

Fudan and Appalachian Library Exchange Program: 2009 to 2012

By Megan Johnson, Allan Scherlen, and Xiaorong Shao

In May 2008, representatives from Appalachian State Library's Belk Library and Information Commons traveled to Shanghai, China to meet with Fudan University Library to finalize the Fudan-Appalachian Library Exchange Program (FALEP). This program was created to provide library faculty with an international perspective and supports Appalachian's Internationalization Strategic Plan to increase global research and faculty development activities.

The Appalachian State University librarians that participated in the 2008 trip included University Librarian Mary Reichel, Xiaorong Shao, Beth Cramer, and Allan Scherlen. Dr. Shao was hired as a Faculty Fellows Librarian in 2006 and she takes a lead role in international outreach in the library and across campus.

The FALEP exchange officially began in the fall semester of 2009. Appalachian and Fudan each served as host for librarians from the partner institution. Fudan University librarians were in residence at Belk Library from three to five months, while Appalachian librarians were in residence at Fudan Libraries for four to six weeks. Each institution paid for their own librarians' airfare travel and passport costs while the host institutions provided housing and a monthly



Weihua Shi, Megan Johnson, and Zhang Jing, Deputy Director of East China Normal University

living stipend.

Three Appalachian librarians participated in the exchange between 2009 and 2012: Megan Johnson (E-Learning and Outreach Librarian), Allan Scherlen (Social Sciences Librarian), and Leslie Farison (Business Librarian). Exchange librarians from Fudan were Weihua Shi (Associate Director of Dean's Office for Fudan University Library System), Xuan Xu (Reference and Instruction Librarian), and Weihua Cheng (E-learning librarian).

Cultural Exchange

All six librarians who participated in the exchange learned many things directly related to library services, but equally important, all six learned about cultural differences. Participants returned to their home institutions with a deeper understanding of the other country's culture, and the experience enabled them to serve

with enriched social sensitivity and a more global perspective.

All three Chinese librarians improved their already excellent English language abilities, and the three Appalachian librarians took courses in Mandarin. At Appalachian, more Chinese international students and faculty feel welcomed and comfortable in the library with multiple librarians taking an active interest in Chinese language and culture. The presence of a visiting librarian from Fudan at Belk Library served to bring a global connection to Appalachian librarians who do not have the opportunity to travel to China. All six librarians returned to their home campus with ideas on how to change or improve not only service to international students, but to all patrons.

Participants in the exchange discovered that there are strengths and weaknesses in both Chinese and Western libraries and were able to absorb best practices from their exchange partners.

Scholarship

A primary success of FALEP is the amount of scholarship generated in partnership between the two universities. Five articles co-authored by the exchange librarians at both institutions have been published during the recent years. Research topics include comparative librarianship, the benefits of international exchanges for university libraries, students' opinions about Chinese and U.S. academic library services for international students and scholars, and international partnership between U.S. and Chinese serials librarians.

Professional Development

During the residencies of the visiting librarians, the host universities offered numerous opportunities for professional development. In China, Appalachian librarians met extensively with members of various library departments and toured a number of neighboring university libraries, including Jiaotong University Library, East China Normal University Library, Tongji University Library, as well as four libraries of the Fudan University. The Fudan exchange librarians visited several University of North Carolina System libraries, and attended



Reference librarians and Allan Scherlen at the Library of Liberal Arts of Handan Campus, Fudan University.

various professional conferences in the U.S. Each exchange librarian gave presentations on their areas of expertise while they were in the host library. The topics included library service models, library instructional programs, demand driven acquisitions, and library public relations.

Ongoing Outcomes

Fudan University and Appalachian State University have an existing 14-year relationship, known as the William R. Holland Fellows for Business Study. Each year, 12 Appalachian State University students and 12 Fudan students analyze business groups through a semester-long class. Fudan students travel to the United States for two weeks in April and Appalachian students visit China during May. Many business faculty members at both

institutions have benefited by leading these student exchanges. Two of the U.S. librarian exchanges took place when the Appalachian students were in Shanghai, and FALEP was a great enrichment of this relationship.

Conclusions

Despite the fact that Fudan is a much larger research institution than Appalachian State, the exchange confirmed common goals and practices shared by academic libraries to support the curricula and research of their faculty and students that transcend institutional size and geographic location. The exchange confirmed the hope that librarians from different sides of the globe can share professional and personal bonds that in turn make them better librarians.