

## Collection Development in the Digital Age: Changing Roles of the National Library of China

Ben Gu

Director, Foreign Acquisitions & Cataloging Department  
National Library of China

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**The National Library of China** (NLC) was founded in 1909. With three buildings respectively built in 1931, 1987 and 2008, it celebrated its centenary anniversary in 2009.

### Outline of the NLC's Collections

The NLC has a large and comprehensive collection, with materials printed or digital, in Chinese or in foreign languages. As of the end of 2010, the NLC has a total collection of 29 million volumes/items, with an annual addition of about 2 million volumes/items, ranking the fifth among national libraries all over the world. One of the earliest collections in the NLC is that of Royal Jixidian (缉熙殿) in the Southern Song dynasty. The earliest-dated collection is that of the inscriptions on animal bones and tortoise shells in the Shang dynasty (about 3000 years ago). The NLC's special collections of treasures include a million volumes/items of rare books, epigraphs and rubbings, ancient maps and atlas, Dunhuang scrolls, revolutionary historical documents, local histories and genealogies, and publications on China or by Chinese authors. Among earliest editions in foreign languages, there are incunabula printed in Europe during 1473-77. The NLC defines its Chinese rare books as books published before the 18th century and its foreign rare books as books published before the 20th century.

The NLC holds the largest collection of Chinese publications in the world, and aims to collect all books published in China. The NLC also puts emphasis on the acquisition of gray literature in China, and has a large collection of publications in library and information science, a center of Chinese yearbooks and a special collection of publications of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau regions. The NLC is a depository library of Chinese doctoral dissertations, recognized by the Committee of Academic Degrees, the State Council.

The NLC holds a collection of publications in foreign languages dating from the 1920s, the largest of its kind in China. It could be traced back to books from church libraries, libraries in early foreign settlements, etc. As one of the depository libraries of UN publications, the NLC collects publications of international organizations and foreign governments, such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and International Civil Aviation Organization.

With the development of media and information technology, the NLC has been collecting numerous items of microforms, AV materials and multimedia resources. In the digital age, the NLC is digitizing its special collections and subscribing to some database of electronic serials and monographs.

### Collection Development Policy

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The collections of the National Library of China can be divided into four general categories, namely, preservation copies, basic collection copies, reading copies and lending copies. The preservation copies are collected for long-term preservation and are not for loan. The basic collection copies can be circulated for internal reading. Both the preservation copies and the basic collection copies comprise the permanent assets of the library. The lending copies are acquired for lending purposes, and can be discarded according to their usages. In principle all the first copy of Chinese publications are considered to be preservation copies, the second copies are considered to be basic collection copies, and the remaining copies are considered to be reading or lending copies. In terms of the foreign languages collection, the NLC has one copy for most purchased titles.

The National Library of China acquires its new Chinese language acquisitions through legal deposit, donation and purchasing, and new foreign publications through purchasing, donation and international exchange. The Library has collection coordination and resource sharing cooperation agreements with the Library of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, the Medical Library of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, the China Geological Library and the PLA Academy of Military Sciences, that each library focuses on its own collection respectively on agricultural sciences, medical sciences, geological sciences and military science.

The foreign languages collection contains wide coverage of geographical areas and diversity of languages. There are publications in more than 130 languages in the library.

In principle the collection development policy of the library is "Completeness for Chinese publications and quality for foreign publications", which means that the library should collect all Chinese publications and best foreign publications. This practice will enable the NLC to become an international center of Chinese publications and all publications about China and the Chinese published around the world. The NLC plans to further develop its collection containing traditional characteristics in Chinese ancient books, Orientalia, history of arts, archeology, Dunhuang scrolls, natural history, genealogy, local chronicles and yearbooks.

Provided that there are enough financial and human resources, the NLC will consider collecting all materials in China, and become a national depository of printed memories.

### **Chinese Printed Publications**

The National Library of China receives all legal deposit copies of Chinese publications, and then classifies them into the following categories: permanent collection copies, temporary reading and reading/lending copies. In addition, the library purchases additional copies of Chinese monographs for reading and lending purposes. The library collects all Chinese doctoral dissertations and post-doctoral research papers, and selectively collects Chinese master's theses and overseas doctoral dissertations on China or by Chinese authors. The library puts emphasis on the collection of scholarly books published in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau regions, and tries to collect all books published in these regions.

In China, there isn't any legal deposit law, but there are some regulations promulgated by the State Council and the General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP) under the State Council. According to these regulations, legal deposit copies of books, journals, newspapers and A/V materials should be sent to the GAPP (1 copy), the National Depository Library (NDL) under GAPP (1 copy) and the National Library of China (NLC) (3 copies). However, these regulations are sometimes not very effective.

Because the NLC is not responsible for the ISBN registration and there is no legal deposit law, the NLC is very hard to acquire all the new publications of China. Publishers give their top priority to the legal deposit copies to GAPP and then to the NLC. Acquisitions librarians have to contact publishers every year to remind them to send legal deposit copies and prepare reports to GAPP, so that GAPP can pay more attention to the

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NLC legal deposit issues in their management of publications. The legal deposit rate of books is about 70%, not including children's books, juvenile books, school textbooks and teacher's manuals. To make the collection and the bibliographical databases as complete as possible, the NLC has to pay extra money to purchase books which are not received from the legal depository.

In recent years, the NLC discusses the legal deposit issues regularly with GAPP to ask them to implement related regulations more strictly. We expect to see a higher legal deposit rates in the future. We are also appealing to draft a national library act, which should look into the legal deposit issues.

### Foreign Printed Publications

The National Library of China has four levels of acquisition priorities for printed materials published in foreign countries according to the contents of the materials. The highest level is the Comprehensive Collection of all publications in the following aspects:

- Works by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, and other notable communist leaders;
- Publications on China and the Chinese;
- Works by heads of foreign governments or leaders of major political parties;
- Works by major prize-winners, such as Nobel prize winners;
- Important works in science and technology;
- Works by notable thinkers in the humanities and social sciences;
- International laws and agreements, constitutions of various countries, important laws and regulations;
- Important comprehensive encyclopedias, dictionaries, yearbooks, etc.

Then, there are the second level for the Key Collection of important academic works, such as overseas Chinese publications and foreign translations of Chinese books, works by overseas Chinese, representative works of major literary and artistic schools, monographs in library and information science, books relating to the neighboring countries; the third level for the Selective Collection of some textbooks, literary works and popular books; and the fourth (the lowest) level for the general children's books, low-level textbooks, patents, calendars, technical reports, etc., which are not to be collected in the library.

During 1949-1978, the NLC focused its collection development on materials in science and technology, which accounts for about 80% of its collections in foreign languages. Since 1978, especially since the mid-1990s, NLC has been adjusting its foreign collections, and puts emphasis on materials in social sciences and the humanities now.

In recent years, the NLC is considering to expand its foreign collections in social sciences and the humanities. For example, the NLC reduces the subscriptions to journals in sciences and technologies in printed formats, and instead increases the subscriptions to databases in these fields to meet the needs of users, and to avoid duplication of printed journals collected by NSTL (National Science and Technology Library) and other library consortia. In the meantime, NLC is substantially increasing the subscriptions to printed journals in social sciences and the humanities for national strategic purposes.

In the Foreign Acquisitions & Cataloging Department, there are staff members who have the following foreign language skills: English, Japanese, Russian, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Arabian, Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi, Thai, Mongolian, etc. They are responsible for the acquisitions and cataloguing of all foreign materials, which have a total of 3.5 million volumes now in 87 languages.

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## Digital Resources and Other Types of Materials

The National Library of China puts emphasis on the collection of ancient Chinese books, modern deluxe or limited editions, modern local chronicles and genealogies, materials relating to Dunhuang grottoes, manuscripts of notable authors, documents in the languages of ethnic minorities before 1911, photographs of the heads of the government or famous international figures.

For audio/video materials, the library selectively collects representative works in politics, economics, history, geography, culture, society and arts according to the demand of the users.

For microform materials, the library collects microform reproductive items of Chinese periodicals, documents on China and the Chinese, materials of the UN and some foreign governments, documents related to the Far East.

For electronic publications, the library receives legal deposit copies, selectively purchases reference works, ancient books, important abstract and index databases, important full-text electronic journals according to the needs of the users.

According to the Copyright Law and related regulations, library can have digital copies of titles with printed copies in the library's holdings, and can provide electronic reading services inside the library. The NLC is digitizing Chinese materials step by step according to priorities, and making efforts to solve copyright problems for new Chinese publications. The digital documents without copyright problems are provided for public use. Other digital materials are just for preservation of provided for limited use.

As of December 2010, the NLC has a total volume of 480 TB of digital resources, including 1.6 million of electronic books, 44,000 titles of electronic journals, 3100 titles of newspapers, 2.8 million of dissertations, 2.4 million of conference articles, 515,000 audio clips, 810,000 hours of video materials, 105 Chinese databases and 114 foreign databases.

The NLC provides the remote access to 27 Chinese databases and 5 foreign databases, the public Internet access to 5 children's databases, and the access to 2 foreign databases with national licenses. If the technical problems of user authentication are solved, the NLC will provide the remote access to more databases, thus serving to users all around China.

The following "All Characteristic Databases" are available for open access via the NLC's web site:

- Chinese Memory: <http://www.nlc.gov.cn/hxjy/index.htm>



- Oracle bones
- Rubbings



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- Doctoral Dissertations (Limited access): <http://res4.nlc.gov.cn/home/index.trs?channelid=3>



- Chinese Books (Limited access): <http://res4.nlc.gov.cn/home/index.trs?channelid=2>

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The screenshot shows the National Library of China (NLC) website interface. At the top, there are logos for the National Library of China and the National Digital Library of China, along with user login fields. The main heading is '馆藏中文图书' (Collection of Chinese Books). Below this, there are navigation tabs for '特色资源' (Special Resources), '中文图书' (Chinese Books), '博士论文' (Doctoral Theses), '民国专栏' (Republic of China Special Column), '音视频' (Audio/Video), '数字方本' (Digital Texts), '图片专栏' (Image Special Column), '中国学' (Sinology), '古籍特藏' (Ancient Books Special Collection), and '全库检索' (Full Database Search). A search bar is prominently displayed with fields for '题名' (Title), '作者' (Author), '出版社' (Publisher), and '出版年份' (Publication Year). Below the search bar, there are buttons for '检索' (Search), '高级检索' (Advanced Search), and '清空' (Clear). The main content area displays a grid of book covers with their titles, authors, ISBNs, and publishers. A sidebar on the right lists various book categories such as '语言、文学' (Language, Literature), '政治、法律' (Politics, Law), '马克思主义、列宁主义、毛泽东思想' (Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought), etc.

- Platform for cross database search of All Characteristic Databases:  
<http://res4.nlc.gov.cn/home/index.tr?channelid=19>

The screenshot shows the National Library of China website interface for '特色资源' (Special Resources). The main heading is '特色资源 全库检索' (Special Resources Full Database Search). Below this, there are navigation tabs for '特色资源' (Special Resources), '中文图书' (Chinese Books), '博士论文' (Doctoral Theses), '民国专栏' (Republic of China Special Column), '音视频' (Audio/Video), '数字方本' (Digital Texts), '图片专栏' (Image Special Column), '中国学' (Sinology), '古籍特藏' (Ancient Books Special Collection), and '全库检索' (Full Database Search). A search bar is prominently displayed with a 'SEARCH' button and a dropdown menu for '题名' (Title). Below the search bar, there are checkboxes for '中文图书' (Chinese Books), '博士论文' (Doctoral Theses), '民国专栏' (Republic of China Special Column), '音视频' (Audio/Video), '数字方本' (Digital Texts), and '图片特藏' (Image Special Collection). Below the search bar, there are buttons for '检索' (Search) and '高级检索' (Advanced Search). The main content area features a circular diagram with the characters '全', '库', '检', '索' (Full, Database, Search, Query) and a text box describing the library's digital resources. The text box states: '国家图书馆自2000年开始进行馆藏资源的数字化加工工作, 目前自建数字资源内容涉及中文电子书、博士论文、民国文献、在线讲座、在线展览、甲骨文拓片与甲骨片、敦煌文献、金石拓片、地方志、西夏文献、年画、老照片、音像资源等, 包括文字、图像、音频、视频等多种类型, 截至2010年底, 数字资源总量已达480TB, 其中全文数据库内容达2亿页。' (The National Library of China has been carrying out digital processing of its collection resources since 2000. Currently, the self-built digital resources cover Chinese e-books, doctoral theses, Republic of China literature, online lectures, online exhibitions, oracle bone inscriptions, Dunhuang literature, stone rubbings, local gazetteers, Xixia literature, woodblock prints, old photographs, audio-visual resources, etc., including text, images, audio, video, and other types. As of the end of 2010, the total amount of digital resources has reached 480TB, with the full-text database content reaching 200 million pages.)

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## Conclusions

With the development of the National Digital Library Project, the National Library of China will collect more digital publications and promote the dissemination of Chinese publications to the world. The collection development policy will be revised in regular basis to reflect the latest development of librarianship in China. However, the general principle will not be changed: to preserve our cultural heritage and to provide service to the users.

Appendix I:

**Table: Collections of NLC**

Category	Language	Sub-Category	Volume/Item
<b>Monographs</b>	Chinese	General	5,413,505 (Vols.)
		General Ancient Monographs	1,648,206 (Vols.)
		Monographs Published in Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc.	200,068 (Vols.)
		Subtotal	7,261,779 (Vols.)
	Foreign	Western Monographs	1,895,277 (Vols.)
		Russian and Related Monographs	622,147 (Vols.)
		Japanese and Some Asian Monographs	1,041,785 (Vols.)
		Subtotal	3,559,209 (Vols.)
		Subtotal for Monographs	10,820,988 (Vols.)
<b>Journals</b>	Chinese	Chinese Journals (51463 Titles)	6,701,841 (Vols.)
	Foreign	Foreign Journals (47207 Titles)	6,631,305 (Vols.)
		Subtotal for Journals	13,333,146 (Vols.)
<b>Newspapers</b>	Chinese	Chinese Newspapers (7624Titles)	119,097 (Bound Vols.)
	Foreign	Foreign Newspapers (1708 Titles)	93,206 (Bound Vols.)
		Subtotal for Newspapers	212,303 (Bound Vols.)
<b>Special Collections</b>	Rare and Ancient Books		282,300 (Vols./Items)
	New Rare Books		14,918 (Vols./Items)
	Foreign Rare Books		35,638 (Vols./Items)
	Chinese Maps		96,861 (Vols./Items)
	Foreign Maps		49,306 (Vols./Items)
	Photographs		99,646 (Items/Vols.)
	Prints		64,581 (Items)
	Rubbings		304,265 (Items)
	Inscription-Related Books		10,080 (Items)
	Paintings		644 (Items)
	Manuscripts		86,178 (Items)
	Letters		2,930 (Vols./Items)
	Documents in Ethnic Minorities Languages		159,781 (Vols./Items)
	Deluxe Editions		7,463 (Vols./Items)
	Other Special Collections		299 (Items)
	Materials in Library Science		41,575 (Vols.)
Dunhuang and Turpan Materials		21,255 (Vols./Items)	

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		Genealogies and Local Chronicles	53,949 (Vols./Items)
		Other Chinese Materials	1,006,990 (Vols.)
		Foreign Government Publications	56,985 (Vols./Items)
		UN and Related Publications	560,897(Vols./Items)
		Subtotal for Special Collections	2,956,541 (Vols./Items)
<b>Microforms</b>		Microfilms	100,750 (Reels)
		Microfiches	1,308,207 (Sheets)
		Subtotal for Microforms	1,408,957 (Reels/Sheets)
<b>A/V Materials</b>		Audio Tapes	19,708 (Reels/Cassettes)
		CD	40,224 (Items)
		Stereo Records	967 (Items)
		MP3	2,860 (CDs)
		Video Tapes	14,608 (Reels/Cassettes)
		Laser Disc	1,880 (Items)
		VCD	85,829 (Items)
		VHD	260 (Items)
		DVD	38,037 (Items)
		Subtotal for A/V Materials	204,373 (Items)
		Subtotal for Electronic Materials	42,895 (Items)
		<b>Collection Total (As of December 2010)</b>	<b>28,979,203(Vols./Items)</b>

## Appendix II

Photo Gallery – The National Library of China (Photos courtesy of the Author)

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1. NLC's first building built in 1931, now the venue of the Branch Library beside the Beihai Park



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2. NLC's second building built in 1987



3. NLC's third building (Phase II) built in 2008



4. Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature (四库全书)

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5. Modern Reference Books



6. Reading Room of the New Building (Phase II).