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From the “Library of Chinese students in France” to the “Chinese collections of the Lyon Municipal Library”

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Abstract

Still nowadays, it is not common to find in France a Chinese collection held by a municipal library. Among the existing, the one of Lyon Municipal Library (Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon) is the sole to have preserved and have treated a collection outstanding from several points of view, which constitutes one of the finest jewels of the second Rare Books and Manuscripts Department in France, from whom the Chinese Department itself depends.

If our holdings counts today almost 60 000 documents, its origin is strictly connected to the transfer, begun in 1974, of the library of the former Lyon Sino-French Institute (Institut Franco-chinois de Lyon, 里昂中法大学 Li'ang Zhong-Fa daxue) (1921-1946), along with its archives.

The history of our collections witnesses in a rather peculiar way the cultural and technological interflow between East and West, touching on a diachronical plan, two different fields: education and librarianship.

After an historical overview, I shall present the main axes of the policy conducted on such a specialized collection by the first public library in France, with reference to the treatment and valorisation of the holdings in the era of new technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Before introducing the topic of my paper, I shall refer briefly to the general context of France, concerning collections in Chinese language. Excepting materials held by the National Library, universities or research centres, Chinese collections in public (i.e. municipal) libraries are quite uncommon, and even rarer outside Paris area.

The case of the Chinese collections of the Lyon Municipal Library seems to be unique and closely related to the history of the relationships the city has had with the Far-East, and particularly China, for many centuries.

Originally created in the 1970's, these holdings have been increasing steadily: with almost 60 000 items, among which 800 titles or so of serials and about 25 linear meters of archives, nowadays it is the only Chinese library of such a size in French province accessible to anybody, whether they know Chinese or not¹.

Comparing to other Chinese collections in French municipal libraries, especially created to loan items of general interest to Chinese-reading users, our Chinese Department is the sole to have treated a special collection, outstanding from several points of view. It represents nowadays one of the jewels of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department² of the Lyon Municipal Library, which is the second most important in France, the first being at French National Library.

This collection, created on the basis of the former library of the Lyon Sino-French Institute (Li'ang Zhongfa daxue 里昂中法大学) (1921-1946), is precisely the constituent core of our Chinese Department. Its history witnesses in a rather peculiar way the cultural and technological interflow between East and West, touching on a diachronical plan, two different fields: education and librarianship. But I had better to start from the very beginning.

¹ For a general overview, see Chinese Department Internet pages at http://www.bm-lyon.fr/trouver/Fonds_chinois/Fonds_chinois.htm.

² For further information, see the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department Internet pages at http://www.bm-lyon.fr/trouver/Fonds_ancien/Fonds_ancien.htm.

THE CHINESE STUDENTS AT LYON SINO-FRENCH INSTITUTE (1921-1946)

I have just mentioned the close ties between Lyon and the Far-East. Along the centuries the city has played an important role in the political, economic, and cultural relationships within France and China, and this for several reasons: the economic exchanges connected with the silk trade; its historical role in editing and printing the first texts illustrating Chinese empire as it was related by the first Jesuit missionaries – materials richly represented in our Rare books and Manuscripts Department; or its role in the missionary renewal in 19th century, especially in China.

In the modern period, cultural exchanges between Lyon and China are witnessed by the foundation in Lyon of a Chinese university.

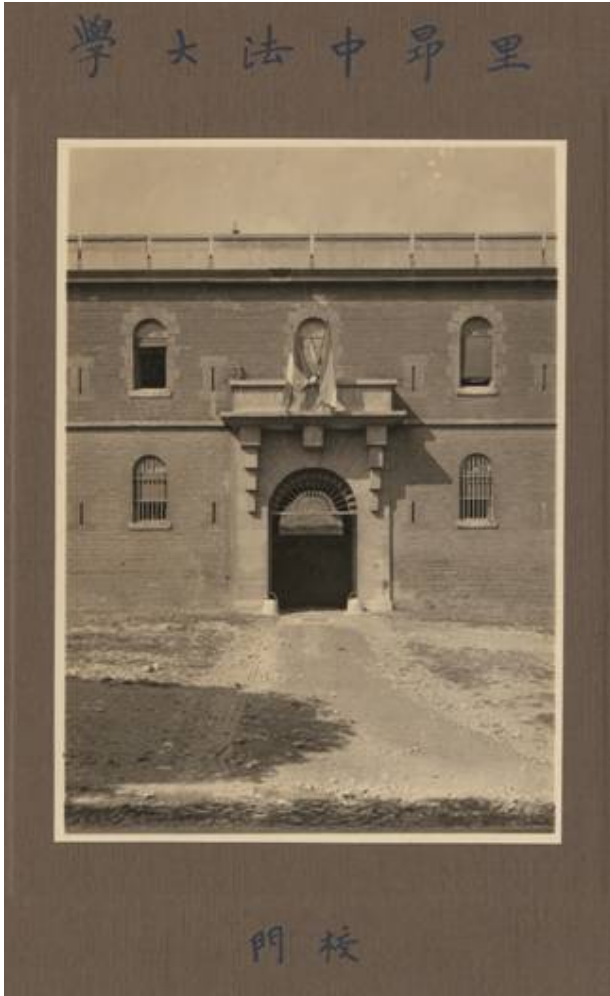


Fig. 1: Main entrance of the Lyon Sino-French Institute

The Lyon Sino-French Institute (1921-1946) can be seen as the last and successful form of Chinese presence in France in the first half of the 20th century – after the arrival of countless Chinese coolies in order to supply manpower in French factories – and of the movement known as “Study and work movement” (Qingong jianxue yundong 勤工俭学运动)³.

This is a quite limited point of view on the matter, stressing the French perspective. Seeing it from a Chinese point of view, rather different concerns would appear. Facing Western penetration in Chinese territories, realizing the cultural and technological gap existing between China and Western countries, the need to form an elite able to bring the ancient Chinese empire into the era of modernity, all these elements contributed to development, since the end of the 19th century, of a “study abroad movement” (liuxue 留学). Supported by the most advanced and illuminated personalities in China, whether in political or intellectual circles, the most preferred destination was Japan, followed by U.S.A. and Europe. For the

³ Among the reasons of its founding, I shall indicate here the existence of a chair on Far-Eastern Civilisation at Lyon University since 1900, the strong support the project has enjoyed by Lyon University authorities as well as distinguished citizens (Edouard Herriot (1872-1957), mayor of Lyon, Marius Moutet (1876-1968), deputy of the Rhone Region, Paul Joubin (1862- ?), Lyon University Dean, and last but not the least Maurice Courant (1865-1935), Professor of Far-Eastern Civilisation of Lyon University). Moreover, Lyon was preferred to Paris as students here would be less exposed to political activities, which would distract them from studies.... This point seemed to be very important to the Chinese counterparts, Li Shizeng 李石曾 (1881-1973), Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940), and Chu Minyi 褚民誼 (1884-1946), the well known intellectuals of that time, who conceived the project and worked very hard to realize it.

latter, France was the most attractive, not only for the high quality level of its educational system, but also for political “studies”, owing to the revolutionary background of the country, cradle of the French Revolution ideals.

Anyhow, as far as we know, the Lyon Sino-French Institute is the unique example of a Chinese university⁴ established outside continental China and run by a double administration board (administrative charges were double and occupied altogether by Chinese and French personalities, on an equal basis). It hosted during a quarter of century 473 male and female students, chosen on a basis of selective examination in China, and already holding a certificate of secondary education obtained in their own country.



In Lyon, they were taught French language, history, sciences, etc. to prepare them enter French universities or specialized schools. A quarter of them returned in China with a Ph.D. from a French university. Once trained in fact, they would go back to their country and make up the cadres China lacked. Some of them have had an outstanding destiny: writers, artists, surgeons, high level teachers or professors, politicians, this list could be long.

Fig. 2: Students and administrators of the Lyon Sino-French Institute in 1929

THE LIBRARY OF THE CHINESE STUDENTS IN LYON

Some information should deserve our attention:

First of all, I shall indicate that this library is the sole Chinese / sinological collection created and increased outside China by Chinese.

Although made up in a French and French-speaking environment, the Institute gathered for its students, besides a rather expected research library in European languages, a very important collection of materials in Chinese (monographs and serials), multidisciplinary in its contents. This Chinese section had around 14 000 volumes of books and more than 400 titles of serials and its size could not merely be justified by the fields of studies chosen by the students⁵. I would go even further in saying that in this Institute, this library section in Chinese language was not really necessary, from a strictly scientific point of view. It is a fact that that these Chinese students studied in France, in French establishments, courses and written works had to be in French only. Assuming

⁴ The term ‘daxue’ (大學) figuring in its Chinese name means ‘university’, but *de facto* the Institute was more similar to a preparatory school.

⁵ The Ph.D. theses prove, on the contrary, that the topics related to China are rare, and above all, had really these Chinese students the need to go abroad for studying “thing Chinese”? The fields of specialisation chosen by students for their Western learning are as follow: sciences, literature and arts, law, medicine, pharmacy.

that the main aim was to specialize in ‘Western knowledge’ (xi xue 西学), why then such a Chinese collection and so important in size? The archives of the Institute are silent on this point, despite the fact that information is given for example about the library section in European languages (especially about costs, opportunity to buy this or that item, and so on).



Fig. 3: The Library at the Lyon Sino-French Institute

Anyhow, some aspects should deserve our attention, as they explain the constitutive process of this Chinese library:

First of all, the peculiar characteristic of this institute, where ALL the students were Chinese, representing a sort of Chinese enclave on the French soil.

Secondly, the geographic distance from their own country and culture, making them feel in an exile-like condition.

Thirdly, the drastic upheavals occurring in a troubled China at that time.

All these elements undoubtedly helped to create a collection,

relatively complete, which nowadays mirrors quite clearly the intellectual and editorial activities of that time in China. At the time of the Institute, on the other hand, this library represented the ‘minimum store of knowledge’ available to the students abroad, who needed on the same time to be informed of the current affairs taking place in their own country in the social, political and cultural fields.

Three (or four) librarians from China ran the library of the Institute for several years. The collection has been increased by onerous accessions of materials, exchanges (especially with other libraries), donation by Chinese institutions (especially publishing houses) or political organisations (especially sections of Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang 国民党) in Europe), as well by personalities of the Institute (administrators), or students themselves.

In the 1940’s, during the World War II, the institute stopped progressively to perform its functions, and the library herewith. The financial difficulties, which marked the whole existence of the Institute, are the main reason. The last student coming from China is registered in 1946, whereas the few students there had meanwhile to leave the buildings. The ancient military fort (Fort Saint Irénée), which hosted the institute itself, was requisitioned in order to organize a French military hospital first and later the headquarters of the dreadful Intelligence Services of Gestapo in Lyon.

At this crucial point of the history, I can not but remember that we owe to the personal initiative of the last French Head of the Institute and Professor of Chinese language at Lyon University, Mr Georges Dubarbier (1888-1972) the preservation of the holdings. Facing the requisition of the buildings during World War II, he avoided destruction or loss of the library collections and of the Institute Archives by transferring them to his own cellar. These documents will be later returned back to the Institute and stocked in two rooms of the ancient military fort, which will be recovered in the 1950’s by Lyon University to make of it a dormitory for French students. In these two rooms, the library holdings of the former Lyon Sino-French Institute “fall asleep” almost completely

forgotten and unattended: 25 years should pass before they would “reappear” at the Lyon Municipal Library. In the meanwhile, locally almost no attention has been paid to them, possibly because



nobody was really able to recognize their historical and cultural value, nor to see them as a part of the cultural heritage of the city and the region, and even less as a precious evidence of the intellectual history of 20th century China⁶.

Fig. 5: Seals of the Library of the Lyon Sino-French Institute

FROM THE LIBRARY OF CHINESE STUDENTS IN LYON TO THE CHINESE COLLECTIONS OF THE LYON MUNICIPAL LIBRARY

All the holdings stocked in the mentioned two rooms have been progressively deposited at the Lyon Municipal library since 1974 and during many years⁷. Once more, their destiny depends much more on the initiative of individuals than institutions: Ms Danielle Li (Li Chensheng 李尘生) and General Jacques Guillermaz (1911-1998)⁸. Strongly moved by the goal of avoiding the definitive lost or transfer of the holdings elsewhere (in France), their initiative for having them transferred to the newly established Lyon Municipal Library got finally the support of the political representatives at city and regional levels. Most important, both Ms Li and General Guillermaz were somehow the first ones to really recognize the value of these collections as part of the cultural heritage to be

⁶ Though its great value as an information source was well recognized by French sinologists. In the period between the closing of the Institute and the transfer of the holdings to the Lyon Municipal Library, members of a Paris-based research centre on modern China have been to visit the two stocking rooms to “wake up” the holdings from their peaceful sleep. Being specialists, they were well aware of the value of the items for researching on China Republican Period. The goal was to “exchange”, “loan”, and microfilm Chinese materials, almost impossible to find in France and even in Europe. Actually we do not know precisely how many items went to Paris and came back to Lyon, but for sure everything has not been returned... A systematic research and survey by comparing paper catalogued entries of the Institute Library and the items entered on the Inventory registers of Lyon Municipal Library has never been conducted and possibly will never be.

⁷ From a legal point of view it is a long term loan, signed between representatives of the city and of Lyon University on July, 6th 1987: *Contrat de dépôt. Ouvrages, périodiques et documents d'archives issus de la dévolution de l'ancienne Association franco-chinoise.*

⁸ The former is the daughter of an ancient Chinese student of the Institute and today retired professor of Chinese language at Lyon University. The latter can be considered as the father of the French sinology concerning modern and contemporary China, Head, up to 1976, of the research centre I referred to above.

shared altogether by East and West: for the cultural and intellectual history of China, but also for the 20th century history of Lyon and France.

Even before taking into account the treatment of the holdings, the major concern was to find a fitting place. Their preservation has become really urgent, and the new library of the city could guarantee excellent conditions for storage and preservation of these fragile items (all the 15 floors of stacks have excellent environmental conditions (an average temperature of 18°, an average humidity of 55%), along with an anti-thief device system. Whether the place for them was available, it was more difficult for the municipal library – and I must say here even for the most important municipal library in France, for size and holdings! – to treat conveniently these Chinese collections: essentially for a lack of librarians specialized in Chinese language and culture, but also of points of reference issuing from similar experiences: this kind of transfer seems to be unprecedented in France. For these reasons, at the very beginning the treatment of this collection, starting with the inventory of the items by Ms Li herself, who worked alone as a volunteer up to 1985⁹.

But this was 30 years ago, the Lyon Municipal Library having taken up the challenge, facts demonstrate that the experience, far from being perfect or accomplished, has been successful. I shall explain why and how.

Considering the educational purposes of Lyon Sino-French Institute, its library was encyclopaedical in kind. The holdings entered at the Lyon Municipal Library are as follows:

- 15 000 volumes of Books and 150 titles of serials in European languages, covering social and political sciences, literature, history, philosophy.
- 10 000 volumes of monographs with Chinese bindings (original Chinese cases scarcely survived), dating back from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries: editions but mainly reprints of Chinese classical works, covering various fields of Chinese classical knowledge and culture.
- 4000 volumes of modern monographs. They constitute the most interesting and richest part of the library. This section holds the rarest documents, all published between the 1920's and the 1940's, with focus on political social and economical situation during the Republican Period, but also, and more considerably, in Chinese literature and arts of that time. This section includes also several hundreds titles of Western or Japanese works (literature but also social and political sciences...) translated into Chinese and edited or reprinted chiefly during the 1910's (the reference work on translated literature is almost accomplished, and will be published soon online); a collection of manuals for the newly established Chinese modern schools, after the suppression of the examination system, printed in 1910's too.
- 425 titles of Chinese periodicals. This collection too, is rather important and coherent, giving an excellent image of the Chinese intellectual life during the Republican Period. Whether dedicated to political, literary, artistic or scientific fields, these holdings are rarely complete, but often very important.
- 73 titles of serials in Western languages (English, French, German) when not Esperanto, edited in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan (40 titles) or Europe (France, Suisse, Belgium, U.S.A, Great Britain).

⁹ Nowadays too, such specialized librarians in French public libraries are really rare. What is more, up to recent years even research libraries very often do not have a staff of professional librarians (i.e.: having received a professional training in librarianship along with a command of Chinese language). Consequently such specialized collections have often been treated by researchers or academicians, specialized in sinology, acquiring the necessary know-how by an on-the-job training. Ms Li herself had to get a training in librarianship (centred on the treatment of Chinese collections) going to... Harvard-Yenching Library (U.S.A.). It was in 1978.



Fig. 4: *Jing-Han gongren liuxue ji* 京汉工人流血记, Beijing, 1923. Call no. CH 6828.

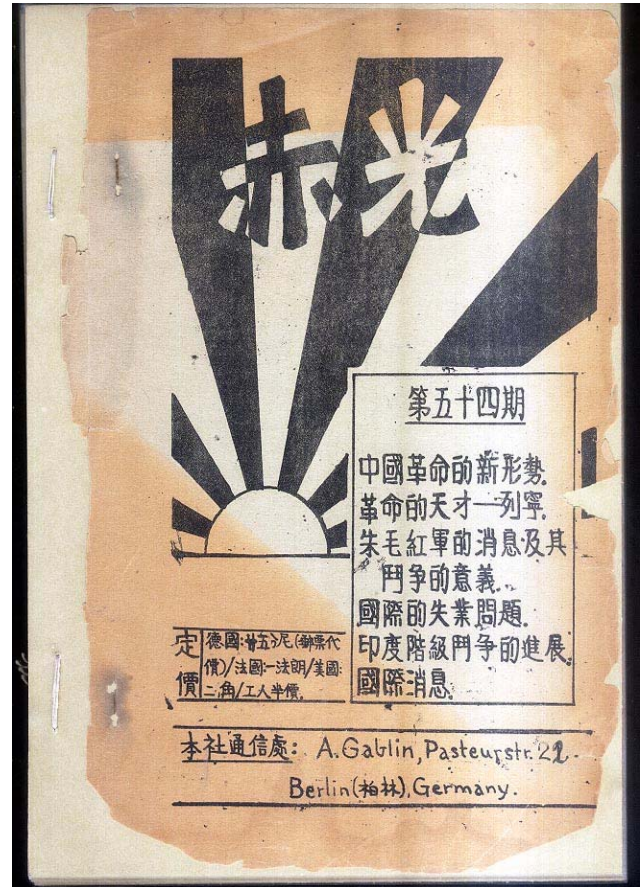


Fig. 5: *Chiguang* 赤光, n° 54, 1929, a Chinese communist serial in Chinese, published in Berlin (Germany). Call no. CH PER 1400.

To complete this list I shall add items of smaller collections: books in Japanese (untreated up to now, for lack of specialized librarians), some dozen maps of China provinces printed at the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) or in the following decade, as well as rare titles of periodicals edited in Europe (France, Germany) by Chinese and in Chinese language.

That's for the library, rough figures indicates that no precise statistical survey has been realized yet. The Lyon Sino-French Institute Archives too were deposited at Lyon Municipal Library.

The holdings occupy 25 linear meters and their treatment is on work.

Archives cover the whole history of the institute, partly in French, partly in Chinese (because of the double administrative charges, one for a Chinese representative, one for a French one) and comprise: the administrative books of the institute (correspondence, financial registers), the students' enrolment registers, along with their personal files, and copies of the theses they wrote, a small collection of photographs and original Chinese degrees obtained by students in China, the complete collection of the *Les Annales franco-chinoises* = 里昂中法大学季刊 (Li'ang Zhong-Fa daxue jikan), the quarterly published between 1927 and 1934 by the Institute in cooperation with their students. All the correspondence between France and China, chiefly with Chinese personalities, representatives of political power at central or provincial levels, as well official documents issued by Chinese educational establishments, all written of course in Chinese language,

should sooner or later retain the attention of the historians. This part rests quite unexplored up to now.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE HOLDINGS



Fig. 7: The holdings of the Lyon Sino-French Institute on shelves at the Lyon Municipal Library

Seeing things from a strictly perspective of a municipal library, its role and missions, at first sight such a specialized collection hardly would or could have found its “right” place in a public library. Its transfer is much more a fact of chance, than the result of an accession policy clearly decided in advance by library authorities or city representatives. The holdings could have been just “added” to the existing collections, without a real commitment for their treatment and valorisation, as their transfer was simply a matter of urgency intended to assure their physical preservation. Beginnings in fact have been quite hard. Lyon experience proves once more that it is often a problem for a public library to manage such specialized collections, and the strategies for their treatment and valorisation can not but take into account some of their peculiar aspects. Their treatment and valorisation necessitate first of all to appoint specialized librarians, and secondly to readjust the library policy, as these collections go beyond the scope of general collections in public libraries.

For sure, our Chinese collections have somehow benefited of the active policy centred on cultural heritage the Lyon Municipal Library has listed among its main missions, besides the most traditional one, devoted to loan and reference services for a general readership. This policy oriented toward the cultural heritage, can be explained by the existence of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, but also of the third specialized Department of our library, whose collections on the past and present local history of Lyon and its region are really of reference for the wide public as well as specialists and researchers¹⁰.

The place given to the Chinese collection was hence, BUT not without difficulties¹¹ at the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, on whom the Chinese Department itself nowadays depends.

¹⁰ For a general overview of specialised collection at Lyon Municipal Library: <http://www.bm-lyon.fr/decouvrir/collections/presentation.htm>.

¹¹ It was of course necessary to have recognized and ‘proved’ the value of these holdings, from an information point of view, but also as cultural heritage *tout court*: once its status recognized, it has been possible to set up a better defined policy of preservation, treatment and multifaceted valorisation of these

The Rare Books and Manuscripts Department conserves several hundred items on China, dating back from the 17th to the 20th centuries printed in Western languages in Europe, as well as a collection of 52 titles of Chinese works dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries (essentially holdings of the former Jesuit *Collège de la Trinité* of Lyon)¹².

With the transfer – or to say better – thanks to the transfer of the former library of the Lyon Sino-French Institute, a real Chinese Department originated in a public library of the French province: nowadays not only it is of reference for the history of 20th century China, its literature and culture, but it contributes, at different levels, to the cultural interflow between East and West. Since its transfer, the holdings have been increasing steadily, reaching almost 60 000 items today. Accessions almost doubled, thanks to some important donations (or deposits) received over the years.

- General Jacques Guillermez, French diplomat and sinologist, bequeathed his personal library (more than 2 500 volumes), including periodicals and monographs concerning the Chinese Republican Period and Cultural Revolution, all written in Chinese;
- Mrs Michelle Loi (1926-2002) has also offered her personal library, particularly rich in documents on Chinese literature after the 4th May Movement, especially studies on Lu Xun (1881-1936) and materials on Chinese Communist propaganda, both in Chinese or European languages. His research files have also reached our collections.
- In 1999, the Jesuit Library of Chantilly (knew also under the French name: *Collection des Fontaines*), with more than 12 000 volumes of Chinese books, among the 500 000 composing it, was deposited at the Lyon Municipal Library. The Chinese section is of great value as much as it represents the testimony of Christian presence in China. The Chinese section conserves also the private library of André d'Hormon (1881-1965), which itself is a perfect example of a 'Chinese man of letters library'.
- More recently (2003), Mrs Nicole Soymié offered her late husband Michel Soymié (1924-2002) private library (8 000 items, along with his research files), in Chinese, Japanese and Western languages and covering his preferred research fields: Chinese religions and philosophy; popular literature, Dunhuang studies (敦煌学 Dunhuang xue).

Moreover, over the years several thousand monographs and serials have been donated or deposited by the most important sinological research centres of France¹³.

This expansion of Chinese holdings is partly the result of a remarkable set of external actions undertaken along the years. The aim was, and still is, of course, to connect at best our Chinese holdings to the existing information offered in sinological field, at national and international levels. Since the very beginning, initiatives have been taken in order to weave a network with other sinological libraries, specialized librarians, universities representatives and researchers in France and abroad. Along with this policy, our acquisition budget is devoted to purchase materials

holdings. In the context of Lyon Municipal Library organisation, their status in fact has remained simply undefined for several years and has varied along with the developments of the Chinese holdings themselves. The Chinese Department has depended of the Library Direction (up to 1987), of the Reference Department (up to 1992), of the Literatures and Languages Department (up to 1995)....

¹² The Jesuit institution, founded in 1565 and closed in 1765, gathered an outstanding collection of materials, making up an erudite library, reserved to the professors of the *Collège*. As for the materials in Chinese, they have been gathered in China by Dominique Parrenin, S.J., (1665-1741), and offered in 1728 or 1730 to the *Collège* of Lyon. See for further reference: Héraud, Bénédicte, *Les Fonds chinois de la Bibliothèque du Roi: 1719-1742*, (Mémoire de DEA en Sciences de l'Information, 1993). It should be worth noticing that the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department of Lyon Municipal library holds items printed up to 1921.

¹³ Centre de Recherche sur la Chine Moderne et Contemporaine, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises at Collège de France, Société Asiatique. It is important to point out that, unlike the policy generally followed by such research centres, the main vocation for our Department is preservation of items.

completing the existing collections, especially in the fields of literature and social sciences of 20th century China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

As for specific relations with China, I prefer to devote myself to this in the last part of my paper.

TREATMENT, VALIDATION, AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The treatment of the holdings, its valorisation and development would not have been possible to such an extent without the personal commitment of Mr Jean-Louis Bouilly, Head of the Chinese Department, who, since his arrival in 1985, has been working alone for almost 20 years, before a second post could be created, two years ago, at the Chinese Department¹⁴. His achievements along the years helped in obtaining more and more means available (technological, financial and ‘intellectual’), and sensibly contributed to orient the library and city representatives policy, which nowadays is one of strong and steady support: the Chinese Department has become part of the cultural offering of Lyon.

But to return to the question of treatment, the most important challenge was (and still is) to give visibility to these holdings. In the same direction is oriented our work today, together with a strong validation policy. Considering the poor condition of the two stock rooms at Fort Saint Irénée, the holdings arrived in total disorder at Lyon Municipal Library and their physical treatment and reorganization on shelves took a several-years to accomplish.

Their ‘intellectual treatment’, according to librarianship standards was the first stage to overcome. There was a need to modify the image that the ‘Library of Chinese students in France’ had at the very beginning. It was called a ‘ghost collection’ by specialists (sinologists). It was completely unknown, hence ignored, even at the local level (France and Lyon itself) by the wider public. The strategy towards users needed to take into account the variety of our readership, ranging from the “initiated” (professors, researchers and specialists, as well as students in sinology) to “laypersons”. Whether specialized, collections in a municipal library are to assure the main mission of this kind of institutions, i.e. orient and inform a wide public, even if it has no specific knowledge of China nor a command of Chinese language. The kind of readership and its expectations let us react accordingly. While computer information processing was not largely developed, an important retrospective bibliographical work has been conducted, permitting the editing of printed catalogues for reference, treating of the Lyon Sino-French Institute’s holdings – here catalogues constitute tangible evidence of the existence of the collections themselves. The case of Mr Bouilly’s *Ouvrages en langue chinoise de l’Institut Franco-Chinois de Lyon*¹⁵, printed in 1995, is of reference for our strategies, double-oriented according the two ‘opposite’ typology of users. Especially intended to reach a specialized readership, its publication was crowned by an exhibition on the Lyon Sino-French Institute at our library. The targeted public was the local one, and the aim to make it aware of Lyon’s cultural heritage and history.

¹⁴ In 1985, he was appointed just for 5 hours per week, the total amount of hours has been gradually increasing, but full-time work on Chinese holdings has been possible since 1993 only. Up to 2004, when a second full-time post was appointed to the Chinese Department, some help was given very discontinuously to Mr Bouilly by trainees, temporary (and always briefly) appointed to the Chinese Department. I shall remember hence the strong support received by Ms Li all these years.

¹⁵ Bouilly, Jean-Louis (assisted by Li, Danielle and Bénédicte Héraud), *Ouvrages en langue chinoise de l’Institut franco-chinois de Lyon (1921-1946)* = 法国里昂市立图书馆馆藏里昂中法大学1921年至1946年中文书目 (Faguo Li’ang shili tushuguan guancang Li’ang Zhong-Fa daxue 1921 zhi 1946 nian zhongwen shumu), Lyon, 1995, with 2840 entries in Chinese and contents analysis of items in French language. Other reference printed materials are: Bouilly, Jean-Louis and Chensheng Li, *Catalogue des thèses de doctorat des étudiants de l’Institut franco-chinois de Lyon* [and] *Liste des noms des étudiants de l’Institut franco-chinois de Lyon (1921-1946)*, Lyon, 1987.

Information has been progressively transferred to our OPAC, or on the Internet pages devoted to our Department on the site of the library. Considering that nowadays we have a regional, national and especially international readership, the spread of information online has become essential for us.

Having recognized quite soon the value of new technologies applied to information management, Lyon Municipal Library has been the first library in France to offer, around 1997/1998, an OPAC with entries in Chinese characters. As in the case of printed catalogues, these entries are still today catalogued paying particular attention to both contents and form of items, in order to offer to users a rather detailed description of materials. Results hence approach those expected for rare or specialized collections.

Nowadays these entries figure also in foreign online catalogues, such as the U.S.A.-based RLG Union Catalog.

The information offered is enriched and diversified through our online pages (having French, English, and Italian versions). There it is possible to get information about our Chinese Department and holdings, the history of the Lyon Sino-French Institute, or to check special bibliographies. Our database of Internet Sites on China is constantly updated, together with information about other useful external resources. All intended to better orientate the users. The main developments of these online information and reference services occurred since the end of the 1990's.

The Chinese Department plays an important role in the global offering of information by the Lyon Municipal Library. It takes part in new online reference service, completely free, created in 2004 and called *Guichet du Savoir*¹⁶. We answer within 72 hours any question posted by users. Questions and answers are immediately stocked in a 'knowledge' database freely accessible to Internet surfers. Moreover, our Department, together with the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department and Lyon and Rhone Region Department are going to take part in the international network of reference service "Question Point", handled by Library of Congress and OCLC which is expected to better fulfil the expectations of more 'initiated' when not 'specialized' users than those usually writing to the *Guichet du Savoir*¹⁷.

Some projects for digitalization of items in cooperation with specialists of the Chinese Department of Lyon University are under discussion. Materials of Chinese holdings (especially the Lyon Sino-French Institute Library and the Jesuit Library of Chantilly) should figure also in the iconographical database especially devoted to ancient owners of items.

Rather than treating the actions undertaken towards our specialized readership, it seems to me worth mentioning here some of the actions undertaken in order to reach a general audience, and the way specialized collections find their place in a public library. To resume, as it is the case for the three other specialized departments of the Lyon Municipal Library, we act somehow as intermediaries, between specialized knowledge and non-specialized users, extremely curious and interested in approaching fields too often reserved to the 'initiated', or difficult to approach.

That is why great attention is devoted to free activities, such as conferences on 'things Chinese' by specialists, ready-made exhibitions for other public libraries not provided with Chinese holdings, and lending of materials for exhibitions organised by other institutions.

But 'Discovery Time' Sessions remain the most striking example of the way the Lyon Municipal Library validates its own holdings, specially targeting common users. Through this formula we present materials held in our collections treating of a specific subject of Chinese culture. It is clear that activities of this kind introduce users to uncommon fields of knowledge and constitute an important means for us to approach and discover our collections¹⁸.

¹⁶ At <http://www.guichetdusavoir.org/GdS/>.

¹⁷ Service operating date has been fixed for April 2006.

¹⁸ Of course, these materials, unlike the others library holdings are not open access.

THE CHINESE DEPARTMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE - EAST AND WEST

Considering the topic of this conference, I think it most useful to talk in this conclusive section of the relationships between Lyon and China, especially in the field of librarianship today.

First of all, we have to recognize the precious role played along the years by our Chinese counterparts (continental and Taiwanese), whether libraries, research centres, public institutions and so on. As Western specialists, Chinese researchers too (Taiwanese as well as of P.R.C.) helped a lot in spreading information about the history of the Lyon Sino-French Institute. Quite soon, as the information on Chinese holdings at the Lyon Municipal Library began to spread, we were asked to give access to our collections, to single Chinese specialists as well as delegations on professional trips, whether representatives of political, educational (universities, research centres), or cultural (associations, press, televisions) institutions. As a result, many articles in the press or in more specialised research serials have appeared. The collections of the Lyon Sino-French Institute, together with those of the former Jesuit library and of Manuscripts and the Rare Books Department are really useful to specialists for their research on the history of exchanges between East and West and Chinese culture up to the end of Republican Period.

After the transfer of the Lyon Sino-French Institute's holdings to the Lyon Municipal Library, the first collection of new materials added to this constitutive core was of Chinese origin. After an exhibition of Chinese printed items (essentially books) held in 1983 at the Lyon Municipal Library, Guoji shudian (国际书店 China Publications Centre) offered all the items exhibited. This donation of 5 000 volumes about Chinese language and culture not only has been the starting point for new additions, but largely contributed to make the library's authorities aware of the need to give means for treating all these Chinese holdings.

For several years we have been benefiting from regular additions of monographs and serials on the basis of the exchange program offered by the Taiwan National Library and Nanjing University. This program allows us to offer today more than one hundred current periodicals to our readers, edited in the Peoples' Republic of China as well as in Taiwan.

More recently, and in the context of partnerships between China and Lyon city as well as the Rhone Region, new developments occurred in the relationships between the Lyon Municipal Library and Canton Municipal Library as well as Shanghai Municipal Library (our institution is twinned with both of them since 2000). Relationships are mainly devoted to material and cultural exchanges, through specific agreements.

As for the Canton Municipal Library, besides exchanges of materials, Mr Bouilly had six month training there (1999-2000), in order to get better acquainted with some peculiars aspects of Chinese librarianship and public library management.

Our Chinese Department developed some important activities, in the context of the "Cross-cultural years" project, the result of an agreement between the Chinese and French governments. During the "Year of China in France" (2004), our library hosted in June an exhibition of Chinese paintings: the Canton Municipal Library, jointly with Canton Art School, exhibited 20th century original works preserved in their own collections. The year after (the "Year of France in China", 2005) our Chinese Department organized an exhibition at the Canton Municipal Library, centred on the History of the Sino-French Institute. Library's and Archive's original items were exhibited in China for the first time¹⁹.

As for the Shanghai Municipal Library, our long-lasting cooperative relationships were formally renewed last year, with the signature of a new agreement. Besides an ongoing exchange program of

¹⁹ As for consequences, along with issues more "scientific" or "specialised" in kind, it seems important to me to point out that, on a more "human" level, some descendants of students of the Lyon Sino-French Institute have been in touch with us, in order to get information and archives materials reproductions, which are helpful for them in tracing their family history.

books, this agreement focuses more specifically on an exchange program of French and Chinese librarians. Alternatively, every year, a librarian is sent to the twinned library, for mid-level training in library and information management. Hence, last year (2004), we welcomed the first librarian of the Shanghai Municipal Library, who received six months training in our library.

CONCLUSIONS

Some conclusions: These cultural exchanges between our library and its Chinese counterparts seem to me worth noticing, not only because they renew a secular tradition of relationships between Lyon and China, but also because they help spread and share a cultural heritage, common to both China and France.

Moreover, these exchanges help us guarantee the responsibility of bringing new life to a collection originated by a community (a foreign one within the French borders) which cannot play this role anymore. International cooperation cannot but benefit from such specialized collections, foreign in nature.

From an historical perspective, cultural heritage has been constantly moving on, and still is. In our case, despite the fact that the material traces left by the Chinese students in France are physically preserved in our library, new technologies have an important role to play in the preservation and validation of these collections, at a local and especially an international level.

But there is another aspect I would like to recall. It concerns the process through which new holdings have been added to the constitutive core of “the library of Chinese students in France”, and which are mostly materials of more recent printing. This dynamic process seems important to me, because, taken as a whole, the Chinese holdings of the Lyon Municipal Library constitute a “hybrid” case: not just collections of general interest in the sinological field, nor just collections labelled ‘rare’ and, what’s more, making up a specialised collection in a French municipal library! There is enough material to baffle “purists”, whether sinologists, professional librarians of “rare books”, or those defending the traditional and main mission of municipal libraries. Here is the greatest challenge in my opinion.

Sincerely, we can say we have a lot to learn from the “scientific community” (sinologists or professionals), in order to better fulfil our missions: preservation, treatment and validation of the holdings, through actions which have to satisfy the expectations of a wide range of readership, locally and internationally-based.

As for our specialised collection, on one hand its management can not but take into account the fact that readers can be interested in it for reasons which have nothing to do with a “specialised knowledge”; on the other hand, its management cannot but take into account the ‘pedagogical’ role we have, especially for the transmission of cultural heritage and specialised knowledge. What can be considered as the most erudite, strangest, most special and ‘mysterious’, very often is what fascinates most, interests, raises curiosity.

Whereas our aim is to organize at best our information offering, according to the rigorous standards of librarianship or the particular needs of a specialised readership, we believe in our role of intermediates of discovery ‘just for pleasure and personal curiosity’.

It is in this spirit that we wish to do our best, well aware of the huge work lying ahead of us to manage all the holdings of our Chinese collections.