“With a new era in China, there may come also a new era for the whole world.”

Above: Librarian Holly Snyder shows students from Hong Kong a few of the John Hay Library’s treasured items about China.

Brown University’s Chinese Collections

John Brown (1736–1803) was the first Rhode Islander to become engaged in the China trade, sending his ship, the General Washington, to Canton in 1787. Since that time, Brown students, faculty, alumni, and friends have continued to interact with greater China through travel, diplomacy, scholarship, and collaboration. The John Hay Library, complemented by other special collections holdings around the state, reflects this rich history. And the Brown University Library’s impressive collections, both those gifted and purchased, have triggered and enhanced Chinese studies and research at Brown and among scholars worldwide. The Library’s array of related collections presents pathways to understanding early American endeavors in China, the experiences of Brown’s first Chinese students, the development and maturation of East Asian Studies at Brown, international exchanges between China and Rhode Island, and targeted University initiatives such as the 2011–2012 Year of China celebrations.

In the 1960s, a gift from Charles Sidney Gardner, father of Brown Professor John B. Gardner, began the Library’s first major Chinese collection. Charles Gardner donated approximately 30,000 volumes, the majority in Chinese. Most of the gifted books were published in the 1880s, with some dating as early as the beginning of the 17th century and others as late as the 1910s. The holdings cover language, literature, history, philosophy, religion, art, archaeology, and social sciences, with a focus on the Qing dynasty history which was Professor Gardner’s specialty. Brown quickly enhanced the Gardner Collection after securing a federal grant in 1965, enabling the Library to purchase more Chinese materials and to grow the overall collection into a first class resource. Today’s collection is comprised of over 150,000 books in East Asian languages, thousands of Western language materials, as well as many serials, electronic resources, microfilm, audio-video materials, and maps.

The most extraordinary element of the Gardner Collection is located on the third floor of the Rockefeller Library. Adjacent to the stacks is the small, specially constructed Gardner Room lined with three walls of traditionally styled Chinese bookcases. These engraved cabinets house 93 Chinese rare books (mostly published between the 17th and 19th centuries) which are printed on fine rice paper, accordion-folded and bound with twine.


Below: “Hall for Brown School of Sociology” from promotional pamphlet Brown in China: A Brown University School of Sociology at Shanghai (Brown University Campus Committee, February 1921).

Right: Dr. Li Wang, East Asian Collection Curator, in front of the Gardner Room’s traditional Chinese bookcases.
The John Hay Library’s resources, mainly produced and collected by Westerners, reveal how outsiders have historically imagined, mystified, and struggled to understand China over the centuries. One of the earliest examples is the *Dictionarium Sinicum*, a manuscript created in 1726 and maintained at a Jesuit college in Beijing. This large leather-bound, thousand page volume holds a systematic translation of Chinese words (written in traditional characters) into their Latin equivalents. It serves as a material artifact from the China trade and evidence of early diplomacy in China. At the time, foreigners were prohibited from learning Chinese. However, Benjamin Bowen Carter, a maritime physician and member of the Brown class of 1786, studied Chinese and acted as an interpreter in Canton. He was likely the first alumnum of Brown to take a serious scholarly interest in China. U.S. consul in Canton (1802–1810), Edward Carrington, was a colleague and correspondent of Benjamin Bowen Carter, and they discussed Carter’s potential succession to the U.S. consul. Sadly, Carter died before receiving such a rank. In 1844, John Carter Brown (class of 1816) presented the *Dictionarium* to the Library as a memorial to his maternal uncle.

The John Hay Library also houses texts relating to China from the personal collection of the Library’s namesake, John Hay, class of 1858. John Hay was the architect of the Open Door policy in China and a proponent of the Boxer Rebellion Indemnity Scholarship Program which, using funds from war reparations, founded a preparatory school in China (today Tsinghua University) and provided scholarships for the education of Chinese students in American universities. In 1906, the year after Hay’s death, his widow, Clara Stone Hay, donated more than 400 books and manuscripts from his personal library to Brown. The collection includes volumes pertaining to Chinese/American relations written by Hay’s contemporaries which were personally presented and inscribed to him by missionary and diplomat Chester Holcombe and engineer William Barclay Parsons.
The Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, one of the foremost collections of the John Hay Library, contains materials depicting Chinese military and court officials. Mrs. John Nicholas Brown's primary interest was the history and iconography of military uniforms and costumes. In addition, she collected battle and campaign scenes, military portraits and caricatures, ceremonial displays, and travel narratives. Among this large collection are 86 original, mounted and unsigned gouache paintings of Chinese court, official, and military costumes, circa 1820; a suite of watercolor and gouache drawings of mandarins, warriors and spouses; a Chinese funeral party made of plaster; and figures representing soldiers of the Boxer Rebellion made prior to WWII by Heyde of Dresden and Mignot of France. In 2011, the Library received a new addition—a small fabric national flag of the People’s Republic of China from Tom and Antonia Bryson (classes of 1972 and 1974). Now quite rare, these flags were issued by the country’s Aviation Committee during WWII to identify American pilots for rescue.

The Library also holds an impressive set of international postage stamps. Beginning with the first Chinese stamps issued in 1878, the George S. Champlin Stamp Collection provides captivating insight into Chinese history and culture over the last two centuries. After 1949, when China split into the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China-Taiwan Formosa, each region began issuing its own stamps. The Champlin Collection includes stamps produced in both Chinas as well as other regional stamps, which are complemented by blocks of Chinese stamps, and used covers (postal envelopes) in the Library’s Irene Tramm Collection.
Brown’s celebrated History of Science Collection charts the development of scientific disciplines since the Renaissance and contains fascinating works on Chinese astronomy and time-keeping. The Library recently acquired a groundbreaking medical text, *Les Secrets de la Médecine des Chinois* (Grenoble, 1671), the first European book on Chinese medicine. Comprised of extracts from Chinese medical treatises translated into French by an unnamed Jesuit missionary, *Les Secrets* includes the first accounts in the West of the Chinese theory of pulses, concepts fundamental to Chinese medical practice at that time and of much interest to European physicians. Brown is the first institution in the Northeast to hold a copy and one of only seven institutions worldwide.

Brown University made distinctive contributions to foreign missions in the 19th century through educational efforts, with several Brown graduates becoming eminent translators and school leaders in China. This leadership was modeled by Francis Wayland, the fourth president of Brown University (1827–1855), who had been a Baptist clergyman and pastor of the First Baptist Church in Boston prior to his appointment at Brown. Wayland’s papers in the University Archives include manuscripts and letters with the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Missionary Union, revealing Wayland’s thoughts on the state of the Missionary Union in China during the mid-1800s. Wayland was acquainted with missionary Josiah Goddard (class of 1835), who went to Singapore in 1839 and then on to Ningpo, China in 1848 to serve until his death in 1854. Goddard developed an English-Chinese lexicon and translated the New Testament into Chinese (a copy of Goddard’s translation is available in the Rockefeller Library).

In the 1920s, Brown launched Brown-in-China, an initiative intended to create “a Chinese college under the inspiration of American idealism,” to strengthen China’s democracy and “to direct the progress made in Chinese society by establishing new controls for conduct through compelling ideals of righteousness and service.” Daniel H. Kulp (class of 1913), who had already spent six years at Shanghai Baptist College and Theological Seminary, led this initiative.

As part of this program Professor James Q. Dealey spent a semester teaching at Shanghai Baptist College and Theological Seminary. Over one hundred of Dealey’s photographs are stored in Brown University Archives along with background information about his trip. These photographs capture a variety of scenes which caught Dealey’s interest, like the image of “prize winning cotton,” and shots of parades and automobiles. Harold S. Bucklin also served as a professor of Sociology at Shanghai College. Bucklin’s students read *Social Conditions in An American City*, which describes Springfield, Illinois. Based on this study, they conducted their own social survey of the Chinese village of Sung-Ka-Hong. The Sung-Ka-Hong survey was published in English and Chinese; copies of both are available in the University Archives at the John Hay Library.
Zue Sun Bien Class of 1912 (known as Bian Baimei) was Brown University’s first Chinese graduate. Following Zue Sun Bien, a succession of Bien family members completed degrees at Brown University. Zue Sun Bien studied economics and political science at Brown. He was appointed a James Manning Scholar in 1912, and in 1920 became manager of Tientsin office of the Bank of China. He kept a diary from 1914 to 1968. In 2010, this diary, of over one million Chinese characters, was published in four volumes by Bien family descendants and distributed to university libraries and scholars around the world. A copy of the diary is now available in the Gardner Collection.

Since 1912, many renowned Chinese scholars and professionals have graduated from Brown University. One of Brown’s most notable alums, President Wei Yang, Ph.D. ’85, is a research pioneer in Fracture Mechanics, Mechatronic Reliability, and Micro/Nanomechanics. He is the current President of Zhejiang University in China, and has served in a number of leadership roles including Interim Chair of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), Chairman of the Union of Research Universities in China, and Asia-Pacific Chair of Global University Network of Innovation (GUNI). Showing a commitment to Brown and helping to strengthen the University, President Yang served as an inaugural member of the Brown University Advisory Council on China, and helped to increase Brown’s involvement, visibility, and reputation in China.

The current Year of China Oral History Project is designed to document the evolving relationship that Brown University has had with China at different points in history. By recording the diverse voices of Chinese students, staff, and faculty at Brown, the project will complement the Library’s existing historical records and illuminate a larger history of China.

I started studying Chinese for no reason that I could articulate; I was just following my nose, my heart….China was not a popular subject at the time and people did not understand or feel the relevance of China; it was still a dark mysterious place in most peoples’ minds. Even my parents were not pleased when I decided to major in Chinese studies. They kept questioning where it would lead. But the great thing about Brown is that you don’t have to have a specific agenda — it’s a time just to explore your interests.

—Excerpt from interview between Jocelyn Richards ’12 and Hollywood Producer Janet Yang ’78
On the occasion of the Year of China, the John Hay Library hosted “Culture and Art from the Divine Land: An Exhibition of Chinese Collections in the Year of Dragon.” The exhibit displayed books, pictures, and museum objects selected from the Library’s East Asian Collection, Chinese Writers Signature Collection, Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, and Curator Li Wang’s private collection. Highlighting links between Brown and China, it explored cultural exchange and understanding between the peoples from both nations. In February 2012, “Culture and Art from the Divine Land” was featured in the Year of China’s Lantern Festival Gallery Walk. In May 2012, Orwig Music Library hosted “Cultural Revolutions: A Study in Contrasts” curated by Senior Library Specialist, Nancy Jakubowski. “Cultural Revolutions” featured Maoist propaganda songs, “model theatrical works” from The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and samplings from concurrent works by Asian Pop artists of the ’60s, ’70s, and ’80s. The Library also hosted a welcome reception for distinguished guests from the Cross-Straits Tea Exchanges Association in the Laura and David Finn Reading Room, led by Mr. Zhang Jiakun, former Executive Vice Governor of Fujian Province, China. Mr. Zhang Jiakun donated his calligraphic works and books, including *Tie Guanyin da dian* (Encyclopedia of Tie Guanyin, a representative type of oolong tea). As part of the reception two master tea performers briefly demonstrated the traditional Chinese tea ceremony, *cha dao*, the “Way of Tea.” In addition, Mr. Bing Ling, Chair of the Association for Chinese Writers in the U.S., contributed a number of new Chinese writers’ signature works.

Today, Library users interested in finding Chinese materials can search Josiah, the Library’s online catalog, in English or Chinese characters. Reference services, online text and chat, and research consultation are also available through Dr. Li Wang, East Asian Curator, and other subject librarians and specialists.

**The John Carter Brown Library**

The John Carter Brown Library, an independent research library at Brown University, holds one of the world’s most renowned collections of Americana—but is surprisingly rich with sources on other parts of the world. Many of the earliest travel narratives in the JCB include sections on Asia. Jan Huygen van Linschoten’s richly illustrated *Itinerario, voyage ofte schipvaert, van Ian Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien* (Amsterdam, 1596) spans Asia from Mozambique to Japan. The son of a Haarlem notary, Linschoten emigrated first to Seville, then to Lisbon before traveling to Portuguese Goa. There he copied Portuguese maps that revealed trade routes that the Portuguese had sought to keep secret. Likewise, in the *Pars Indiae*, also known as the *Petits Voyages* (Frankfurt, 1599), Theodor de Bry described and vividly illustrated the geography and customs of the East Indies, including China, while his *Grands Voyages* covered the Americas. Ferdinand Verbiest’s *Voyages de l’empereur de la chine dans la tartarie* (Paris, 1685) recounts the Jesuit’s presence in China and Verbiest’s accomplishments there. It includes a copper plate engraving of the astronomical instruments he made for Beijing’s Imperial observatory, which he headed.
The European fascination for all things Chinese is reflected in Juan González de Mendoza’s *Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumlбрес del gran reyno dela china* (Madrid, 1586). González de Mendoza based the work on a manuscript by Miguel de Luarca, a Spanish soldier who traveled to China. It is the first European work to include Chinese characters, and appeared in no fewer than 30 editions within 15 years of its first appearance.

For more on the holdings related to China in the John Carter Brown Library, see the online exhibition “America and the China Trades 1750–1850” at http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/china/index1.html.
Chinese Collections

AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

Flying Dragon Above the Great Wall (cut paper banner).

As 2012’s Chinese zodiac sign, the powerful dragon symbolizes the promise for a dynamic, harmonious, and prosperous year.