

Xujiahui Library: A Cultural Crossroads between East and West

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ABSTRACT: Since its establishment in 1847 by French Jesuits, the Xujiahui Library (also known as Bibliotheca Zi-ka-wei) seems to stay intact despite the fall of the last dynasty, wars both world and civil, and political and economic reforms and upheavals. Many an effort has been made to decode the secret of its lasting survival, such as its role as a first public library in Shanghai, its unique collections, and continuing contributions from its dedicated librarians. While the above holds true, the author has discovered a number of aspects inherent, but vital to the success of the library: 1) A cultural and geographical crossroads between the East and the West, reflecting the city it is in; 2) Forward and outward library missions laid down by its founding fathers, and flexible adaptations to time and place; and 3) Core collections interacting between the East and the West to meet the needs of its diverse users.



Figure 1. Modest Library Sign
Courtesy of Titangos Photography Studio

I came across the Xujiahui Library when researching the history of the Shanghai Library for my paper¹ and book.² Long after those writing projects, I could not help but wonder about the reason why it was able to survive the changing times and vicissitudes. In a span of 168 years, China has changed from an imperial China (the Qing Dynasty, 1644-1911) to the Republic of China (1911-1949), and finally to the People's Republic of China (1949-). Such a wide timeline arc witnessed a succession of rebellions and turmoils, namely, Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), Boxer Rebellion (1900), and Republic and Communist revolutions, intertwined with World War I (1914-1918), World War II (1937-1945), and Civil War (1945-1949). Since 1949, more changes have taken place, such as Land Reform (1947-1952), Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957), Great Leap Forward and People's Commune (1957), Three Years of Natural Disasters (1959-1961), the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), economic and political reforms (1976-1994), new nationalism (1994-2000), and the consumer society after joining World Trade Union (WTO) since 11 December 2001.

One day in May 2015, I finally had my curiosity satisfied by visiting the Xujiahui Library and meeting its librarian, Mr. Ming Yuqing. Located at No. 80, Caoxi Road North in the Xuhui District of the Metropolitan Shanghai, the Library is shadowed behind the Xujiahui Cathedral (also known as St. Ignatius Cathedral), but more dramatically, dwarfed by skyscrapers, and drowned by constant traffic from pedestrians and vehicles alike. It has a two-story main building and three-story south and west wings added later on. In the main building, a perpetual video documentary on the history of the Library is played on the right side of the foyer whereas a central stairway is used as an entrance, leading straight up to the second floor, which has two main rooms visible, with the small one used as a staff office and the bigger one as a reading room, furnished with more than a dozen reading desks lit up by the amber glow from surrounding desk lamps.



Figure 2. Amber Lighting
Courtesy of Titangos Photography Studio

With the caring oversight of the librarian, Mr. Ming, sitting behind his desk, antique books lining the shelves, a creaking wood floor, and singing birds outside, time seemed to stand still, creating a perfect harmony between the East and the West in a world of sound and fury. To visitors as well as local users, the Xujiahui Library is an oasis in their pursuit of knowledge and scholarship, thus a source of local pride, whether in wartime or peace, in economic downturn or boom, and in political upheaval or stability. This rare status that the Xujiahui Library enjoys is no surprise, if one looks at its history by examining the strategic location, forward and outward library missions, and collections.

I. Xujiahui: A Crossroads of the East and the West

“Demystify the Secret of Xujiahui Library”,³ a recent article by Yu Yi published in *Wenhui Daily* (or *Wenhui Bao*), a major daily newspaper in Shanghai, described in detail the evolving history of the Library since its beginning in 1847 and many of the Library’s rare collections such as *Euclidis Elementorum libri XV* (published in Cologne, Germany in 1591), *Dictionnaire Chinois, Français et Latin* (compiled by Chrétien Louis Joseph de Guignes in 1813), *Analects of Confucius* in Chinese and Latin, and the Chinese bibles read by two local families, Xu and Wang. To further illustrate the Library’s evolution, the article utilized a series of photographs of the Library’s building both in its present form and that of 1900s.

After due examinations, Yu concluded that the Xujiahui Library was not only the first library in Shanghai but also the earliest public library in modern China. It was called to rise and became the only library open to the public after the destruction of the Oriental Library at the beginning of World War II, which was established in 1924 by American Presbyterian Mission Press (later changed to the Commercial Press). On January 29th, 1932, the Japanese bombed the Zhabei District that was then a center for politics, culture, and the printing and publishing industries, thus becoming one of the most heavily bombed areas in Shanghai. The Japanese air raids destroyed the Commercial Press and its library. With both national and international aid, the Commercial Press resumed its operations on August 1st the same year. But its library was permanently shut down, with thousands of out-of-print and rare books and local newspapers and gazettes reduced to ashes. As a result, many of the former’s users began to switch to the Xujiahui Library and were delighted at the library’s ample collections, seamlessly filling the gap and meeting their exact needs.

It goes without too much argument that the Xujiahui Library is the earliest public library in modern China as well as the first library in Shanghai. An even more vital role the Library has been playing, however, lies in its accessibility, both geographical and cultural. The establishment of the Library closely coincided with the opening of Shanghai and its changing role as a crossroads between the East and the West. Formed as dry land by silting from Lake Tai, Shanghai did not merge as a city until 1291 in the [Yuan dynasty](#) (1271–1368) when a new settlement called Shanghai County (上海县) was established with a population of about 300,000. In the late [Qing dynasty](#) (1644–1912), Shanghai was elevated to a large domestic market for fishing and transporting cotton, silk, and fertilizer. China’s defeat in the [First Opium War](#) (1839–1842) resulted in the [Treaty of Nanjing](#) (1842), which forced Shanghai to be opened up as one of the five Chinese trading ports, the other four being Canton (Shameen Island), Amoy (Xiamen),

Foochowfoo (Fuzhou), and Ningpo (Ningbo). In 1843, the British settlement was established in Shanghai and soon joined by the American and French concessions, and five other countries.

Long before the Shanghai International Settlement, around the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties, Protestant and Catholic missionaries saw endless potential for the conversion and education of China's vast population. Unlike the Protestant missionaries who busied themselves chiefly with establishing schools and hospitals from 1807 to 1953, the Jesuit missionaries focused on cross-cultural dialogue and leaning by promoting scholarly publications and building churches and libraries since the late 16th century.

The year of 1514 not only marked the discovery of a trade route to China by Portuguese sailors but also the awakening of Jesuits' interest in the newfound country. Spain and Portugal were the first two countries to choose to send their Jesuits to China. When running out of candidates, Portugal also enlisted Italian Jesuits as part of its contingency. In the late 17th century, Spain, Portugal, and Italy were joined by two more countries, France and Germany. By record, the Jesuits pioneered Christian missions in China as early as 1582, although the first attempt to reach China was made in 1552 by St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552), a Navarre Basque Roman Catholic missionary. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the first superior of the Italian Jesuits in China, achieved unprecedented success in his missionary work through his remarkable tolerance toward the Chinese rites to Heaven, Confucius, and ancestors. Because of his scholarship and scientific abilities in predicting solar eclipses, in 1601 he was offered the position of adviser to the imperial court of the Wanli Emperor, thus becoming the first European to enter the Forbidden City. In 1605, Father Ricci established the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (宣武门天主堂), the oldest Catholic church in Beijing. Following in his footsteps, the Jesuits were seen wearing Chinese scholar's clothing, mastering the Chinese language and culture, and befriending the imperial government by becoming its tutors or advisers. In addition, they accumulated substantial personal collections by transporting books from Europe to China, most notably by Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628), a Dutch Jesuit. In 1693, the Beitang Library was founded at the North Church of Beijing as the first Jesuit library in China. "Through dedication to their mission in China, the Jesuits ignited an ongoing, cross-cultural dialogue between Western and Eastern customs, philosophies and cultural leanings that began in the late sixteenth century and has continued ever since."⁴ In the 17th and 18th centuries, the [Chinese Rites controversy](#) came to a head among Roman Catholic missionaries over the religiosity of Confucianism and Chinese rituals. The debate centered on whether the Chinese ritual practices Father Ricci had tolerated could be qualified as religious rites or considered incompatible with Catholic belief. After Pope Clement XI banned the Chinese Rites in 1704, which was reaffirmed by Benedict XIV in 1742, Emperor Kangxi disagreed with the Pope's decree and banned Jesuit missions in China.

It was not until 1842 when the second wave of Jesuit missionary efforts arrived, but this time the destination was Shanghai. According to David E. Mungello, an American historian specializing in cultural interaction between Europe and China since 1550, the strategy of bypassing Beijing and going directly to Shanghai reflected not only a sharp contrast between the imperial capital and the new commercial and colonial center but also a shift of priorities and powers from a reliance on the imperial intermediary to a wider base of Chinese Christians. What the new Jesuits needed foremost was a direct bridge between Europe and China. In 1843, a seminary was set up in Heng Tang, Qinpu, a westernmost district of Shanghai. Father Claude Gotteland (1803–1856),

head of the French mission, decided that once a permanent place of residence for newly arrived missionaries was allocated, a space to house library collections would be highly desirable to support their study of the Chinese language and culture so as to be prepared for their future work. From the beginning, an emphasis was thus placed on the Chinese collection. The remote location of the seminary was, however, not only inaccessible, considering the condition of roads and transportation means, but worse, thinly populated. These disadvantages forced Father Gotteland to revise his plan that included the delay of building village schools in the Christian communities in the area. Moving to a more centrally located place to reach out to a greater population proved to be a better choice. Five miles southwest of the City of Shanghai, the village of Xujiahui was an ideal candidate. It was the ancestral home of Xu Guangqi (徐光启, 1562–1633), one of the Jesuits' most influential converts. As a Ming Dynasty court official as well as a renowned agricultural scientist, astronomer, and mathematician, Xu lent strong support to the early Catholic Church in China and collaborated with Father Matteo Ricci and other priests to translate Western mathematical and scientific works into Chinese.

In March 1847, Father Gotteland instructed Father Mathurin Lemaître to purchase a plot of land adjacent to Xu's family chapel, northeast of Xu Guangqi's burial site. He also commissioned Father Joanne Ferrer, a Spanish Jesuit, to design the Jesuit seminary, chapel, and priests' living quarters. By the end of July when the construction was completed, the seminary was moved from Qinpu to Xujiahui. As Father Gotteland planned, Jesuits moved to their new quarters, and three rooms were indeed set aside for the new library. The Xujiahui Library was thus founded as the second Jesuit library in China and the first library in Shanghai, functioning mainly as a scholarly repository and a library for resident priests to work and study.

Also as planned, the Xujiahui Public School (or Collège Saint Ignace; today known as the Xujiahui Middle School) was founded in 1850. In 1868, the Xujiahui Museum, the first natural museum in Shanghai, was established. In 1872, the first coastal observatory in China began to be built along Zhaojiabang. As a matter of fact, the word *Xujia* means Xu's family whereas its suffix *hui* means an intersection or meeting place of two rivers, the Zhaojiabang and the Fahuajing. With more educational facilities made available by the Catholic Church, Xujiahui became a window to the West. It served as a true crossroads of Eastern and Western cultures, religions and politics, reflecting the actual state then of the City of Shanghai. In 1867-1868, one more story was added to the one-story living quarters to house the outgrown library, with the first floor holding its collections, and a new floor for priests' quarters.



Figure 3. Xujiahui Cathedral (or St. Ignatius Cathedral)
Courtesy of Titangos Photography Studio

In 1896, the ground was broken for the construction of a new Xujiahui Cathedral (or St. Ignatius Cathedral) at 158 Po Road, adjacent to the Xujiahui Library. The former Xujiahui Catholic Church was built in 1851 at 120 Po Road, when Father Gotteland received a land donation from the Xu Family. With the ever-increasing congregation, the Church, with a capacity of no more than 200 people, desperately needed an expansion. As the construction of the Xujiahui Observatory drastically depleted the limited church funding, the new church was postponed until the turn of the 20th century when a combined donation became available from the Xu and the Lu families. Designed by William Macdonnell Mitchell Dowdall, a self-taught English architect, the new Xujiahui Cathedral, in Gothic style, was finally completed in 1910 as the Cathedral of cathedrals in China, the First Cathedral in the Far East, and the Jesuits headquarters in Shanghai with a missionary complex.

The fame of the Xujiahui Cathedral put the Xujiahui Library on the map. Along with the church plaza, school, and museum, the Library became part of the Cathedral complex, whose growth prompted the expansion of the Library, with a plan drawn to convert the northeast wing into a two-story building. The renovation was completed in 1906, with a floor space of more than 2,000 square meters. The present structure is a conglomeration of a two-story north wing and a three-story south wing connected like a letter L, plus a three-story western extension later added to the rear of the south wing.



Figure 4. L-Shaped Library Wings
Courtesy of Titangos Photography Studio

The three-story south wing, decorated with verandas on each floor, was originally built in 1867 as the residence for the priests, while the two-story north wing was added between 1896 and 1897. According to a still visible cornerstone written in French, the western extension was added in 1931. The two-story north wing, in the Portuguese style, served as stack rooms, with the Chinese-language section on the first floor and Western languages on the second floor, until in 1956 when the Xujiahui Library became part of Shanghai Library.

One important factor that particularly compels our attention is the convenient location with a sound population base that gave rise to impetus to the expansion of the Church and its facilities such as the library, school, and plaza. Imagine what few users it would have if the library were still at the remote seminary in Qinpu. Would many famed scholars trek to Qinpu daily to utilize the library services after the bombing of the Oriental Library at the beginning of World War II?

Would the vacuum of the destroyed Oriental Library be so miraculously filled by the Xujiahui Library as the first public library?

II. Focusing on Eastern-Western Interaction

The new Jesuit mission had a clear library mission, i.e., continuing the legacy of Matteo Ricci's scholarly endeavors and being his able successor.⁵ From the very beginning, Father Gotteland outlined a goal for the Xujiahui Library to support both the missionaries' study and work and the local scholars' pursuit of learning. To achieve the goal, he provided his priests with a reading room and library, and a collection specifically focused on Eastern-Western interaction by bringing Western cultures to the East and Eastern cultures to the West. Meanwhile, he encouraged them to donate or collect books. The goal is of great importance at dual levels: 1) It reflected an early effort on the part of French Jesuits to introduce Western cultures to the Far East in general and Shanghai in particular; 2) It showed the founders' wishes to grasp the essence of the Eastern cultures in order to fulfill their missionary work in China. The Library holds two distinctive types of collections: the Western and the Chinese collections, religious and secular. To a great extent, its collections were not restricted only to religious subject areas, as most theological libraries tend to do.

In 1997, Gail King, editor of *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, published her survey of the Library's collection in 1935⁶. In the specified time frame, the Library had more than 100,000 titles in 200,000 volumes, of which only 80,000 volumes were in European languages. According to collection updates provided by both Shanghai Library⁷ and the introductory video entitled *Shanghai Library-Xujiahui Library*, the Library now has about 750,000 volumes in its Western collection in nearly 20 different languages, such as English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Latin, and Russian. They cover subjects in philosophy, politics, economy, linguistics, literature, art, history, geography, science, Sinology, and theology. The collection consists of two major parts: 1) pre-1800 European language rare editions and early Japanese-language documents, and 2) manuscripts of early mission-related writings by the Jesuit missionaries. The latter, as a special collection, has drawn increasing international interest.

Instead of collecting titles exclusively in Western languages, the Xujiahui Library founders put a great emphasis on the Chinese language and culture with unique onward and outward foresight. They included early Sino-publications such as Jean-Baptiste du Halde's *Description de la Chine* (1735), collections of maps of China, bilingual or trilingual dictionaries of Chinese, Latin or French, and translation of earliest Chinese fiction and [Four Great Classical Novels](#) (i.e., *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Water Margin*, *Journey to the West*, and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*). It is *Sapientia Sinica: exponente* (also known as *the Meaning of Chinese wisdom*) published in 1662 that marked the beginning of introducing the East to the West through a Latin translation of selected [Four Books and Five Classics](#) (i.e., *Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Analects*, and *Mencius*; *Classic of Poetry*, *Book of Documents*, *Book of Rites*, *I Ching*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*). Translated by Ignacio da Costa (1599-1666), a Portuguese Jesuit, the book was chiefly the study notes of Four Books by Italian Jesuit Prospero Intorcetta (1626-1696).

Among the Chinese collections, the works of Confucius, such as Confucian [Thirteen Classics](#), have occupied a prominent status. In China, there were then at least three major belief systems,

Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. The decision to elevate Confucianism is by no means accidental. It is

“Stemmed from the Jesuits’ interest in his philosophy and wisdom, which bears remarkable similarities to Western morality. It was the intention of the Jesuits to use the morality of Kong Fuzi as an avenue through which they could demonstrate the similarities between Western and Chinese morality; and moreover, corroborate their claim that Kong Fuzi, or Confucius, was a cultural representation of monotheistic thought and not a deity.”⁸

Apparently the Jesuits were justified in their emphasis of Confucianism. Through their cross-cultural exchange, the concept and teachings of Confucius arouse great enthusiasm from such influential Enlightenment thinkers as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Arouer Voltaire, and Christian de Wolff, who pursued the principles and doctrines of Confucius and Neo-Confucianism in their search for a “common humanity.”⁹



Figure 5. Classic Wall
Courtesy of Titangos Photography Studio

In addition to the Confucius classics, history, philosophy, and literature (经史子集), Tibetan literature, translations of Western classics, and manuscripts in early Sinology and theology in China and Far East, the Xujiahui Library boasts remarkable periodical holdings. They are comprised of historical legal literature such as complete sets of the Shanghai Municipal Council Gazette and Municipal Reports, China Yearbooks edited by H. G. W. Woodhead from 1913 to 1939, and thousands of local gazettes amounting to nearly 120,000 volumes throughout China, whose completeness was second only to the extinct Oriental Library. The library acquired a substantial number of early and rare magazines, and complete runs of newspapers, such as Shanghai's first Chinese-language newspaper, *Shanghai Xinbao* (also known as *Shanghai News*), *Shenbao* and China's first English-language newspaper, *North China Herald* (known as *North China Daily News*).

Two Chinese newspapers, *Shanghai Xinbao* (1861-1872) and *Shenbao* (1872-1949) have been of great value to historians and scholars in various fields. The former happened to cover the later years of the Taiping Rebellion. As the only Chinese newspaper in Shanghai, it reported many real stories and happenings, thus becoming one of the important sources about the rebellion. *Shanghai Xinbao* is also the first Chinese newspaper to carry advertisements among more than 300 newspapers and magazines circulating throughout China in the 19th century.¹⁰

Shenbao was founded by Ernest Major, a British businessman, in 1872 and discontinued in 1949. It was the first modern newspaper in Shanghai, written by Chinese reporters for Chinese readers. The more than 2 million articles it published provided readers with the full spectrum of life over a span of 77 turbulent years. According to Librarian Chen Bingren, the Xujiahui Library's set of *Shenbao* was more complete than that of the Shanghai Newspapers Library, as all advertisements in the set owned by the latter were lost during the binding process for archival purposes.

Founded by British auctioneer Henry Shearman in 1850 and discontinued in 1951, the weekly *North China Herald* has become one of the most important genealogical sources for people around the world to build their family trees when they discover that they have Asian roots and connections. The English language it was published in is another great attraction to those whose language is not Chinese. Recently, Sue Morrell Stewart, a South African teacher, visited the Xujiahui Library. It has been a family fascination ever since her grandmother told her father on her deathbed that she was born in China. After her father's vain trip to England and her fruitless inquiry in the Shanghai Archives, Sue was successful with *North China Herald*, where she found the full name of her British great-great-grandfather, G. W. Haden, mentioned in several annual directories published by the Herald. She also located the death notice of her great-grandfather David Martin in 1907. Thanks to the information provided by the Herald, she managed to complete a Shanghai timeline on her family tree: her great-great-grandfather, G. W. Haden, an editor of the Herald, died in the late 1800s; her great-grandfather, David Martin who married Haden's daughter Mary, used to be a captain of the "Tatung," a steamship owned by British Butterfield & Swire (B&S) Shipping Company specialized in shipping, travel and mercantile along the China coast from 1866 to 1931; Martin's daughter, Charlotte was born in 1898 and honeymooned in 1925 in Shanghai with her British husband who worked in South Africa.¹¹

The complete and comprehensive historical periodicals held by the Xujiahui Library have assisted countless historians, scholars, and ordinary citizens in their pursuit of knowledge,

research, and writing. The depth and breadth of the collections in both Chinese and major Western languages have enabled the Xujiahui Library to become a library truly for everyone. Dr. Gertrud Maria Rösc, Head of the Department of German as a Foreign Language at the University of Heidelberg, has had an equally successful story in the use of the Xujiahui Library where she eventually discovered the much desired historical documents on the writer Vicky Baum for her creation of “Hotel Shanghai.” In search for the relevant background information, she had searched in vain in the Shanghai Archives and the Shanghai Library.¹²



Figure 6. Tranquil Reading Room Can Be Filled With Busy Users.
Courtesy of Titangos Photography Studio

III. Why Can the Xujiahui Library Last?

By conventional criteria, the Xujiahui Library is neither the oldest nor the largest library in China. It is, however, one of the lasting libraries that have managed to keep themselves relevant so as to serve their users continuously. The library building has housed not only its residence priests but also overnight guests like Li Xiucheng (李秀成, 1823-1864) during the Taiping Rebellion. Like any historical mirror, the Library's collections faithfully record and reflect historical events occurring in those 168 years, with no alterations or bias, even in the heated debate between Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881-1936) and Di Ke (狄克), a penname of Zhang Chunqiao (张春桥, 1917-2005). In 1935, the latter criticized Xiao Jun (萧军, 1907-1988), one of the former's literary protégés, for misrepresenting the Northeast in his novel *Countryside in August* (八月的乡村). Lu Xun fought back fiercely by accusing Di Ke of being the one who feigned revolution in

order to oppose revolution in his famed essay entitled 《三月的租界》 (*The International Settlement in March*).¹³ In 1968, the Xujiahui Library was called upon to fact-check the three decades' old debate when Zhang Chunqiao, a member of the Gang of the Four, was questioned about his anti-revolutionary role in the 1930s.

To such a miracle of relevance, the author of *Demystify the Secret of Xujiahui Library*,¹⁴ attributes the collective contribution of generations of librarians and library staff. While the attribution holds true, the author seems to overlook one pivotal factor about the wholesomeness of the library: the aforesaid mission of Jesuit missionaries and their library, i.e., to pursue the interaction or cross-cultural dialogue between the West and the East so as to be able successors of Father Ricci. They are the driving forces keeping the Library and its people going.

1. Flexibility in Moving to an Urban Location

By looking at a series of changes to the Library's history, one cannot help but notice a singular feature, characteristic of the Xujiahui Library, namely, its flexibility. Such flexibility was reflected from its 1847 prenatal move from Heng Tang, Qinpu, 23 miles west of Shanghai, to Xujiahui, 4.5 miles outside the City. Seeing the newly established seminary being not only remote and inaccessible but also sparsely populated, Father Claude Gotteland revised his plan accordingly for a permanent place for his missionary residence and the library. It is interesting to note that the same tendency occurred more than a hundred years later in the move of the original Woodstock College from Maryland to New York City in 1969. The reason for the move lies in the fact that, "After Vatican II, Jesuits began to believe that they should be educated amid the urban environment instead of in rural isolation."¹⁵

The move to Xujiahui has proved to be the flexibility much needed. The convenient location and short distance to the Library is a key factor to facilitate the use and popularity of the Xujiahui Library. In 2012, Sung Jae Park published his findings in measuring the travel time and distance in library use patterns in a full temporal and spatial environment,¹⁶ and in measuring public library accessibility by using GIS (geographic information systems).¹⁷ His findings through both multipurpose travel patterns to use libraries and the GIS analyses have determined that distance is a deciding factor for library use. Agee, Vodeb, and Vodeb also employed the GIS method to conduct a spatial analysis of the public library network in Slovenia and concluded that the travel distance to the nearest library is highly important.¹⁸ The physical accessibility is thus considered a fundamental measure of freedom to attend activities, which is true of library use experience in Florida, Slovenia, or Shanghai, let alone in the limited transportation options and lack of roads that prevailed in the late 19th century. That is one of the reasons why many a public library has run into protesting outcries when their administrators try to save operational costs by closing neighborhood libraries.

To improve and facilitate the accessibility, Father Gotteland purchased a piece of land in the Village of Xujiahui to reestablish his seminary and library more than a hundred years ago. Today, Park recommends that librarians define service areas for libraries, develop library programs and services for susceptible user groups, and evaluate user groups' needs, whereas Agee, Vodeb, and Vodeb suggest improvements of the library network, aligning the role of the library services according to the perceived needs of the local people, and the promotion of

mobile libraries for rural and remote areas. If we study carefully the three scenarios, we will find that there is a commonality among them: We build our libraries and services close to where our users are.

2. *Flexibility in Library Collections*

Neither Rome nor the collections at the Xujiahui Library were built in a day. Their comprehensiveness and relevance to the studies of early Sinology and Christianity in China are a direct result of the mission originated by its founders and carried on faithfully by staff members in different times and periods. As soon as the Library was opened in 1847, Father Gotteland called on all Jesuits to donate or collect books for the Library. Combined this obligation with a personal pride, many missionaries regarded the new library as their own. Among its contributors were his successors such as Angelo Zottoli (1826-1902), Louis Pfister (1833-91), and Henri Havret (1848–1902) as well as Chinese Jesuits like Ma Xiangbo (1840–1939) and Li Wenyu (1840-1911).

Most founding Jesuits were also authors or editors. This is by no means an accidental phenomenon. “In fact, publication was the primary role of scientific inquiry in China. Jesuits located in China were substantially connected to scientific communities in Europe ... Jesuit cultural learnings of the Chinese civilization were not, however, limited to sciences. The Jesuits translated and published Chinese teachings, such as Confucian maxims, and wrote extensively on Chinese political, social, and religious systems ... Through publication and personal correspondence, the Jesuit mission acquainted and informed Europe of the culture and philosophy of China.”¹⁹ Because of their engagement of Chinese officials and intellectuals in scientific dialogue, Jesuits collected library materials in their areas of expertise over the years, thus producing a pronounced flexibility or dynamic element in library collections, reflective of time and demands. Father Zottoli, known for his knowledge in literatures and languages, spared no means enhancing the library collection in the subject areas in question. Apart from being headmaster of the Xujiahui Public School in 1853, he was a prolific writer. He published *Cursus litteratura sinica* printed in 5 volumes (1879-1882), compiled Chinese-Latin dictionaries, and translated into Latin essential Confucius classics. Henri Havret was another outstanding collector during his tenure from 1894 until his passing in 1902. In addition to managing the Library, he served as an editor of *Variétés sinologiques* (1892-2005). As a historian on China, he managed to obtain substantial materials published in Europe about early Sinology.

Xu Zongze (religious name: Ruose) is not only known as the 12th generation of Xu Guangqi but also the first non-priest head of the Chinese Language Section from 1924 to 1948. As a Doctor of Divinity, he published a series of books concerning Catholic missions and missionary work in China, most notably, *Introduction to the History of Chinese Catholic Missionary* (中国天主教传教史概论, 1938) and *Ming and Qing Dynasties Jesuits* (明清间耶稣会士译著提要, 1949). During his writing for the latter, Xu utilized exclusively the collections available at the Library from a selection of more than 400 writings by Jesuits and Sinologists. Like his predecessors, Xu was very aggressive in collecting local gazettes. In his two and a half decades' head position, the Library accumulated more than 2,000 unique yearbooks and gazettes, which ranked the Xujiahui Library as the biggest gazette holder in China after the Oriental Library at the beginning of the Second World War.



Figure 7. Changing with time and technology
Courtesy of Titangos Photography Studio

The Xujiahui Library is one of the most fortunate libraries in the sense that it has been equipped with a consistently supportive and creative library management throughout its history. Before the 1949 Revolution, the total library collections remained flat around 200,000 volumes (120,000 volumes in Chinese and 80,000 volumes in European languages), a figure not too drastically different from that of Gail King's 1935 estimation. The total of its collections reached 750,000 volumes after 1956 when the Library became a branch of the Shanghai Library and absorbed the collections from several special libraries in Shanghai, such as the Royal Asiatic Society Library, Haiguang Library, and Shang Xian Tang Library (the International Institute of China). When Gu Yanlong became the head of Shanghai Library, he allocated an independent purchasing fund for the Xujiahui Library. The staff there could bypass the Acquisition Department to go straight to major booksellers' warehouses to select and purchase anything worthy of the library, as Gu would advise them. Today, Dr. Wu Jianzhong, head of Shanghai Library, has inherited the same forward and outward thinking. He advocates a continuing collection development at the Xujiahui Library so as to become a knowledge powerhouse, an exchange center and podium for the interaction between human beings and resources. On May 25, 2015, a celebration was held for the grand opening of the Xujiahui Library as the Center for China-Western Cultural Exchange.²⁰

3. Flexibility in Library Rules and Regulations

Starting from 1870, Chinese staff began to be put into leading positions at the Xujiahui Library. Xu Bing was the first Chinese priest to lead the Chinese language section. After 1913, four more

Chinese priests continued to hold the position. In 1924, Xu Zongze was the head of the Chinese Language Department, which lasted more than 24 years. It is in his time that the Library underwent a fundamental transformation, changing from a closed Jesuit library to a library open to the general public, as long as a user was recommended or guaranteed by a priest or library staff. The same regulation stays valid until today. If one wants to use the Library, a written permit is expected. Such a welcoming change played an active role in benefiting many a well-known scholar, who had utilized the Xujiahui Library for their research and writing. For example, Ge Gongzhen (戈公振, 1890-1935), a historian in Chinese journalism, was referred by Jesuit priest and educator Ma Xiangbo to use the Library, after the destruction of the Oriental Library. During my recent visit in May 2015, I went without prior knowledge about the visiting permit. But after I explained to the guard who I was, he not only let me in but also kindly advised me to introduce myself to the librarian so as to get a detailed tour. And my wishes were fulfilled.



Figure 8. Instructed by Mr. Ming, the Librarian
Courtesy of Titangos Photography Studio

Such flexibility is, however, no mystery, if we look closely at guidelines for missionaries in China. In his *Binding Friendship*, Jeremy Clarke interprets John O'Malley's *The First Jesuits*, and concludes that "In the case of Matteo Ricci and Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607), the Jesuits who proceeded Ricci both into China and undertaking Chinese studies, being involved in any other ministry of the word entailed arduously applying themselves to the study of Chinese language and culture so as to be able to engage in Christian dialogue in culturally appropriate ways."²¹ Guided by such principles, Jesuits were adaptable to the new country from the very beginning. The example of changing garments Clarke cited is particularly telling. When Ruggieri

and Ricci first came to China in 1583, they wore the robes of Buddhist monks and even shaved monk hairstyle so as to let the world know that they were men of religion, without realizing that monks were generally not respected in the 16th century. But their pursuit for mastering Chinese language and culture enabled them to learn of their initial ignorance by acquainting themselves with new scholar friends in Ricci's fields of cartography and observatory astronomy. In 1595, Jesuits officially changed their clothing from monks' robes to scholars' garment.

At present, the majority of collections at the Xujiahui Library are kept away due to their rarity and fragility. With an annual count of over 2,000 library visits and usages, the Library has received increasing demand to open it to all.²² Concrete plans have been underway at the Xujiahui Library to expand its open hours and collections, such as gradually recalling the collections kept in two storages during 1993's metro construction in the area, and opening to the public since 2003 after its major renovations. In 2010, it purchased the Swedish Roche China Studies Collection, the world's largest private collection of Western Sinology from Luo Wenda.²³

As a departure gift, Mr. Ming Yuqing, the librarian, answered the following questions from me:

Q: Is your library being heavily used, since there is no user around?

A: Yes. It can be crowded, especially in the afternoon.

Q: What status of your library in relation to local residents?

A: Local residents regard it as their proud heritage. None will fail to know its location.

Q: Where are your collections, as we only see reference books around?

A: We have storage. The two elevators in the back wall are used for paging items.

Q: What is your relationship to Shanghai Library, the main library?

A: We are working together as one unit. When there is a system upgrade, they will come. We have ample terminals to be utilized.

Q: What do you see your future, considering all the commercial developments outside the window?

A: Business as usual. The library will still remain the same as always.

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