



A New Era for Music Librarians in Asia: Collaborations and Challenges

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Part 1 – Building of a Japanese and Korean Contemporary Music Collection

The Music Department of Hong Kong Baptist University is the oldest among all tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. To support primarily the undergraduate and masters' programs, the Library has been actively collecting contemporary music by mainland Chinese composers and Chinese American composers. Last year, aiming to inspire students to music of neighboring countries, the Music Department requested the Library to embark on building a Japanese and a Korean contemporary music collection.

This proved to be more complicated than imagined. To start with, no one in the Department or the Library are familiar with the repertoire (or the composers) in these areas. Nonetheless, through the assistance of IAML Japan and the networks built in previous IAML congresses, 10 Japanese contemporary composers were identified and relevant bibliographies and library catalogs were consulted. Communication was also established with a music store in Tokyo to source the scores needed. This experience has shown the power of collaboration across two countries, and without the IAML as the bridge and platform, such collaboration could not have come as easily as now.

Part 2 – What's Best for Our Users? The Question of Romanization for Chinese/Japanese/Korean language materials in RILM

In recent years, materials in Chinese, Japanese and Korean (CJK) flourish in RILM. This does not only show RILM's attempt to encompass international content, but may also be attributed to the increasing interest in research about these countries and the countries' desire to make research more visible to a global community.

For years, RILM follows the Romanization / transliteration treatment of non-Latin scripts when handling CJK materials and this has been the general practice adopted by the Western world in the 19th and most of the 20th centuries. Even now, Pinyin (for Chinese), Romaji (for Japanese) and Romanization (for Korean) are added to the title, author and journal name fields in RILM. Nevertheless, this Romanization merely projects the pronunciation of words and fails to present their precise meanings. Worse of all, Romanization often creates confusion than help especially among personal names. So, does Romanization really assist one in finding and locating research materials? Especially in the 21st century when computer systems and search engines have advanced in such an exponential speed that can support sophisticated searching of a wide range of languages, is Romanization as essential as it used to be?

Nowadays, displaying non-Latin characters are no longer a challenge with the emergence of Unicode and the expanded repertoire of MARC-8 and UTF-8. Typing the Romanized form in the search box is also not the only way to do a CJK search as all computers now provide a good range of input methods for different languages. Using the computer's input method to type in the real CJK words could in fact largely improve the accuracy and efficiency of a search. Therefore, this is perhaps the time to re-think what is the best for our users!