

# Berkeley reveals a new Starr

The C.V. Starr East Asian Library brings Berkeley's extensive collections together for the first time, opens scholarly opportunities

By Dick Cortén

On March 17, a treasure trove in the central core of campus opened its tall bronze doors to the public, ready for scholarly business and a certain degree of tourism.

Sought and planned for decades the C. V. Starr East Asian Library became a reality during two years of construction, just across Memorial Glade from its organizational parent, the Doe Library.

The treasures that now reside in Berkeley's newest library have for decades been scattered around the campus, often stored in less-than-ideal conditions. They include over 900,000 volumes of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean materials, the largest repository of academic materials on contemporary China outside of that country, and the largest collection of stone rubbings — some dating before the year 1000 — among all research libraries outside of Asia.



Now they have a home, together, in the first freestanding library in the United States constructed exclusively for an East Asian collection. Its Henry Fong Rare Book Room contains a vault for the rarest of the rare, with temperature and humidity controls and modern security measures.

The push for such a facility came initially in the 1980s, from faculty in fields related to East Asia. Today, more than 70 Berkeley scholars teach over 200 courses concerning East Asia each year to more than 5,500 undergraduate and graduate students. This campus is one of the few institutions in the U.S. to offer five years in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language study.

Even in their former locations, with restricted hours of access, the library's materials have been compelling.

"When I graduate in spring 2008, the hardest part of leaving Berkeley will be saying farewell to the East Asian Library," said Janice Kanemitsu, a Ph.D. candidate in Japanese studies who is researching Japan's early modern period (1600–1868). "It is absolutely one of the top two libraries in the country for my field, both in primary texts and secondary scholarship."

"Not only does it have a vast collection of Japanese-language secondary scholarship in my field of specialization, I can also hold in my hands and read the very same books as readers of the Tokugawa period," she said. "Outside of Japan, perhaps only the Harvard-Yenching library (at Harvard University) has a larger collection of Tokugawa-period woodblock-printed books."

The facility will be a "knowledge hub to support scholastic research, exchanges of ideas and discoveries of new insights. It will become a key conduit where the East and the West converge," said Coleman Fung, a UC Berkeley alumnus and the CEO and founder of Open Link Financial Inc. He donated \$5 million for the new library's Coleman Fung Media Center, which will have links to public and private databases in Japan, Korea and China that relate to the humanities and social sciences. "It is critical," Fung said, "that Berkeley furthers its mission by providing such a constraint-free conduit where cultural gaps can be turned into educational opportunities and bridged accordingly."



## C. V. STARR EAST ASIAN LIBRARY BASICS:

Dedicated: October 20, 2007. Opened: March 17, 2008. Location: north of Doe Library, across Memorial Glade, near Havalind Hall, on Observatory Hill below McCone Hall. How big: four floors, 68,000 gross square feet. Designed by: Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects. How much: \$46.4 million. Private sources: more than a thousand donors, among them the C. V. Starr Foundation (cornerstone gift of \$8 million, pivotal to the project) and a donor group honoring former Berkeley Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien, the engineer-scholar who became the first Asian-American to lead a major U.S. research university (collective contribution more than \$6 million). Named for: Cornelius Vander Starr (1892–1968), a Berkeley undergrad, who became an insurance pioneer with the American International Group with a deep interest in Asia. Peg Skorpinski photo

