Chapter 6
The Construction and Development of the Academic Digital Library of Chinese Ancient Collections

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ABSTRACT

The Academic Digital Library of Chinese Ancient Collections (ADLCAC) is a cooperative project which originated at Peking University Library of Ancient Collection in 2000. The project is one of the largest databases of ancient Chinese materials among global academic institutions which was created to connect large-scale academic libraries with ancient collections, and to expand the number of ancient materials and full-text image databases held by China's universities. This section introduces its development history, member libraries, resources, service mechanism, characteristics, and future development.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The planning and design of the Academic Digital Library of Chinese Ancient Collections (ADLCAC) originates from the Peking University Digital Library of Ancient Collections, and receives technical support from the China Academic Library and Information System (CALIS). Planning commenced in September 2000. By the end of 2003, the initial ADLCAC framework had been completed, and services were offered to domestic and international readers through a platform called "Mi Ji Lin Lang" (祕籍琳琅, meaning "an abundance of hidden book treasures"). Building on this foundation, CALIS proposed the Academic Digital Library of Chinese Ancient Collections. Since the project was initiated in April 2004, the database has developed into one of the largest web-based networks of ancient Chinese materials among global university institutions, and it is expanding its influence.

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The First Development Phase of the ADLCAC

The academic library system has the largest collection of ancient Chinese materials outside of China's public library system. Academic libraries are on the frontlines of service for academic teaching and research, and managing this collection and providing access to the ancient materials is an important part of their work. In the age of the Internet, many academic libraries are faced with the urgent task of digitizing and uploading ancient classic Chinese texts, and sharing these resources with other Chinese academic libraries.

Based on these considerations, in early 2004 the Peking University Library, together with the Nanjing University Library, the Beijing Normal University Library, and the Sichuan University Library, developed a plan to establish a digital library that would make their ancient Chinese materials accessible to multiple academic libraries. The project was called the "Academic Digital Library of Chinese Ancient Collections (ADLCAC)." This proposal received strong support from CALIS, and in June 2004, a digital library was approved as a first-level funded project on special databases, becoming a key project in CALIS' Tenth Five-Year Plan (CALIS Phase II). The first phase of the ADLCAC project ran from June 2004 to September 20th, 2006. A review of the work summarized the results after two years of hard work by all members as follows (Yao & Shen, 2007):

1. The first inter-university database of ancient Chinese collections was created, and the four participating libraries submitted 202,449 ancient materials metadata records, 5,467 book sample photographs and full-text images, and more than 10,000 electronic books.
2. Metadata standards and a shared, web-based union cataloging system for ancient materials was designed based on metadata standards. The design of the technical system was found to be reasonable, practical, and efficient. Using this cataloging system, all four participating libraries completed computerized retrospective cataloging of their ancient collections within two years of implementation.
3. An effective retrieval system called "Xue Yuan Ji Gu" (学苑汲古,meaning "academic ancient collections"), which used specific characteristics of the ancient materials and accommodated multiple search methods, was developed.
4. A set of digitization standards was devised for ancient materials, including metadata, cataloging, processing, and digitizing criteria.

After passing the quality evaluation, and being officially opened for public use, the ADLCAC received generally positive feedback from the public, and also attracted attention from domestic and international academic libraries. A number of academic libraries expressed a strong desire to join the project, and three additional member libraries were accepted: the East China Normal University Library, the Jilin University Library, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong Library. By the end of September 2010, all seven member libraries had submitted data to the ADLCAC, for a total of 310,000 ancient materials metadata records, 26,000 book sample page photographs and full-text images, and 10,000 volumes of electronic books.