

English-language Serials in Pre-revolution China:

A Metadata Analysis

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Background

A number of English-language newspapers and periodicals were published in China from early 19th century till the communist revolution in 1949. Mainly published by the British and Americans living in China prior to 1949, these serials are invaluable primary sources because they provided first-hand accounts of westerners' life and activities in China and also contributed to the western perceptions of China.

At this point, it is difficult to say exactly how many English-language serials were published in pre-revolution China, but *A Research Guide to China-coast Newspapers*, a publication from the East Asian Research Center at Harvard University, lists 57 newspaper titles from 1822 to 1911, so the total number of newspapers and periodicals in the whole pre-revolution era may be in hundreds. Some of these publications have been used by researchers, but many of them may be still unknown to the academic community.

In this project, I will treat the whole range of English-language serials in pre-revolution China as a genre and systematically collect and analyze the information about them. Compared to previous studies related to these publications, this project has a broader scope and a different focus. Previous studies usually only looked into individual

sources or a subset of these publications, while my project attempts to examine the whole range of English-language serials. Most previous researchers were primarily interested in the information contained *in* the publications (i.e. data), but my focus here is the information *about* these publications (i.e. metadata). A sample list of metadata types for these serials is in the attachment.

This project has two purposes. The main purpose is to demonstrate the full range of these serials and their availability at Yale libraries to the academic community, which ultimately may help increase their usage by researchers. In addition, I want to experiment with analyzing the metadata from the perspective of print culture; hopefully we can uncover the correlation between this particular genre of publication and the social contexts in early modern China. The expected outcome of this project is a publishable paper, in which I will provide a bibliography of these serials with their availability at Yale being noted and summarize the results from the metadata analysis. The bibliography may also be put on the web site of the East Asia Library.

Methodology

This study will examine the English-language non-missionary serials published in pre-revolution China. The missionary publications in pre-revolution China are different from non-religious publications in many aspects and they have been more adequately studied, so they are excluded from this project. I intend to implement this project in the following three phases. The first two phases will involve a student assistant, who will conduct data collection and analysis under my direction.

Phase 1: Collecting the metadata

1a. Search union catalogs and import records into EndNote

Union catalogs, RLIN/Eureka and OCLC/WorldCat, contain some essential metadata about these serials, but there is no straightforward way to locate these serial records. We will start by searching subjects “China” and “newspapers” (or “periodicals”) with the limitation on language (English) and date (pre-1949) in OCLC and RLIN. After the searches, it may be necessary to examine the records manually and exclude the duplicates or odd balls. Searches like this may not be exhaustive, so we then double check with an authoritative English-Chinese dictionary of proper names in early modern China to see if additional serial titles are listed there. If an additional serial title is found in the dictionary, we then manually search this title in RLIN and WorldCat to retrieve its record. This process will be tedious, but after going through it, we will be more confident about the completeness of our coverage. We then import the records retrieved from RLIN and OCLC into EndNote (a reference management program) and create two separate EndNote files.

1b. Compare RLIN and OCLC records in EndNote

We can then compare the RLIN and OCLC records in EndNote and try to resolve any inconsistency by looking into the original record and/or physically examining the source material. This way, we will have a consistent and reliable metadata record for each serial title in EndNote format.

1c. Verify Yale holdings for each title

Because all these serials have been discontinued, verifying their holding at Yale will involve searching both Orbis and the card catalog. The Yale holding information can then be noted in the EndNote file.

1d. Find information about publishers from other sources

The information about the publishers (their name, country of origin, and occupation) may not be available in union catalogs. For serials that are in Yale collections, we can look into the material to find such information. For materials not owned by Yale, it is necessary to examine other sources. These sources include biographies of westerners who lived in China, dictionaries, books on the history of journalism and publication in China, knowledgeable librarians and faculty members, and the web. We can then add such information into the EndNote file.

1e. Produce an annotated bibliography of these serials and upload it to the East Asia Library web site

When all the relevant information is in the EndNote file, we can generate an annotated bibliography of these publications from the EndNote file. This bibliography will include all the metadata for each serial title as well as the Yale holding information. At this stage, we can put the bibliography on the East Asia Library web site.

Phase 2. Analyzing the metadata

We can then input the metadata into an Excel spreadsheet and analyze the metadata from there. More specifically, the questions I seek to answer from data analysis will include but not limit to the following:

How were these English-language serials distributed geographically? Why?

What was the general trend of this type of publication in terms of their total number? Did the total number go up all the time since early 19th century and then fall at 1949 or else?

Did the percentage of American-owned serials increase over time, as the increase of American influence might predict?

Did the percentage of Chinese-owned serials increase over time, as the increase of Chinese nationalism might predict?

Answers to these questions will place these publications in their historical contexts and demonstrate the full potential of these publications as primary sources.

Phase 3: Write up the findings

Timeline

I plan to complete this project by the end of year 2004. I plan to have a student assistant working with me for 6 hours a week during phase 1 and phase 2. The timeline is as follows:

Phase	Timeframe
Phase 1: Data collection	Mid-January through March (10 weeks)
Phase 2: Data analysis	April through Mid-May (6 weeks)
Phase 3: Writing up	Through December (7 months)

Expenses

The following expenses are necessary, but some of them may be covered by the East Asia Library. The total amount I am requesting from SCOPA is \$1221.60.

Item	Requesting from SCOPA	Notes
EndNote version 7	\$180	List price at CDW
Student Assistant hours	\$1041.60	1 Assistant at Level 4 (\$10.85 per hour) X 6 hours/week X 16 weeks
Other office supplies (paper, pen, toner, etc.)	\$0	Departmental
Total	\$1221.60	

Benefits

This project has both immediate and future benefits to Yale University Library. The immediate benefit is that we at the East Asia Library will be able to better serve our patrons with an increased knowledge of these primary sources and their availability at Yale. This project also has the potential to expand into a larger project in the future, through which we may bring outside funding into the library to index and digitize these publications.

This project can also bring direct and indirect benefits to the East Asian collections beyond Yale. My preliminary literature search indicates that there is no up-to-date reference work for these English-language serials, so the paper I intend to publish may well become an essential reference for all East Asian collections in North America. Furthermore, this project explores a generally under-served area: English-language materials published in East Asia. Librarians at the East Asian collections in North America tend to concentrate on materials in East Asian languages (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean), while the materials published in English in East Asia may be neglected. But the reality is there are fair amount of English publications all over East Asia, both

historical and contemporary. This project, with its expected outcome, may raise the awareness about the English-language publications in East Asia, so they can be better collected, preserved and utilized.

Attachment: A Sample List of Metadata Types

Type	Source
Name of the Publication	Union Catalogs
Name of the Publisher	Reference Materials, etc.
Publisher's Country of Origin (Britain, U.S. or China)	Reference Materials, etc.
Publisher's Occupation	Reference Materials, etc.
Year of Beginning	Union Catalogs
Year of Ceasing Publishing	Union Catalogs
City of Publishing	Union Catalogs