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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# Discovery is a journey of surprises and adaptations: Lessons from the digitalization of Chinese and Japanese rare and special collections at the UBC Library

A person in a light-colored jacket and dark pants stands on a dark, rocky outcrop, looking out over a vast landscape. In the background, a calm lake reflects the sky, and a range of large, rugged mountains with patches of snow stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky.

**Eleanor Yuen**  
**Asian Library, University of British Columbia**  
**PRDLA 2011**



*Lessons from the digitalization of Chinese and Japanese rare and special materials at the UBC Library*

## Chinese and Japanese Digitization projects

North American Chinese Rare Books project (NACRB) &  
the Pre-1796 rare books / manuscripts project (CRBP)

Community Historical Recognition Programs (CHRP)

- Chinese Canadian pioneer family archives
- Chinese Times
- Chinese clan association publications

Japanese Maps of the Tokugawa era  
<http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca/tokugawa/>

Tairiku Jiho 1908 - 1942



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## Objectives of digitization

- Improve access to hidden collections
- Enable effective management of collections
- Facilitate cultural heritage preservation
- Enhance manipulation of data
- Enable collaboration
- Support effective service models



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## Challenges

Publication format and style of Chinese Times and Tairiki Jiho of specific eras:

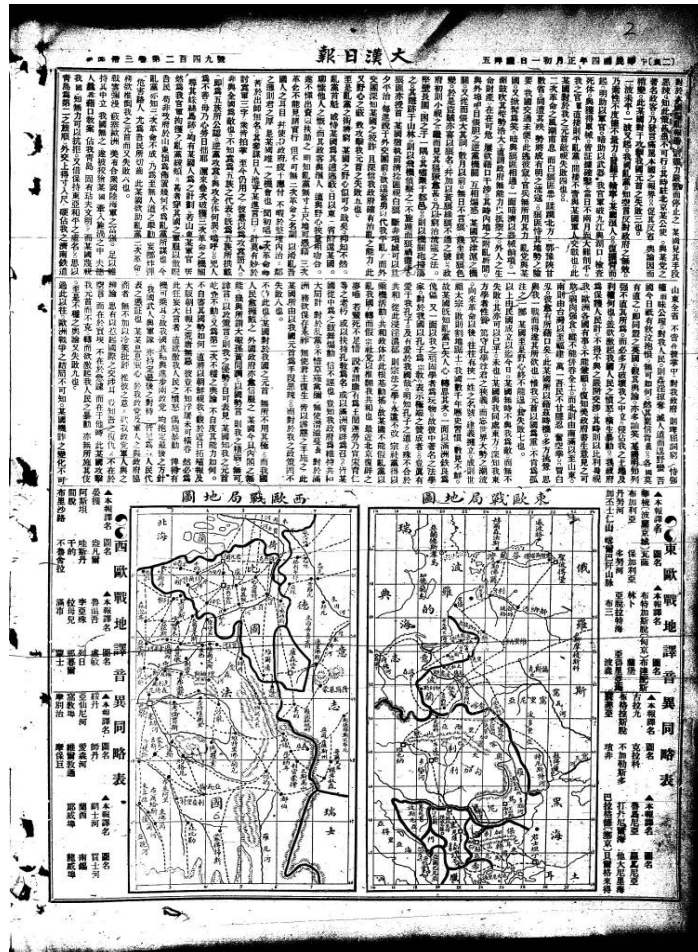
- messy OCRing
- full-text search impossible

Continued...





# Lessons from the digitalization of Chinese and Japanese rare and special materials at the UBC Library



申報 中華民國四年正月一日 禮拜五 第...號

▲悲劇良醫  
▲注意代理廣告  
▲有米出賣  
▲請招新船務

自來血

萬祥堂

廣告

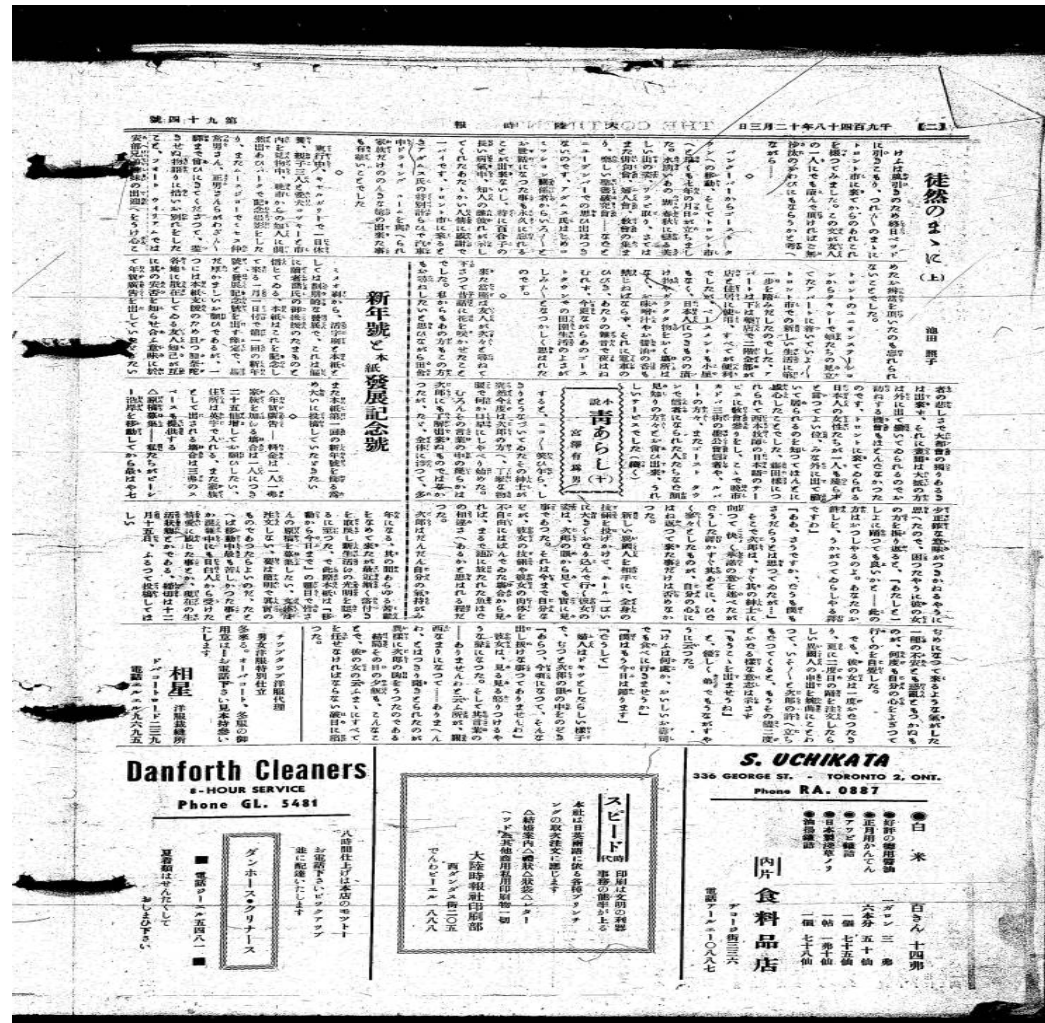
白告

Chinese Times

Continued...



# Lessons from the digitalization of Chinese and Japanese rare and special materials at the UBC Library



Tairiki Jiho

Continued...



*Lessons from the digitalization of Chinese and Japanese rare and special materials at the UBC Library*

- Copyright clearance needed from families/owners: Post 1926 for Japanese newspapers
- Lee's family archives & Normie Kwong collection etc. in limbo (Thung - father, died 1951 and Kepment - son, died 1976) – is due diligence in tracking adequate for the green light?
- Chinese clan associations – not feasible to obtain clearance from all “publishers” / owners who are mostly affiliated with small village offices in Guangdong, China

Continued...



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- The breath of Japanese characters that include syllabary expressions, kanji and ruby used in the old newspapers resulting in mixed vertical and horizontal texts.
- Proverbial terminologies used in 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese Canadian correspondences  
E.g. 水腳 (transportation expenses) will be 運費 or 交通費 in contemporary usage.
- Special archaic characters used in the Tokugawa maps  
E.g. 卷 and 軸 were older terms for Japanese scrolls.
- Digitized items with some/full meta data attract more use than known collections with no bibliographic records.

Continued...





*Lessons from the digitalization of Chinese and Japanese rare and special materials at the UBC Library*

- Extensive reference resources required to augment the use of the digitized materials are not available in the holding location such as the Rare Books and Special Collections
- Librarians and archivists with relevant language skills and subject expertise are essential in the delivery of service – not available outside the Asian Library

Continued...



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- Lack of established thesaurus, subject headings that supports in-depth and effective searches. Natural language vs. controlled headings. New RDA standards might point new direction?
- Split locations do not impress current or potential donors
- Digital images and oral history on Chinese Canadians from uTube and FaceBook require disclaimers which collectors cannot provide
- Are projects developed by minor CHRP grant holders sustainable?

Continued...



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- Collaboration

Different iterations of CONTENTdm and DSpace post obstacles for pooling pertinent resources under the CHRP portal

NACRB members with holdings in non-MARC metadata; different source of cataloguing metadata and rare works that require cataloguing metadata – need to agree on a standard acceptable to all

The CHRP ingest tool incapable of capturing the huge multimedia files owned by community partners





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## **Lessons learned:**

- Recognize the fuzzy border of archives, special collections and regular print collections – “publication to data”
- Accept full-text search might not be realistic at this point – table of contents, searches at page level are options
- Populate projects with appropriate staff credentials and development plans
- House materials where the language and subject expertise are available
- Make informed decisions on copyright issues- some level of risk-taking?
- Facilitate cross-unit collaborations on preservation
- Help front-line staffers to support institutional collaboration projects



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How are we stacking up in the new trends of digital libraries?

Christine Borgman's keynote on Data Deluge:  
Digital Library Challenges for Asia  
October 2011 ICADL, Beijing  
<http://www.icadl2011.org>

