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## Introduction

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## Introduction

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According to a recent study by the UCLA Center for the Study of Inequality and the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APA-ICS), the Asian American population will grow by 74 percent between 2015 and 2040 and the Asian American electorate will more than double and grow by 107 percent. Paul Ong, director of the UCLA Center for the Study of Inequality, writes, “Our report finds that in 2015, there are 20.5 million Asian Americans, and a quarter of a century from now, 35.7 million. In 2040, nearly 1 in 10 Americans will be Asian American. During the same period, the number of Asian American registered voters will increase from 5.9 million to 12.2 million.”<sup>1</sup> The increase of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders will certainly diversify and shift communities across the United States. This kind of significant change in demographics will have a direct impact on library services and resources.

So, who are the Asian Americans and what are the library services and resources they need? What does it mean to be an Asian Pacific American librarian in the twenty-first century? As editors, we pondered this personal question on professional identity to delineate the scope of the book. Should we emphasize American roots in the United States and neglect the neighbors in Canada and Mexico? Can we define more broadly, such as Asians in the Americas, to include North, Central, and South America? Are national origins and borders central to the themes of this book? What about multiracial and adoptive members of our communities? How are they served? How do socioeconomic, educational, and non-English-language factors affect resources, access, and services? We deliberated on these questions, reviewed the literature, and discussed them at length via Skype meetings. Our research

led us to focus mostly on US-based instances of Asian American communities within the framework of immigration, but with an appropriate mindfulness about recognizing the global nature of the Asian diaspora.

*Asian American Librarians and Library Services: Activism, Collaborations, and Strategies* brings together contributions from librarians, educators and information professionals who are themselves of Asian American heritage, and other contributors who support the information and resource needs of Asian American communities. Taken together, the chapters and interviews voice an overwhelming conviction for diversifying the LIS field, library programming, and resources to better reflect the social and economic realities and information needs of Asian Americans in the United States. The contributors show that we care about diversity, that we acknowledge that it is painfully lacking in so many aspects of libraries and librarianship, and that libraries and the LIS profession must systematically integrate diversity and inclusion in their strategic priorities and practices, indeed, in their very mission, such that the rich diversity of experiences and histories of Asian Americans in library and archival collections, services, and programming are not only validated and recognized, but also valued and celebrated as vital components of the shared American experience.

This edited volume presents a myriad of experiences of Asian American professionals in the field of library and information sciences, archives, museums, educational institutions, and nonprofit and community organizations. From Canada to Mexico, from Japan to the Philippines, from New York to Los Angeles, from the American South to the Pacific Northwest, our contributors come from vastly different regions, and share their perspectives, narratives, and experiences working with Asian American collections and constituents. For example, some of our contributors' stories share how their families fled the scenes of war in Asia, in particular, Laos and Vietnam, or survived incarceration in the United States, in the case of Japanese American internment camps. The authors have a variety of professional backgrounds and accomplishments: from library deans to newly minted MLS librarians; from academic law librarians, archivists, curators, public and community librarians, to library leaders who are active in public, academic, national, and international organizations. They also have a wide range of expertise and specialization, ranging from digital asset management in academic libraries, Asian American Studies, and South Asian Studies oral histories to children's programming in public libraries and health sciences librarianship.

Readers will find that *Asian American Librarians and Library Services: Activism, Collaborations, and Strategies* is divided into three sections:

- Collections, Exhibits, and Resources
- Services, Outreach, and Programming
- Leadership Experiences and Perspectives

In the Collections, Exhibits, and Resources section, we have chapters and interviews that focus on general, digital, and special collections, Asian American-themed exhibits, and resources that highlight library organizations supporting Asian American librarianship, such as the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA), Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA), and Asian American Law Librarians Caucus (AALLC). Several contributors address the need to continue to chip away at biased and pejorative terms in the Library of Congress Subject Headings to improve accuracy, discovery, and access to resources by and about non-Western perspectives. We also learn about digitally available collections that connect us with previously marginalized or unavailable resources, such as tattoo oral histories. These contributions demonstrate the importance of advocacy and inclusiveness of minority perspectives and highlight the efforts to broaden library, archival, and museum collections on Asian America.

In the Services, Outreach, and Programming section, the chapters share best practices, case studies, and narratives of libraries supporting the diverse Asian American communities in the United States. Whether they are immigrant communities such as the Hmong in Fresno County, Asian American children in public libraries, or international students such as Korean groups in academic libraries, these contributions provide firsthand experiences in engaging with user groups through responsive resources, services, education, and innovative programming.

In the Leadership Experiences and Perspectives section, we feature chapters and interviews that consider Asian Americans in library leadership. These pieces explore challenges, opportunities, vision, and inspiration from library and information science professionals and leaders on issues of diversity and social justice, structural barriers, professional advancement, and community relevance. These individuals are change agents, who draw strength from their lived experiences as leaders in a profession that is still 87 percent white, and speak truth to the supposed "post-racial" era in America, intent on their resolve to make a difference in the profession. Our colleagues actively contribute to the profession through service in a variety of organizations, such as Korean American Librarians and Information Professionals Association (KALIPA), Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL), Association for Library and Information Science Educators (ALISE), Joint Council of Librarians of Color (JCLC), and American Library Association (ALA), to name a few.

Working on this project showed us that Asian American library professionals are insightful, resourceful, collaborative, and inspired to serve the public good and lead from where they are "to create magnificent change," as contributor Adriene Lim put it. Together, the book chapters attest to the core values of individual excellence, community engagement, and social justice that are embraced by and motivate the work of Asian American librarians all

across the United States and beyond. The volume recognizes and honors the creative and intentional work librarians do for their constituent Asian American communities, and shares best practices on promoting Asian American communities, resources, and outreach.

This project also showed us that there is a need to continue this dialogue, provide more publishing opportunities, raise awareness of the need for collecting resources about marginalized or emerging communities and providing services to them, and create more professional development and leadership skills-building opportunities for Asian American library professionals at all levels. We need more opportunities to validate, acknowledge, strategize, and collaborate with and learn from our colleagues all across librarianship and related fields. We need to mentor new library professionals to succeed and understand the value of supporting Asian American information needs. Indeed, we hope this volume adds to the existing works that highlight Asian Americans and libraries and inspires many more volumes that give voice to the commitment, contributions, and possibilities of a highly engaged and relevant Asian American library professional community.

#### NOTE

1. See Paul Ong and Elena Ong, *The Future of Asian America in 2040*, May 7, 2015, [http://luskin.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/AA2040\\_report.pdf](http://luskin.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/AA2040_report.pdf).

## *Part I*

# Collections, Exhibits, and Resources