



# International Leads

*A Publication of the International Relations Round Table of the American Library Association*

Volume 17

March 2003

Number 1

## The Central University Library Rises from the Ashes in Bucharest, Romania

By James P. Niessen

The dominant image for Romanian librarians of the events of 1989 is of the smoking ruin of the Central University Library (BCU), caught in the crossfire on what is today officially Revolution Square. The fire consumed 500,000 volumes, including the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts with the papers of many leading writers, most traumatically those of Mihai Eminescu, and various incunabula and other early imprints.

### The old building

The ruined building had been dedicated in 1914. It gained a central role in the life of the country's leading university, as a host for distinguished public lectures. After 1948, it was regarded as a national center for Romanian literary bibliography. An international campaign to aid the library after 1989 brought the donation of 4 million volumes from Britain, over a million guilders worth of books, equipment, and assistance from the Netherlands, large book donations from France, the United States, Canada, and Italy, a monetary contribution from the German Research Society, and gifts from many other countries. The inevitable duplicates were distributed by BCU librarians to libraries in Romania and the newly independent Republic of Moldova.

The General Director of UNESCO issued an appeal for support of the reconstruction and modernization of the library "by means of voluntary contributions in cash or in the form of equipment and services." The first step in the resurrection was the launch of a computerized catalog already in 1990, making the BCU the first library in the country with networked acquisitions, cataloging, OPAC, and circulation systems. International funds and government support made possible not only the restoration of the original landmark building facing the square, in eclectic style, but the construction of a new wing in modern style on adjoining land, appropriated

for this purpose already in 1931. As the result of this work, the library's total internal space and reading room area more than tripled; the stacks space more than quadrupled and can now accommodate two million volumes, and there are 150 public computers where there were none previously.

### The restoration of the building

Library Director Ion Stoica rededicated the library in the presence of the country's political leaders and distinguished foreign guests on November 20, 2001, 110 years after its founding. He recounted with justifiable pride the earlier history and recent reconstruction of the library and spoke eloquently of its future. The new library was more than "a large documentary entity. Its true



The new entrance to the Central University Library.

The banner reads "110 Years."

(Photo: James P. Niessen, November 2002)

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## The Romanian Library

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quality is tied to the new philosophy on which the establishment is based, a philosophy centered on placing information resources in a commons...[in] a stimulating and productive relationship between real and virtual, a means of integration with higher education and with research, which will better capitalize upon Romanian resources of intelligence, i.e. a model that is dynamic, scalable, far from the frozen and dusty libraries of yesterday.”

Today’s students enter the library not through the massive old doors and staircase facing the square, but through a flat expanse of glass indenting a corner of the sleek new tract that faces a side street. Inside, lockers and coat check quickly accommodate your extra belongings. You exchange your library card for an entry card that you swipe at an electronic door. Once you pass into the atrium, staff at the check-in counter provide a seating card for one of the seven reading rooms (you can select your preferred seat on the computer monitor) in exchange for your entry card. Each reading room has a reference collection in designated subjects. An attendant takes your seating card and contacts the page if you have requested materials identified from the OPACs.

### Access to the collection

Information on the library Web page makes it clear that Ion Stoica’s vision of a networked library has not yet been realized. You see no card catalog in the atrium of the BCU because it was destroyed in 1989. The BCU is the largest of the libraries of the University of Bucharest, but one of fourteen in all. Of their estimated 1.8 volumes today, thirty-seven percent are in the central library, and only thirty-seven percent of these are in the OPAC, which itself includes only the BCU’s collection. The rest is in the thirteen branch libraries which saw the

overwhelming portion of library circulation, visitors, and on-site use of collections last year. Seven branches have their own independent OPACs; the rest have none but card catalogs. Having completed their move into the new facility only a year ago, BCU librarians are now working toward improved collaboration in reference and collection development throughout the system. The strategic



Entering the library atrium.  
(Photo: James P. Niessen,  
November 2002)

plan stipulates the progressive completion of retrospective cataloging, the eventual integration of the central and branch catalogs, and steps toward cooperative collection development across the university and outside it.

In early November 2002, I was graciously received by Ion Stoica and his colleagues. We spent productive days of research in the BCU and in the larger collection, but more spartan surroundings of the Library of the Romanian Academy. A few weeks later, colleagues in the BCU honored Dr. Stoica at the end of his many years of leadership of the Central University Library. With them, I wish him a pleasant retirement and many years to come. La mulți ani! (James P. Niessen is *World History Librarian at the Alexander Library, Rutgers University in New Brunswick.*)

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*International Leads* (ISSN 0892-4546) is published quarterly by the International Relations Round Table of the American Library Association in March, June, September, and December. The first issue was published in 1957. IL contains news about international library activities, the international work of ALA and other organizations, and people and publications in the field. IL is indexed by *Library Literature* and *Library and Information Science Abstracts* (LISA) and is sent free to all members of IRRT (dues \$10); non-ALA members can subscribe for \$12 per year by writing to International Relations Office, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611. Materials for IL should be sent to *International Leads* Editor, **Sha Li Zhang**, Wichita State University Libraries, 1845 Fairmont, Wichita, KS 67260, USA, e-mail:

[shali.zhang@wichita.edu](mailto:shali.zhang@wichita.edu)

## Message from the IRRT Chair

By Karen Starr

In a few short months, librarians will be converging in Toronto from around the world to support the work of libraries and librarians, learn from the conference programs, and enjoy the hospitality offered at the 2003 ALA/CLA Annual Conference. Are you interested in participating in the full scope of activities of the International Relations Round Table? There is plenty to see and do and all of you are welcomed at the round table.

The International Visitors Center Subcommittee, chaired by Bleue Benton from the public library at Oak Park, Illinois, will be greeting and assisting international attendees in the International Visitors Center at the conference. Librarians from the U.S. and Canada are encouraged to contact Bleue at [bbenton@oppl.org](mailto:bbenton@oppl.org) and sign up for a time slot to be a host. It is a wonderful opportunity to learn about Toronto from our Canadian co-hosts and to meet librarians from a myriad of countries around the world.

The ALA annual conference is a maze of meetings, programs, exhibits and many people. It can be confusing enough to one who has attended the conference on a regular basis. The Orientation Subcommittee chaired by Judith Lin Hunt from Montclair State University is looking for seasoned conference participants who want to mentor an international guest by answering questions, helping them sort out the conference program, and identify locations in Toronto related to the conference. Contact Judith at [huntjl@mail.montclair.edu](mailto:huntjl@mail.montclair.edu) if you are interested in helping.

IRRT provides a support infrastructure to host international guests at annual conferences as illustrated by the above activities. Round Table members also provide opportunities for conference attendees to attend

programs and activities which feature international topics. There will be an international poster session coordinated by the International Posters Subcommittee chaired by Marty Kesselman from Rutgers University. The International Papers Subcommittee, chaired by Susan Schnuer of University of Illinois Library, encourages the scholarly exchange of ideas on library issues between U. S. librarians and their colleagues from other countries. The Subcommittee is calling for papers and seeking four to five presenters from foreign countries who represent a wide diversity of opinions and approaches to the library field. The official IRRT program occurs on Monday, June 23, between 1:30 and 5:00 p.m. This year the time slot will be shared by the Program Subcommittee chaired by Pat Harris from NISO and the Sister Libraries Subcommittee chaired by Fred J. Gitner at Queens Borough Public Library, both of which will be hosting programs of international interest. There will be a short IRRT membership meeting held between the two programs.

Come to the International Librarians reception on Monday, June 23, between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. and enjoy meeting our international guests. Our thanks go to Zita Murphy from Ryerson University Library, Toronto, for all her work in identifying a reception site. The reception will be held at the Elgin and Wintergarden Theatre Center. This center has been hailed as one of the most beautiful theatre complexes in the world. It is the only stacked theatre operating in North America and it contains two separate, completely restored Edwardian theatres. To view photos of the theatre, go to [http://www.wttc.com/elgin\\_experience.html](http://www.wttc.com/elgin_experience.html). Reception co-chairs, Deborah D. Mazzolini from Belvedere-Tiburon, California and Peter

Kargbo at New York University Library, along with the members of the Reception Subcommittee, are planning a number of activities along with the good food and good conversation to create an enjoyable evening. Stay tuned for information about how to purchase your tickets for the reception.

I encourage you to visit the IRRT website for more information about how you can participate in the Round Table programs as well as upcoming information about the 2003 ALA/CLA Annual Conference to be held in Toronto, June 19 through June 25, 2003. Stay tuned on the ALAWORLD listserv for additional activities and information about the International Relations Round Table.

### Welcome New IRRT Members!

Atlanta – Fulton Public Library  
Attn Tammy Flood  
Jonathan Bengtson  
Cathy Carpenter  
Paul Coleman  
Anna Dahlstein  
Susan Dlmattia  
Patricia Duplantis  
Carmen Elsuezabal  
Loida Garcia-Febo  
Julia Glynn  
Evelyn Lord  
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Clara Ogbaa  
Marie Paiva  
Lyndsey Shaeffer  
Claudia Silverman  
Younghee Sohn  
Lauren Stara  
Marinus Swanepoel  
Susan Swanson  
Reid Toyama  
Tricia Van Ryn  
Peg Walther



## The 2002 Feria Internacional De Libros

By Julia Schneider

Think of a major event in which hostesses wear slick black dresses; the players talk through clouds of self-generated smoke, and the noise is deafening. If this brings to mind your local bingo parlor, you probably were not one of the more than 200 North American librarians who traveled to Guadalajara on an ALA/FIL pass program in December 2002 to attend the Feria Internacional de Libros (FIL). The program sponsors participants for a three-night stay at a Guadalajara hotel, plus breakfasts, and \$100.00 towards airfare to Mexico. The hotel in question, the Vista Plaza del Sol, is near the Exposition Center where it all happens: cocktail dresses, smoke, noise – and books.

For those unfamiliar with the FIL, here are a few facts. The Feria is rated as the second biggest international book festival, after Frankfurt's, with attendance last year estimated at 400,000 visitors. Approximately 13,500 professionals also participated. Their ranks made up of publishers, vendors and librarians from over thirty countries. A survey of the Who's Who of the festival lists representatives from Alemania to Zimbabwe, not to mention scores from the U. S. A. who come to stock their shelves with materials for Spanish-speaking populations.

If you get the impression that the FIL is not your usual regulated affair, you are right. This year, the featured country was Cuba. When I got back to my library, a co-worker told me that she had heard about riots at a Cuban opening. I missed them, but did learn about opening at the Artes de Mexico for a new book about eroticism and fruit in Cuban painting (*Cuerpos en bandeja*, by Orlando Gonzalez Esteva), listened to David Unger read from his new novel, which caused a few cheeks to glisten, and heard from Adan Griego of Stanford about the new books about Gloria Trejo, the Juarez murders (*Huesos en el desierto*) and a scandalous new photo book, *Ricos Y Famosos*.

Mexicans live in America, but their America is not the United States. Those expecting a Spanish-speaking ALA are in a surprise. Part of the reason for this must lie in the very incongruity of having a major book fair held in a country where librarianship is in a somewhat seminal stage, where it is estimated that only seven percent of the population, or seven million people, read on a regular basis, and where, to quote a recent article in *Criticas* "What's missing ... is the pure and simple joy of reading." Libraries, especially public and school libraries run under the state education department, have no long-held and honored tradition here. In early December 2002, President

Fox announced the approval of a new 80 million dollar (811 million peso) to the library devoted largely to technology, many felt that this money might have been spent to enhance collections in all libraries throughout the Republic.

And yet, at 5:00 p.m., each day during the book fair, when the public was admitted to the fair, hordes of school children were



Misael Perez from Biblioteca Iberoamericana at a restaurant after a tour. (Photo: Julia Schneider, December 2002)

waiting to come in. When I left at the closing time one evening, some of them were still poring over items in the Scholastic booth, long past their bedtimes. Surely, for those students, reading is not the "sort of punishment" discerned as typical by the *Criticas* article. One of the most moving experiences for me came during the tour of the august Biblioteca Iberoamericana (Octavio Paz) housed in a centuries-old convent. In the recently-opened children's section of the library, which featured a lamentably small, but attractive collection of books, the English-speaking tour guide, Misael Perez, spoke of how street kids came into the library to try to learn to read or, at least, to look at books. "We don't have to go out to get the kids; the kids come and find us," he said. This statement prompted a fellow tour participant to comment that, had there been a donation box available for tour members at that moment, it would surely have been filled then and there.

This was my second Feria. Therefore. I was beyond the virgin-initiation stage that most participants find so confusing. One bit of advice, each year, it seems that first-timers not expect to accomplish very much, so as not to be disappointed or burnt-out. Partly as a result of having done it all before, I found I was able to do much more than I accomplished in 2000, but another important factor was involved. Two years ago, I was looking at books for a state agency that required three bids for every item purchased and was dealing with problems of shipping

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## *From ALA's International Desk* By Michael Dowling

### **Registration Deadline Approaching for IFLA in Berlin --**

For those interested in attending the IFLA Conference in Berlin, August 1 through 9, 2003, the deadline for early registration is May 1, 2003. Remember to use the ALA IFLA number **US-0002** to register at the discounted IFLA member rate. Registration and other information on the conference can be found at <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/index.htm>. Also, IFLA has officially changed the name of its conference to *the World Library and Information Congress*. The change is designed to ensure that the event has a greater impact outside the profession and in the city in which it takes place.

### **Looking for Communities to Host Russian Librarians --**

The Open World Program is still looking to communities to host Russian librarians this year. Any community with a desire to show Russian librarians and information managers how American libraries work with government, local businesses, and civic organizations to provide library service to the community is encouraged to apply to host a delegation. Each five-person delegation includes one librarian who serves as bilingual and bicultural facilitator. The local community would be responsible for organizing both programming and home hosting. The program should

provide hands-on experience, direct observation, and substantive exchange with professional counterparts. Local communities will be reimbursed for their major expenses. If you think your library and community would like to host a delegation of five Russian librarians between May 14 and 21 or October 5 and 12, 2003, or if you have any questions, please contact Vera DeBuchananne, Open World Program Manager, at [vdeb@loc.gov](mailto:vdeb@loc.gov).

### **Global Reach --**

Thank to all of you who took the time to add your international activity profile to the *Global Reach* database. We still need all IRRT members who have been involved in international activities to create a profile. It only takes a few minutes. To access the site and create your own profile, please visit at <http://www.ala.org/workinternational> and click on the *Global Reach* link. You can also edit your profile at any time.

### **International Members to Receive Discounts --**

I would like to thank the ALA Publishing Department and Publishing Committee for their commitment to ensure that ALA international members receive member discounts on ALA publications. It helps in our efforts to make us a more globally friendly organization.



## **Barbara Ford on the New Post**

**“I am very excited about the opportunity to combine my lifelong interests in libraries and the international issues in this important position,” explains Ms. Ford.**

Barbara J. Ford, American Library Association (ALA) president in 1997-1998, has been selected to direct the prestigious C. Walter and Gerda B. Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign. She also has been named the C. Walter and Gerda B. Mortenson Distinguished Professor. The center was established through generous gifts from the Illinois alumnus C. Walter Mortenson and his wife, Gerda B. Mortenson in 1989 and in 1991 respectively. The Center seeks to strengthen international ties among libraries and librarians, regardless

of their geographic location or access to technology. Since its inception, the Center has hosted more than 500 librarians from over seventy-five countries who traveled to the United States to participate in training programs.

“Libraries are key to an informed citizenry, and the continued strengthening of international ties among libraries and librarians worldwide is essential. International partnerships such as those developed by the Mortenson Center assist in developing training for librarians and stronger libraries around the world. I look forward to being part of this important work.” Ms. Ford said.

Ms. Ford is also a veteran of the Peace Corps Volunteer program with service in Guarare, Panama, and Managua, Nicaragua. She gave presentations on library issues in the United Arab Emirates, Mexico, Peru, Hungary, Argentina, Denmark, Zimbabwe, Cuba, India, Sweden, and China. Her latest co-edited book is *Libraries: Global Reach—Local Touch*, published in 1998 by the American Library Association. The URL for the Center is: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/mortenson>.

## News and Announcements

### Hong Kong Book Fair Offers Free Pass Program for U. S. Librarians

--The Hong Kong Book Fair offers opportunity for ALA members to participate in the "Free Pass Program for Librarians" to attend the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual fair, July 23-28, 2003. The Fair will provide selected U.S. and Canadian librarians who collect Chinese language materials four nights of hotel and free registration. Those eligible to participate in the program are personal members of ALA who work in the area of Chinese language acquisitions and are working to build their Chinese language collections to better serve their community of users. The Hong Kong Book Fair provides:

- 400 exhibitors from Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan;
- first-hand access to the latest publications for public and academic libraries;
- the latest in software and electronic publishing, and
- opportunity to purchase materials at large discounts.

The deadline for application to the "Hong Kong Book Fair/ U.S. Librarian Invitation Program" is April 10, 2003. For an application, please visit <http://www.ala.org/work/international/hongkong.html>. For more information, contact:

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Chicago, IL 60611

Phone: (312) 280-3201

Fax: (312) 280-4392

Email: [intl@ala.org](mailto:intl@ala.org)

### Volunteers are needed for IVC

--The IRRT International Visitors Center Committee is looking for volunteers to staff the International Visitors Center (IVC) at the ALA/CLA conference in Toronto. IRRT sponsors the IVC for foreign librarians. It is located in the Metro Toronto Convention Center and is open Friday, June 20 through Monday, June 23, 2003.

Volunteers assist international visitors by answering questions and giving directions at the conference. The IVC offers local information, maps, conference materials, a message board, computers for international visitors, and a place to meet with friends and relax. We need people to staff the IVC and meet and greet our foreign colleagues during specific time slots. It is a great way to meet a variety of people from around the globe. If you are interested in helping, please contact Bleue Benton at

Oak Park Public Library

834 Lake Street

Oak Park, IL 60301

(708) 383-8200 x144

[bbenton@oppl.org](mailto:bbenton@oppl.org)

### Looking for Mentors for International Librarians in Toronto

-- The challenge of navigating the ALA Annual Conference can be a daunting experience for librarians from abroad. To help international librarians make the most of their conference experience, the International Relations Office is once again coordinating a mentoring program and looking for the U.S. librarians' assistance.

A little bit of the mentor's time at conference (and/or correspondence before the conference) is needed to review the conference program, make suggestions on a schedule of programs and on how to visit the exhibits. The helpful advice and suggestions from the mentor can help make a big difference for librarians from abroad and be a rewarding experience for the mentor. If you would be interested in being a mentor, please contact [intl@ala.org](mailto:intl@ala.org)

### International Librarians Reception

-- Open to all conference attendees, this reception offers a unique opportunity to network with hundreds of librarians and information professionals from around the world. Join us for a mixing of cultures and ideas, regional cuisine, hors d'oeuvres and open bar. The reception will take place in the Elgin Wintergarden, 189 Yonge Street in Toronto, between 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., on Monday, June 23, 2003. This event is free to international librarians outside the United States and Canada. For others, the advance ticket is \$25 through the ALA registration and \$30 onsite.

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## The 2002 FIL

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that blighted every buy from the word "go." In 2002, I came with pesos from an American school in the Republic and an empty suitcase into which to put everything I bought. It is impossible to convey how much easier this was. Though distributors like Linda Goodman of Bilingual Publications Company, Michael Shapiro of Libros Sin Fronteras, and Rakesh Kumar of Multicultural Books and Videos do all they can to ease the problems inherent in cross-border shipping, their task is an enormous one.

I thank the memory of Arnulfo Trejo, David Unger, Steve Carey, Delin Guerra, and Michael Dowling at FIL and ALA who help to bring together books, events, and people at this extraordinary festival. Though I am on my way to being a seasoned pro, I am just beginning to find my way around this immense, confusing but exciting fair. (*Julia Schneider is on leave as the Librarian at the J.F. Kennedy School, the American School of Queretaro.*)



## Impressions on Libraries in China

By William Wong

I joined a delegation of Chinese studies librarians from the U.S. on a ten-day tour of China in November 2002. We visited libraries, archives, museums, publishing houses, and government agencies. The tour began in Beijing, the capital city of China. Our visit coincided with the convention of the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Our second stop was Shenyang, known as the center of heavy industries in China. We learned of the unique circumstances of the eBook Department of the Liaoning Publishing Group. This department is funded by its provincial government, yet has launched a project producing large Chinese databases in order to participate in the competitive marketplace. We continued to the city of Xi'an, which served as the dynastic capital of China thirteen times in China's history. The trip was concluded in Shanghai. The libraries and museums are on par with the New York Public Library and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the city. There are not only a wealth of resources, but also strengths in particular subjects such as concession and guild history, genealogies, and the history of making music, among other subjects.

The most noticeable change is in the library architecture. Many library buildings constructed in recent years resemble the "five-star hotel" with a rotunda at the entrance, complete with marble floors and stairways. One can sense the luxury in this new environment. Besides the look, the design of the building is functional and user oriented as there are OPAC and other workstations,



A group of librarians from Shanghai Library, Library of Congress, University of Virginia at Charlottesville, University of Illinois, University of Michigan, University of California, and an official from China's Ministry of Culture visited Shanghai Library.

(Photo: William Wong, November 2002)

reading rooms, open stacks, and staff offices, enabling the libraries to offer more service programs. In the 1980s, the National Library of China (NLC) was the largest one in terms of size. The new facilities of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library in Beijing and the Shanghai Library are larger than the NLC. The Shenzhen Library in Guangdong Province, which is under construction, is said to be even larger. The NLC deputy director showed us the lot on which the old buildings stood and indicated that the second phase of the library would be constructed there. At a time of budget constraints, it is encouraging that China does not shy away from investments in library services.

The libraries and museums are on par with the New York Public Library and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the city. There are not only a wealth of resources, but also strengths in particular subjects such as concession and guild history, genealogies, and the history of making music, among other subjects.

Librarians in China are public employees. They have official ranks. For instance, the rank of Research Librarian is the highest rank and is comparable to that of a university professor. We saw many examples of forward progress in the management of Chinese libraries. For example, the existing librarian performance review criteria were deemed inadequate and new evaluation measures, such as management by objectives, staff input and peer review, creative and scholarly activities, and employment by contract have been added. The library laws, including American style "ADA" regulations, were enacted at some local and provincial levels. The national legislature, the People's Congress, to be held this coming spring, can be expected to pass a set of national laws for library services. These initiatives would suggest that Chinese people now realize that the legalistic mind is an element in a progressively open society.

In response to the potential challenges of the World Trade Organization membership, Chinese publishers are consolidating into larger groups based on different regions. Within the group, individual units retain their specialty in either publishing or sales. Publishing and distribution will eventually be separated and the goal of

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## Libraries in China

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specialization will be met. Meanwhile, the newly formed publishing groups are determined to face the challenges of intellectual property rights. While local courts handle hundreds of counterfeit cases each day, those cases involve publications from small and unknown presses. Since the first copyright law enacted in 1990, China has revised it twice, once in 2001 and again in 2002. The government has tried its best to deal with this difficult and complex issue. However, it will probably take considerable time and the use of both education and enforcement to eventually reverse the trend among the general population.

Any observation on China would not be complete without a word about the

dual system of administration and party. At all levels of government and organizations, there are top administrators and party secretaries. In an academic setting, the university president and the party secretary of

The government has tried its best to deal with this difficult and complex issue on copyright. However, it will probably take considerable time and the use of both education and enforcement to eventually reverse the trend among the general population.

that university are equally important. The same is true for a library director and a party secretary in that library .

The party secretary, according to political theory, functions as a “watch dog.” If one considers an administrator as the executive, then the party chief must be the legislator. In recent years, if an organization is being privatized, the role of the party secretariat has been reduced and its authority weakened. While many libraries have initiated entrepreneurial projects such as fund raising, rental collections, new publication displays sponsored by publishers, fee-based appraisal of rare books, and advertisements in library publications to boost their revenues, academic and public libraries will never be privatized and the dual system may be around for quite awhile. However, the Chinese leader Jiang Zemin’s recent call for acting on widening the constituent base by allowing capitalists to become party members could change the course of China’s future. (*William Wong is Asian Studies Librarian, University of California Libraries, Irvine.*)

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