory; 0, least satisfactory. Please grade:

讲演	5	4	3	2	1	0
内容丰富 (Informative)						
与工作相关 (Relevant to Job)						
实用 (Applicable)						
难度适中 (Comprehensible)						
有趣味 (Interesting)						
清晰易懂 (Legible)						
速度适中 (Well-paced)						
时间掌握恰当 (Right Length of Time)						
互动性强 (Interactive)						
实用 (Applicable)						
总体印象 (General)						

Impression)						
-------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

1. 请只选择一项 (Please check one of the selections):

选项	打钩
1. 赞成继续举办类似活动并原意推荐给其他同事	
2. 不赞成继续举行类似活动，也不愿意推荐给其他同事	

2. 对本次论坛的意见和建议:

3. 对未来类似活动的建议: