

Prepared statement to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review
Commission
By Chi Wang

Chairman D'Amato, Commissioner Dreyer, Commissioner Wortzel:

I am honored to appear before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission this morning. I have been asked to give my thoughts and to answer questions for this public hearing titled, An Examination of the Library of Congress Chinese Holdings. In a few moments, I will present a statement that will address, as requested by the Commission, the changes in the Library of Congress Chinese language holdings within the last decade, my general assessment of the current Chinese language holdings, what government needs should be met by the Library of Congress China collection, are these needs being met and if not what I see as the major flaws in the collection, and my recommendations on how to better align the Library of Congress China collection with the needs of the government.

But first I would like to make some brief remarks about my career with the federal government, which I had served since 1956. From 1958 until 2004, I worked at the Library of Congress, beginning as a library technician, then as a reference librarian, and later as an Asian science specialist supervising the development of an Asian science collection, including Chinese, Japanese and Korean publications. In 1967, I was promoted to assistant head of the Chinese and Korean Section. In 1975, I was named head of the Chinese and Korean Section. Subsequently, I served in that capacity until my retirement in October 2004 when the Library of Congress abolished the Chinese Section. I have spent almost a half century in my professional career developing the Chinese

collection at the Library of Congress, and I consider myself fortunate to have been able to work in a field that was and is my passion.

When I first joined the Chinese Section, the Chinese collection comprised slightly more than 300,000 volumes. At my retirement in 2004, that number had reached close to 1 million. Meantime, I was able to complete my PhD at Georgetown University in 1969, and I served as an adjunct professor in the department of history and continue to do so today teaching classes on traditional and contemporary China. This teaching experience afforded me opportunities to keep abreast of the trends related to academic interest in China. Serving as head of the Chinese Section in conjunction with teaching at Georgetown allowed me to meet many outstanding China scholars in the United States; they helped give me insight as to what is most important to China scholars in this country. That said, I now will try to address the questions members of the Commission posed to me in a letter requesting my presence today.

The first question concerns what changes, if any, have there been in the Library of Congress Chinese language holdings within the last decade and my general assessment of the current Chinese language holdings. This question is both very broad and complicated in scope.

The most notable change was the abolition of the Chinese Section in 2004 without explanation after more than 75 productive years. Without a Chinese Section, the Library of Congress has no means to develop a strong China collection. The decision came as a surprise to all scholars in the East Asian library field.

The Chinese language holdings in the Library of Congress do, however, remain among the most thorough in the United States. Over the past decade, the Chinese Section has

been trying to increase its collection of contemporary China materials, including the history of Chinese Communist Party, China's military development, China's economy, US-China relations, American studies in China, etc. The Chinese collection in the Library of Congress has the best materials on traditional China studies; no other library is comparable. As for the contemporary China collection, there is much room for improvement.

Since the Chinese Section was abolished in October 2004, two new sections have been created: the Collection Service Section and the Scholarly Service Section. There are no more sections devoted solely to individual countries. According to my analysis, this system greatly hinders the development of a superior Chinese collection.

As to the second question, what government needs, particularly national security needs, should be met by the Library of Congress China collection, are those needs being met and if not what major flaws exist, I believe the government should have more materials on China's political development, its foreign policy, especially toward the United States, China's military development, which would address the national security needs, China's economic development, and China's understanding of the United States. These materials are of paramount importance to the federal government. As far as I can tell, during the past 10 years, very little progress has been made collecting materials relating to these subject fields. With more than 175,000 titles published annually in mainland China during the past three to four years, there are many materials devoted to the previously mentioned subjects that the Library of Congress should be collecting. I do not believe, however, the Library of Congress has done so, and therefore it has not met the needs of the federal government on these subjects to the fullest extent. The major flaw remains a

dearth of contemporary China materials. Members of this commission may wonder why as head of the Chinese Section I could not improve this situation. This a very legitimate question. Here is why I was unable to change the situation. Until the early 1990s, the Chinese Section has nine full-time staff members: a section head, two China area specialists, three reference librarians, one section secretary and bibliographic assistant and two technicians. Nine staff members were sufficient to carry out collection development duties, serve readers and maintain the 700,000 volume collection. But by 1992, the Chinese Section had only five full-time staff members because of retirement, resignations and reassignment. By the mid-1990s, there were only four full-time staff members: one section head, one area specialist, one reference librarian and one technician. With so few staff members, simply maintaining the day-to-day operations became a challenge. I repeatedly urged Library management to recruit additional staff members to the Chinese Section and submitted many memorandums to that effect, but to no avail. I couldn't help but wonder where my memorandums wound up within the Library of Congress's bureaucracy. The chief at that time was an expert on South Asia but never served as a curator at any Asian library. I believe she tried to help me but was unable to do so. She was appointed in 1994 and retired in 2001. Among the four full-time staff members, I was the only one with knowledge of contemporary China, so as you can see, our resources were strained.

During the past 10 years, the Librarian of Congress has asked the Asian Division chief to pay special attention to developing a stronger Chinese collection, including adding materials on contemporary China. The Librarian of Congress during a meeting in his office in early 1993 asked me how to strengthen the Chinese collection. I made some

brief recommendations, and the Librarian of Congress started a review project titled *Social Science in 20th Century China: A Case Study*. From 1993 to 1995, a committee of five members met approximately once per week and also invited outside scholars and consultants to give their input on this topic. The result was a 120-page review that included some very sound recommendations. In 1999, the Librarian of Congress again invited an outside scholar who was an expert on contemporary China studies to spend several weeks examining the Chinese book stacks, to interview Chinese collection specialists throughout the Library and to submit an evaluation report to the Librarian of Congress. This was followed by inviting another American China scholar specializing in China's economy to carry out a review of the Chinese language collection as it pertained to China's economy, trade and finance.

The Librarian of Congress initiated all the reviews, but the recommendations suggested in the reports rarely were implemented over the past decade. The Librarian of Congress also requested a grant from the Luce Foundation to help the Library develop a stronger contemporary China collection. The Luce Foundation was very generous in its support, and for three years China area specialists were able to improve the China collection to a certain degree. But I must say, it was poorly coordinated, and the grants were not used effectively. It did, however, help to increase the number of books on contemporary China.

With regard to the third question, what would I recommend the federal government do to better align the Library of Congress China collection with the needs of the government, the first priority is for the Library of Congress to re-establish the Chinese Section as a independent division not affiliated with the Asian Division. The Chinese

Section had been handicapped in its operations depending on who was serving as chief of the Asian Division. This would no longer be a problem if the Chinese Section were allowed to run its own operations without outside interference.

Secondly, there needs to be a section head with full authority to manage, develop and service the Chinese collection. The Chinese section also needs to hire additional China area specialists, reference librarians and experienced technicians to support the head and to help develop a better collection, with a special emphasis on contemporary China. In addition to the Chinese Section head, there should be an outside advisory committee comprising China scholars to review the progress of Chinese collection development and to meet with the section employees to discuss ways to improve the collection.

Next, I would like to recommend the China Commission start an inquiry focusing on the Asian Division's management approach. Three or four China scholars could investigate why the 2004 re-organization was adopted and why the individual country sections were abolished and downgraded to teams. There also is a need to establish a Chinese acquisition facility in Beijing. This facility should have a China area specialist from the Chinese Section, technical assistance personnel and two local employees in China to monitor important Chinese publications that ought to be recommended to the Library of Congress. The Library has six overseas bureaus in India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nairobi, Cairo and Rio Di Janero. Why can't we have an acquisition center in China?

I also would like to recommend acquiring more electronic databases that contain contemporary China materials. For example, before I retired, I recommend a subscription to CNKI online database from Eastview Information Service in Minneapolis. CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) contains between 6,000-9,000 periodical titles

online in social sciences, humanities and many other subjects. There are many digital resources from China the Library of Congress should acquire. Additionally, the Library of Congress should digitize its entire Chinese collection so scholars around the world can have electronic access to its materials.

I am certain most Americans realize China is a rising power and a possible challenger to the United States in leadership throughout the world. We must have a clearer understanding of events transpiring in China. The Chinese Section should send area specialist to visit China, purchase publications on the spot and ship them to the Library of Congress. As head of the Chinese Section, I took many acquisition trips and brought back many important books from China from the 1970s to 1992. After the former chief and assistant chief retired from the Library in 1992, the acquisitions trips ceased. I would recommend the resumption of these trips.

In 2002, the China Commission in its report made comments over several pages about the poor quality of the China collection at the Library of Congress and also made some constructive suggestions as to how to improve the situation. I read the report carefully and agreed with most of the comments and recommendations. I was encouraged that the Commission made so many constructive recommendations. If the Library of Congress implemented suggestions from all the reports mentioned since 1995, plus my personal recommendations as head of the Chinese Section to the chief, acting chiefs and to the director of area studies throughout the last 10 years, the China collection today would be in much better shape.

I make these remarks with the best intentions toward the Library of Congress and its China collection. After all, I spent close to 50 years devoted to developing and improving

the China collection at the Library. I hope the Chinese Section can return to its glorious past of the 1930s, '40s, '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s. The 1 million volumes in the Chinese collection today were developed through the efforts of many dedicated professional staff members in the Chinese Section since 1928, including four section chiefs. The first, the late Dr. Arthur. W. Hummel Sr., an eminent sinologist in the world, served as Chinese Section chief from 1928 to 1954. The second was Dr. Edwin G. Beal Jr., another well known China scholar and librarian, who served from 1955 to 1966. He was followed by Dr. K.T. Wu, the first Chinese American librarian to serve as chief, from 1966 to 1975. Finally, I had the honor to serve in that capacity until 2004. I certainly did not anticipate I would be the last section chief.

As former head of the Chinese Section, I was proud to be of service to many members of Congress who were interested in China, including some of the most highly respected senators and congressmen. Many of them have passed away, but I still have vivid memories of going to their offices to translate and provide reference services to them or their staff. This is what the Chinese Section staff is supposed to do: serve congress.

The Chinese Section celebrated its 75th anniversary in October 2003. No one could have anticipated the following year that the Chinese Section would be abolished and disappear from the Library of Congress's organizational chart. Because the Chinese Section was a small unit among the Library's 4,000-plus employees, perhaps some of the senior managers made that decision thinking it would not have an impact on the federal government, the academic community and the general public, but without question it did. The Chinese Section has been important to almost every Chinese American in the United States. Whenever Chinese or Chinese Americans visit Washington, D.C., they make a

special effort to come to the Library of Congress to see the China collection. Many Chinese Americans, including scholars, have contacted me to express their displeasure with the abolishment of the Chinese Section and wonder why it happened without explanation. Every academic library in the United States with a Chinese collection has either a curator or supervisor. But now the Library of Congress has done away with that practice.

I have a written proposal with additional recommendations on how to improve the collection development in the Chinese Section, so in closing, I want to express my gratitude to the China Commission for conducting this hearing today. This is an opportunity for several China scholars, including myself as a former head of the Chinese Section, to have an opportunity to make some constructive recommendations. Hopefully, these recommendations are helpful to the development of Chinese collections in the Library of Congress in the future. A better Chinese collection in the Library of Congress is vital for Congress, federal government agencies, American China scholars, many think tanks and members of the general public who are interested in China studies. I hope the Commission can find a way to strengthen the China collection at the Library of Congress, and I will do all I can to assist. Thank you for your time, and I will be glad to answer any questions from the Commission.