
Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association— A History of APALA and Its Founders

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ABSTRACT

THIS ARTICLE DESCRIBES THE SOCIETAL AND professional, as well as the personal, contexts which motivated the creation of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) and its predecessor, the Asian American Librarians Caucus/Association (AALC/A). The article includes profiles of the Asian/Pacific American library leaders who established these organizations and background information about APALA and AALC/A.

INTRODUCTION

The Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) was established at the 1980 American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in New York. It was incorporated in the state of Illinois in 1981 and initiated affiliation with the ALA in 1982. APALA's founders included Lourdes Collantes, Suzine Har Nicolescu, Sharad Karkhanis, Conchita Pineda, Henry Chang, Betty Tsai, and Tamiye Trejo Meehan. According to Collantes, most of the first generation Americans of Asian descent who made up this group of concerned librarians sought to focus on *librarians* of Asian and Pacific Islander ancestry with the new organization; hence the use of the word "librarians" instead of "libraries" in its name. It was felt that the ALA, the large national professional association, had libraries and library services as its primary focus. This focused program provided limited opportunities for ALA to devote time or attention to the specific needs of Asian/Pacific American (APA) librarians. An association such as APALA would support their aspirations and serve as a forum for the

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LIBRARY TRENDS, Vol. 49, No. 1, Summer 2000, pp. 88-109

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discussion and presentation of work-related issues, successes, and problems. Other areas of importance to the founders of APALA were communication with the wider ALA membership and the public at large to gain visibility and recognition for the contributions of APA librarians to the profession and the APA community. There was a predecessor of APALA, the Asian American Librarians Caucus (AALC), which came into official existence at the 1975 ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco as a caucus of the ALA Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged (OLSD). The AALC was the culmination of the determined spirit and dedicated work of its co-founder, Janet M. Suzuki (1943-87).

THE ASIAN AMERICAN LIBRARIANS CAUCUS/ASSOCIATION (AALC/A)

The AALC's purpose statement included the goal to support and encourage library services to the Asian American community. Suzuki's strong commitment to social responsibilities ensured that this goal would become a primary focus of the AALC. She was a Sansei (third generation Japanese American) who was born in Westboro, Ohio, when many other Japanese Americans of her generation were being born in internment/concentration camps elsewhere in the United States. She graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1968 (bachelor's degree in history) and earned the M.S.L.S. at the University of Denver in 1969. Her first job was in the Applied Science and Technology Department of the Central Library at the Chicago Public Library, and her entire career was spent providing reference services in that library's business, science, and technology-related divisions in increasingly responsible positions. Suzuki was active in professional organizations and was appointed to committees of ALA, including the OLPR Advisory and OLOS Advisory, and of LAMA, PLA RASD, and GODORT. She was a member of the Special Libraries and Illinois Library Associations as well as the Chicago Library Club. Significantly, she was appointed co-chair of the ALA Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged (changed to the Office for Library Outreach Services [OLOS] in 1980), Ad-hoc Subcommittee on Minority Concerns from 1980 to 1982, and pressed for its establishment as a Council Committee on Minority Concerns, which occurred in 1981. Her ALA committee work brought her into contact with Jean Coleman, director of the ALA OLSD/OLOS. Coleman encouraged and supported Suzuki's efforts to form a caucus of Asian American librarians to address issues of concern to themselves and especially to promote and improve library services to Asian American communities.

The Black Caucus of ALA, which had been organized by E. J. Josey at the 1970 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Chicago, and REFORMA, which was established the following year by Arnulfo Trejo at the ALA Annual Conference in Dallas, provided inspiration to Suzuki and served as role mod-

els for their socially responsible missions and member issue-driven organizational structures. Suzuki also acknowledged the founding in 1973 of the Midwest Chinese American Librarians Association in her own area of the country and the older Chinese Librarians Association in California as excellent precedents of Asian American librarians joining together for a common, albeit regionally-based, purpose. Suzuki's dream—to provide an opportunity for Asian American librarians of all Asian ethnicities to work together at the national level within the ALA structure—was influenced by her work with national Japanese American community organizations and participation in the Asian American movement. The Chicago Chapter of the Japanese American Citizen's League (JACL) was the first to encourage Sanseis to aspire to leadership positions in the 1970s; other chapters of this national organization reserved those positions for the Niseis (second generation Japanese Americans). Suzuki was active in the JACL and was elected to its board of directors in 1973; she retained a position on the board through 1983. It was an important way for her to give something tangible back to her community.

The Asian American movement, according to William Wei (1993), began in the late 1960s and was primarily the result of the convergence of two historical developments: (1) the emergence of a generation of college-age Asian Americans, and (2) the public protests surrounding the Vietnam War. Suzuki graduated from library school at a time (1969-70) when 100,000+ baby-boomer Asian Americans, 83 percent of whom were Chinese and Japanese Americans, were enrolled in colleges and universities. Except for activists from the working class, these middle-class second- and third-generation Chinese and Japanese American college students made up the majority of "movement" activists and were the movement's main driving force. Wei's excellent historical narrative of the Asian American movement describes the alternative presses that emerged during the late 1960s and 1970s on both coasts and emphasized the power of the printed word to college students in the movement whose ethnic community stories had so long been ignored by the mainstream media.

Suzuki was drawn to the issues that were rallying points for Asian American students from reading alternative press articles and networking with friends and colleagues. West Coast issues included the living conditions in San Francisco's Chinatown, the lack of Asian American studies curriculums at colleges and universities, the Manzanar Relocation Camp Pilgrimages to memorialize the Japanese American evacuation and internment, the firing of Los Angeles Coroner Thomas Noguchi, and the destruction of San Francisco's International Hotel. In the East, important issues were the loss of ethnic identity and ethnic pride (especially among younger Japanese Americans), the concept of pan-Asian unity, and the poor living conditions in New York's Chinatown. The Vietnam War and the underlying feelings of anti-Asian racism that it propagated figured

prominently in the agendas of political activists on both coasts. There were branches of the movement in the midwest, and Suzuki was an active participant in Chicago-area causes. As a member in the Chicago JACL, she supported the general resolutions that were passed at the 1970, 1972, and 1974 JACL National Conventions urging the organization to pursue a redress bill (for the mistreatment of West Coast Japanese Americans during WWII) in Congress. In 1976, when she was a board member, another convention resolution was passed which formed a National Committee for Redress. That action, aligned with the concerted efforts of two other groups (the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations and the National Council for Japanese American Redress) eventually resulted in President Reagan's signing of the Civil Liberties Act in 1988 to provide reparation payments and a formal letter of presidential apology to Japanese American concentration camp survivors. The Japanese American redress campaign was tremendously important to Suzuki as a social justice/civil rights issue. She did not live long enough to experience the satisfaction of the president's signing of the 1988 Act.

Suzuki joined the 1974 crusade led by the Chicago Chinatown New Youth Center (NYC) to convince the Pekin (Illinois) High School basketball team to change its name from the "Chinks" to some other nonracist symbol. NYC members and other Asian American supporters, including Suzuki, traveled to Pekin (near Peoria) to make a presentation to the school and urge the student council to hold a referendum on the question. They noted that the school mascot, Mr. Bamboo, who welcomed fans wearing a silk gown and cap and sporting a drooping mustache and queue, degraded Chinese Americans. The teach-in developed a new social sensitivity among the students but did not achieve the desired results. In 1982, the school administration changed the name of the team to the Dragons after determining that "Chinks" was indeed derogatory to Chinese Americans. Suzuki felt that the decision of the school administration was overdue but she applauded it; there was still student body opposition to the change and older Pekin High School alumni still called themselves "Chinks," making the victory bittersweet. Also in 1974, Suzuki spearheaded the establishment of Chicago's Japanese American Resource Center (JARC) which was co-sponsored by the local JACL chapter and the Japanese American Youth Organization; she was an advisor to the latter and a board member of the former. The purpose of the JARC was to establish a collection of materials on Japanese Americans to serve the needs of JACL members, students, and other members of the community. She utilized her background in librarianship to help her community, selecting and organizing the materials and providing access to resources of interest to Chicago's Japanese Americans; she was named the first chair of the JARC in 1975.

Suzuki's interest in creating a pan-Asian American organization was influenced in part by the reality that there were not enough Japanese

Americans in the library profession and active in ALA to form a separate caucus, and there already were librarian associations for Chinese Americans (in 1976, the Midwest Chinese American Librarians Association changed its name to the Chinese American Librarians Association to reflect a large and growing national membership; the sizable Chinese Librarians Association in California later merged with it). However, Suzuki aspired to a broader representation of viewpoints than that of one Asian ethnic group and hoped that an organization that welcomed all Asian ethnicities—including Asian Indian, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, as well as Chinese—could bring a group of individuals with different cultural heritages and unique perspectives together to discuss librarianship and service issues common to all Asian Americans. She knew that Asian Americans were not considered by many in the profession to be a marginally-represented minority group or even an acknowledged minority group within it. In a chapter of *Opportunities for Minorities in Librarianship* (Scarecrow Press, 1977) that Suzuki and Yamashita (1977) wrote, they noted the June 1972 nine-page feature article in *American Libraries* on “Recruitment of Minorities” which never mentioned Asian Americans. The lack of visibility of Asian Americans in the profession and the perception that no special effort needed to be exerted to recruit them were Suzuki’s motivation to form an Asian American librarian’s group. Lastly, and perhaps most important to Suzuki, there were large populations of Asian Americans, predominantly in urban areas, who were equally invisible and therefore often ignored when it came to the provision of library services and whose needs the caucus could address.

Suzuki was present at ALA’s first conference program to address an issue of particular concern to Asian Americans. The program, “Asian American Consciousness Raising: Overcoming Distortions, Gaps and Lacks in the Media,” was sponsored by the Ethnic Materials Information Exchange Task Force (EMIETF) of the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) at the 1973 ALA Annual Conference in Las Vegas. It was an honor for this writer to be invited to participate as a panelist who reacted to the remarks of Frank Chin, the noted Chinese American playwright, editor, and literary commentator/critic at the first ALA conference of my career. Panelists also told their personal stories about the joys and challenges of being an Asian American librarian. This author met Suzuki at that program, and she said that it was exciting to see new-to-the-profession Asian American librarians participating in a conference program dealing with social issues. She described her efforts to organize the AALC and said that the EMIETF program was the type of thought-provoking forum that she envisioned the AALC sponsoring. She also said that she was working with Jean Coleman, director of the ALA OLSD and the staff liaison to the SRRT, who was also present at the program.

At the ALA Annual Conference in New York the following year, Suzuki

asked me to attend the upcoming Midwinter Meeting in Chicago to discuss the AALC with Henry Chang, Yen Tsai Feng, and herself. The AALC was born in January 1975, and Art Plotnik, editor of *American Libraries*, preserved the birth in photos that appeared in the March 1975 issue. The co-founder of AALC, Henry Chang, was a dynamic and visible spokesperson for the caucus and was elected as its first chair; he would be the first to confirm, however, that Suzuki did most of the organizational groundwork for the caucus since she was conveniently located in Chicago near the ALA and he was in the Virgin Islands. A Chicago Public Library colleague of Suzuki's who was an early supporter of the AALC and later a founding member of APALA, Tamiye Trejo Meehan, recalls that Janet Suzuki worked with others, including Jean Coleman, on the initial AALC purpose statement and bylaws, usually at evening meetings held in the lunchroom of the ALA headquarters on Huron Street. Suzuki was, at that time, one of the highest-ranking (acting division chief) Japanese American/Asian librarians within the Chicago Public Library. She was visible, outspoken, and persistent in her effort to develop the caucus. Chang remembers that, in the late 1960s and early 1970s when he became active in ALA, some Caucasian colleagues believed that there should be an Asian (and Pacific) American librarians organization like the Black Caucus of ALA and even attempted to organize such a caucus for Asian librarians. Chang was concerned and embarrassed about this paternalistic patronizing offer and decided that, if an Asian American librarians group was needed, Asian Americans must be responsible for its establishment. He and Suzuki joined forces, leading to the formation of the AALC in 1975. In 1977, the AALC became the Asian American Librarian Association (AALA) for state of Illinois incorporation purposes. From the beginning, the AALC leadership determined that the caucus would be closely aligned with the ALA OLSD for financial and office support and particularly the provision of conference meeting/program venues that such an arrangement allowed. Meehan states that Jean Coleman nurtured the AALC as one of several ethnic librarians groups within the ALA structure. The AALC's connection to ALA OLSD gave the few Asians in the association a rallying point, a means of combining their voices so they could be heard.

The first AALC program was held at the 1975 ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco and featured Harry H. Kitano, the renowned UCLA professor of social welfare and sociology, whose keynote address was "Asian Americans as a Middleman Minority." The program drew a large and appreciative audience of Asian Americans and other conference attendees. Suzuki was enthusiastic about the auspicious beginning program which she hoped would be a prototype for future conference events planned by the AALC.

Suzuki began to have serious health problems in the late 1970s and was compelled to take a disability retirement from the Chicago Public

Library in the 1980s. Despite her worsening condition, she volunteered as an assistant in the understaffed ALA OLOS and consulted for the OLOS Advisory Committee. A new organization, the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) was born in 1980. Suzuki may have precipitated its creation; she served on the AALA's Constitution Revision Committee in 1979-80, and it is not known if that revision caused an internal rift between AALA members. In any case, while APALA's purpose statement (drafted in 1980-81) was similar to that of the AALA, and the new group had attracted several AALA members, Suzuki felt that there was still a need, and there was room for another professional association to respond to the concerns of Asian/Pacific American librarians according to the social responsibilities mission that had driven the AALA. She chose to establish and incorporate the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Midwest Association (APALMA) in 1981, not as a chapter of APALA but as an alternative to it. The new APALMA and the Midwest Chapter of CALA held a joint conference at Rosary College in May 1982 that she felt was helpful in legitimizing APALMA. According to the brochure for the "APALMA/CALA First Joint Annual Conference," the purpose of APALMA was to provide a forum for discussing problems and concerns of Asian/Pacific American librarians, the exchange of ideas by Asian/Pacific American librarians, and supporting and encouraging library services to the Asian/Pacific American communities. The recruitment of Asian Americans into the profession and the seeking of library school scholarships for APA students were no longer a part of the purposes of this organization.

Suzuki was as determined to make APALMA into a professionally recognized and respected association as she had been with AALA. She passed away from complications of lupus in 1987; the APALMA, which was so inextricably tied to her social consciousness and determined spirit and to herself, ceased to exist without her leadership. APALA, which had absorbed most of the former AALA membership, had already eclipsed the APALMA in stature among APA librarians and prominence within the ALA at the time of its affiliation in 1982 and had become the primary association for pan-Asian/Pacific American librarians to join.

ASIAN AMERICAN LIBRARIANS CAUCUS/ASSOCIATION, 1975-1980

The families of Janet M. Suzuki and Henry Chang have no files on, or archives for, the AALC/AALA housed at ALA headquarters. Jean Coleman retired as director of ALA OLOS in 1987 (the year of Suzuki's death) and passed away in 1996. Some of the information about the organization and its founders is anecdotal—i.e., from conversations with Janet Suzuki at/after work (I was employed by the Chicago Public Library from 1975 to 1978), at ALA conferences, and frequently on the phone, from July 1973

to 1987. I have been unable to determine if there was an AALA chairperson in 1979–80.

AALA Chairpersons:

1974–75 Janet M. Suzuki

1975–76 Henry C. Chang

1976–77 Leo C. Ho (AALC became the AALA in 1977)

1977–78 Vivian Kobayashi

1978–79 Raymond Lum

1979–80 ?

Other Elected Officers: Vice chairperson/Chair-elect, Secretary, Treasurer

Purpose Statement:

- To provide a forum for discussion of problems and concerns of Asian American librarians
- To provide for the exchange of ideas by Asian American librarians and to increase communication between Asian American librarians and other librarians
- To support and encourage library services to the Asian American community
- To recruit Asian Americans into the library/information science profession
- To seek funding for scholarships in library/information science for Asian Americans

Standing Committees: Affirmative Action, Liaison, Membership, Program, Publicity, Recruitment, and Scholarship

Highlights/Accomplishments:

- Published four newsletters annually through the ALA OLSD/OLOS.
- Held programs at the 1975–79 ALA Annual Conferences and membership meetings at those conferences and at the 1975–79 Midwinter Meetings.
- Sent a Survey of Library Services to Asians to the fifty public libraries in the country with the largest percentages of Asians in their service area populations. The survey was supported by the ALA OLSD/OLOS. The survey analysis revealed that library resources for, and services to, Asian Americans were quantitatively inferior compared to those available to other Americans.
- Produced *Asian Americans: An Annotated Bibliography for Public Libraries* through the ALA OLSD/OLOS.
- The chairs wrote articles on the AALC/AALA and library services to Asian Americans for *The ALA Yearbook* in 1976-78.

THE ASIAN/PACIFIC AMERICAN LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION (APALA)

A group of Asian/Pacific American librarians met at the 1980 ALA Annual Conference in New York to establish the APALA. Whether this effort was supposed to be a transition from the AALA or the establishment of a new organization was not documented; what is evident is that there was a definite change in the leadership from the AALA to APALA and a shift of organizational goals and program content. There may have been representational issues of geographic region and institutional type, as well as generational considerations, which motivated the primary APALA founders, but they shared the AALA's founders' concern about the invisibility of Asian American librarians. As Lourdes Collantes recalls, the focus of the APALA was to be on Asian/Pacific American librarians. Suzine Har Nicolescu agrees, stating that the existence of and contributions to the profession by APA librarians had been virtually unnoticed and unrecognized up to that point in time. Sharad Karkhanis was elected the first APALA president, and he retained the position for a second term. He was determined to set up APALA on a sound financial and programmatic foundation which he accomplished during his two-year tenure. Karkhanis was also responsible for heightening the viability of the organization through advocacy for APALA in membership drives and published conference program proceedings.

The founders of APALA hoped to address the visibility issue as its first priority. They succeeded in creating immediate and significant association-wide recognition for APAs and APALA by inviting Senator S. I. Hayakawa, the nationally famous/controversial linguistics professor and second term legislator, to be the speaker at the first APALA program held during the 1981 ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco. Hayakawa, who had been president of San Francisco State University in the era of the Asian American Movement's campus demonstrations for ethnic studies curriculums, proved to be a fitting attraction for the diverse ALA audience that APALA hoped to reach. Collantes noted that Hayakawa's presence became a keynote event for the entire ALA conference, with Information Access Corporation funding a reception and the Asia Foundation hosting a dinner; APALA had no funds to support these functions on its own. In addition to presentations by APA library leaders and high profile APAs from other professions, APALA conference programs in subsequent years have featured a cultural entertainment component that highlights the Asian heritages of its members and a reception featuring Asian refreshments for program attendees and members. Combined with the membership meetings, the program/reception/meeting package constitutes a conference within the ALA annual conference, typically held over the Sunday/Monday ALA dates.

FOUNDING MEMBERS OF APALA¹*Lourdes Y. Collantes*

Lourdes Y. Collantes was born in Manila, Philippines, and earned a bachelor's degree at the University of the Philippines. She emigrated to the United States and earned her M.L.S., M.Ed., and Ph.D. at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She is generally acknowledged as one of the three primary founding members of APALA. (Another Filipina American librarian, Conchita Pineda, director of the Citybank North American Financial Library in New York, assisted in the establishment of APALA and served as its president in 1988.) Collantes's professional career has included an internship at the East Orange (New Jersey) Public Library; appointments as library subject division and acquisitions department head and library science assistant professor at the University of the Philippines; a job with the Rutgers University Mathematical Science Library while working on her M.Ed.; and appointments as associate librarian, acting director, and librarian/professor at the SUNY College at Old Westbury Library. Collantes is an active member of ALA and has participated on/chaired several awards committees, including the David Clift and Louise Giles Minority Scholarships and the H.W. Wilson Library Staff Development Award. Her ACRL activities included appointment to the Lazerow Fellowship for Research Committee. She also served as chair of the ALA Pay Equity Committee. Her APALA commitments included a term as president (1983-84) and service chairing almost all of its standing committees, as well as serving as newsletter editor. She is presently a member of the APALA Executive Board. In addition to ALA and APALA, Collantes belongs to the Association for Computing Machinery and ASIS. She serves on several college-wide, SUNY-wide, and Long Island faculty and library service committees/councils. Among her numerous awards are the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Librarianship and induction into Kappa Delta Phi, the national honor society in education. She was selected to be interviewed for *Women of Color in Librarianship* (McCook, 1998) and is listed in *Who's Who Among Asian Americans* (Unterberger, 1994).

Collantes chose librarianship as an undergraduate major because a friend was interested in it; the friend left library science for law, but Collantes continued her studies into graduate school because she was "hooked." She lacked mentors when she started out in the profession and turned to friends for information and advice. The kind of support she received from her Ph.D. dissertation advisor would have been helpful earlier in her career, she states. Perhaps a greater emphasis on information science and a more immediate progression to the Ph.D. program from the M.L.S. are the only changes to a satisfying career that Collantes would envision if she had a chance to start over. She admitted encountering subtle and not so subtle discrimination and the glass ceiling in her work

life; her response was to return to school to bolster her credentials to break through the barriers to advancement. Her Asian background, which she feels is exemplified by self-discipline, high performance standards, cooperation, and an emphasis on the common good of the group rather than the individual, has been a source of strength for her. Using her analytical and evaluative skills in collection development/acquisitions and the challenges of one-on-one reference service to students give her much enjoyment and satisfaction. She would, however, steer young APAs toward computer science and technology where there are greater opportunities rather than into librarianship unless there is evident enthusiasm for, and commitment to, library service. Her own commitment to APALA has been nothing less than enthusiastic and has endured for twenty years.

Suzine Har Nicolescu

Suzine Har Nicolescu was born in Seoul, Korea, and earned her bachelor's in English Language/Literature and Fine Arts at Ewha Women's University in Seoul. She received the M.A. in Modern Languages/Literatures and Comparative Linguistics and the M.L.S. at the University of Denver and the Ph.D. in Library/Information Science at Simmons College, Boston. Nicolescu is acknowledged as one of the three primary founding members of APALA. She began her career at the University of Denver Reed Library as a cataloger/bibliographer; worked her way across the country to the Illinois State University Library, Normal, as an assistant professor/assistant librarian; and on to the SUNY at Stony Brook Library as an associate librarian/senior cataloger. Her history with the CUNY system began in 1968 as instructor/assistant to the chief of Technical Services at the City College of New York. Nicolescu's position as chief of Technical Services/deputy chief librarian started her long association with the CUNY Medgar Evers College. After she was promoted to associate professor/associate librarian for Bibliographic Control and Automation, she took a leave of absence to become acting registrar for the college. An appointment as director of information systems and services for the college and acting chief librarian was followed in 1985 by her selection as professor/chief librarian/chair, Library and Information Division. She held that position until her retirement in 1999 and was one of approximately thirty Asian American library directors in the country during that time. Her ALA involvements include appointments to the Nominating and Organization committees, and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), LAMA, American Library Trustees Association (ALTA), Ethnic Materials Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT), and International Relations Round Table (IRRT) memberships and committee work. She helped organize APALA and served as its president in 1986. She belongs to the NYLA, CALA, ASIS, and IFLA and many CUNY-wide, college-wide, and library departmental committees. Nicolescu has been widely

published and has made several presentations at regional, national, and international forums. Among her honors are scholarships/fellowships for all graduate work, appointments to boards of trustees/advisors for the Brooklyn Public Library and the Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science, and the Fulbright-Hays Fellowship in 1984.

Nicolescu's background—growing up in an educated family of artists where creative expression was valued and early interest in linguistics and languages—led her to study literature, fine arts, and comparative linguistics and to pursue a master's degree at the University of Denver where she was offered a job as foreign language cataloger/bibliographer upon graduation. The library position began her career and sparked the interest in, and lifelong dedication to, the profession that she loves. She was fortunate to have had two extraordinary mentors. The first, Bodan Wynar, was the founder and president of Libraries Unlimited and chief of Technical Services and library school professor at the University of Denver when she started work at the library. Wynar helped Nicolescu to get a scholarship and scheduled her work hours so that she could attend library school. The second mentor was Seoud M. Matta, dean of the Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science who served as a role model for Nicolescu later in her career. Since her career path has included library positions that allowed use of her knowledge of eight languages and the cultivation of her major interest in comparative linguistics, librarianship would continue to be Nicolescu's choice if she had to start over; there is a range of scholarly interests which were accommodated through her work. To overcome the discrimination that has touched all levels of her professional and personal lives, Nicolescu found that recognizing discrimination for what it is and dealing with it with patience, objectivity, and effort allowed her to achieve her goals. Her Asian ancestry espoused the advantages of hard work and perseverance, influenced her artistic ability, and sustained the ethical and moral values in her relationships with others. She has obtained the greatest satisfaction from academic librarianship in seeing the work of librarians become an integral part of scholarly and intellectual pursuits and the more recent recognition of the importance of libraries and librarians resulting from the availability of global information. Nicolescu encourages anyone to join the profession as long as they realize that librarians should be scholars in many disciplines and that it takes diligence to acquire that knowledge. From the confidence that is built from the acquisition of knowledge will come excellent library service. Since the beginning, Nicolescu has forthrightly shared her knowledge with, and expressed her convictions to, the APALA.

Sharad Karkhanis

Sharad Karkhanis was born in Bombay, India, and earned a diploma in Library Science from the Bombay Library Association before receiving

the bachelor's in Economics at the University of Bombay. He enjoyed his first job in the USIS Library, Bombay, and earned the M.L.S. at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, after a period as a library trainee in the Leyton (England) Public Library. Like Collantes and Nicolescu, he pursued a second master's degree (the M.A. at CUNY Brooklyn College in International Relations/American Government) before earning the Ph.D. in American Government at NYU. Karkhanis is acknowledged as one of the three primary founders of APALA. He was a library trainee at the Montclair (New Jersey) Free Public Library while he attended library school and worked for the East Orange Public Library as a librarian prior to and after graduation. He was appointed assistant librarian at the CUNY Brooklyn College Library and in 1964 was hired by Kingsborough Community College. He is currently professor and head of Periodicals/Serials at the college library. Karkhanis has also served as adjunct lecturer in history at Kingsborough since 1981 and was adjunct lecturer in social science at Bronx Community College in 1972-73. Activities in the ALA include membership on the Council Resolutions, the Bogle International Library Travel Fund (chair) of International Relations committees, and the Reference Books Bulletin Editorial Board of the Publications Committee, as well as appointment to several ACRL and RASD committees. He was a founder and president of the APALA from 1980 to 1982. He is a member of the Library Association of the CUNY (president, 1967-69) and serves on many departmental, college-wide, and CUNY-wide committees. He is the author of two books and numerous journal articles, has published book reviews (in *Booklist* and *American Reference Books Annual*), and has given presentations at regional and international conferences. Karkhanis is listed in *Who's Who in the East* (1998), *Who's Who in America* (1999), *Who's Who in American Education* (1993), *Who's Who in Library and Information Services* (Lee, 1982), *Contemporary Authors* (May, 1984, p. 282), and the *International Authors and Writers Who's Who* (Kay, 1989, p. 452).

Karkhanis attributes the poor handwriting that affected his grade on India's Civil Service exams and the inability to find a job after graduating from high school, coupled with his imagination and appearance, as the impetus to his seeking a job at the USIS Library in Bombay. The experience of that first job stayed with him and was the motivation for pursuing librarianship as a career. He did not have mentors in his career and learned to survive on his own using diplomacy and intelligence/common sense on the job. If given the chance to start over, he would probably have chosen law (as an extension of his interest/studies in American government) over librarianship, but he has no regrets. He experienced discrimination in his professional career and confronted it successfully through legal processes in one instance; other times he has had to compromise. Karkhanis states that his Asian ancestry has been neither a help nor a hindrance in his professional life. What has provided

the greatest satisfaction in his career is the stress-free work environment in the library that he feels will very likely lead to a healthier longer life. He would encourage young Asian Americans to pursue a career in librarianship by promoting the opportunities for fresh ideas, assertive leadership, and intellectual growth that would change the status quo. He believes that new librarians can be the change agents the profession needs. The diplomacy and reserve that is reflected in Karkhanis's responses helped to make him a leader in the APALA and may be unacknowledged gifts of his Asian ancestry.

Henry C. Chang

Henry C. Chang was born in Canton, China, and earned the Bachelor of Law degree at National Chengchi University in Taipei, Taiwan. He was a co-founder of the AALC and helped to establish the APALA. (Another Chinese American librarian, Betty Tsai, professor/systems librarian at the Bucks County Community College [Newton, Pennsylvania] Library, was also involved in the founding of the APALA. She was elected its president in 1987.) When Chang was attending the University of Missouri to pursue the M.A. in sociology and demography, he worked part-time in the library. His interest in librarianship began then, and he went on to earn the M.A.L.S. at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. As with the other high achievers in this group of APALA founders, Chang obtained a second master's degree before receiving the Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Minnesota. After his first job as a library assistant, he became a book selector at the Braille Institute of America (Los Angeles); held reference librarian, instructor/section head librarian, and assistant division head positions at the University of Minnesota. He left the mainland for the Virgin Islands in 1974 where he began a fifteen-year career as chief librarian of the University of the Virgin Islands; was director of the Institute for Training in Librarianship at the College of the Virgin Islands; was project director for initiatives of the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities; was director of libraries; Museums and Archeological Services/Territorial librarian; and was special assistant to the commissioner/library consultant for the Department of Planning and Natural Resources for the U.S. Government. He returned to the mainland to become the president of his own investment corporation and was appointed director of library services at the Braille Institute of America in 1990. He is one of approximately thirty Asian American library directors in the country.

Chang's ALA involvements include election to council, two appointments to the OLOS Advisory Committee, membership on the Beta Phi Mu Award Jury, ACRL, ASCLA, and GODORT committee assignments and appointment to special presidential committees. He was the first chair of the Asian American Librarians Caucus in 1975 and is active in APALA. He is

active in the Library of Congress National Library Services Western Regional Library Group (vice chair/chair-elect); a member of the Chinese American Librarians Association; and was active in COSLA, NCLIS, and many territorial library, university, and government organizations. He has published numerous articles and presented papers at state/national conferences and has consulted for libraries in Puerto Rico, the British Virgin Islands, and California. Honors Chang has received include scholarships, fellowships, and grants; the Virgin Islands governor's Certificates of Appreciation/Achievement; and he is listed in *Who's Who in the World* (1998), *Who's Who in America* (1999), *Who's Who Among Asian Americans* (Unterberger, 1994), and *Who's Who in Library and Information Services* (Lee, 1982).

As noted, Chang's library career began with the part-time job at the University of Missouri. Several graduate studies advisors provided guidance and assistance to him while he was attending schools, but he had no career mentors. His enjoyment of working in the public life and his abilities in library management would lead him to choose librarianship again if he had to start over, although it would depend on the opportunities available in the bigger environment at the time of decision-making. Chang spoke about discrimination and the glass ceiling as barriers that were not necessarily a problem for him but that do exist for others. A comment about having to work harder as an Asian American to prove oneself to be as good as or better than the rest echoes a similar point made by Nicolescu. Chang noted that access to many top library administrative positions is less of an option for Asians, but the United States still provides the greatest opportunities for qualified minority candidates.

Working in the mainstream of library management as opposed to a specialized subject/language collection area, Chang does not think that his Asian ancestry has helped him in any way. His high level of job satisfaction comes from the intellectual stimulation of the academic library environment, the involvement in the political process of public libraries and, in his current position, serving individuals who have disabilities.

Chang, Collantes, and Nicolescu all agree that bureaucracy and budget constraints in library administration were the least satisfying elements of their jobs. The technological advancements and challenges of the new millennium, combined with the increasing importance of Asia to this country's and the world's economy, should attract Asian Americans to the profession and provide opportunities for their particular interests and talents. Chang serves as an excellent role model for future Asian American librarians through the interesting career paths he has chosen and the dedication he has shown to the publics he has served.

Tamiye Trejo Meehan

Tamiye Trejo Meehan was born in Chicago, Illinois, and received a bachelor's degree in Accounting at DePaul University, Chicago. Meehan

pursued an M.L.S. at Rosary College's Graduate School of Library Science and later earned an M.B.A. at DePaul University. She worked with the other APALA founding members to establish the association in 1980 and, with Henry Chang, served as a transitional reference between the AALA and the APALA leadership. She began her library career at the Schaumburg (IL) Township Public Library as a part-time reference librarian. Her long tenure with the Chicago Public Library (CPL) started as a branch reference librarian in 1974. She was soon promoted to branch manager and then to branch district chief in 1979 and was eventually appointed chief of staff development for the CPL. She left the CPL for the directorship of the Indian Trails Public Library District in Wheeling, Illinois, in 1997. Meehan's ALA commitments have included appointment to the OLOS Advisory Committee, LAMA, and PLA committees; she organized the PLA MLS Branch Coordinators Discussion Group and served on the board of the EMIERT. She was recognized for her work overseeing twenty-one branches of her district in the CPL for nineteen years, during which she increased circulation despite declining materials budgets and fewer staff, renovated buildings, created branch Friends groups, trained/developed staff, built language collections, and introduced new technology. She is listed in *Who's Who in America* (1999) and is one of approximately thirty Asian American library directors in the country.

Meehan attributes the intervention of one of her mentors, Kathleen Weibel of the Chicago Public Library, as the spark that inspired her to seek a career in librarianship. Weibel identified the need for minority librarians to reach out to, understand, and serve Chicago's growing minority communities and, while she was establishing deposit collections, she cultivated individuals who had the potential to be librarians. She wrote a grant application to create the Illinois Minority Manpower Scholarship, and Meehan was one of the ten recipients of that award. The scholarship enabled her to attend library school at Rosary College and to work part-time.

In addition to Weibel, the CPL's director of staff development, Peggy Barber, ALA's head of Communications, has mentored Meehan, especially during library school. Both mentors arranged internships and introductions to the ALA's leaders and provided the scholarship recipients high visibility. This early mentoring was appreciated and invaluable. Meehan would not change the directions that librarianship has taken her if she had to start over. The opportunity to make a difference at the branch neighborhood service level in changing Chicago communities would still excite and challenge her.

Her career barriers were probably caused by other than racial or gender discrimination, she admits, having decided long ago to take pride in all parts of her family heritage that built her self-confidence and a thick skin. Her Asian background has been helpful in that few she meets ever

forget her name. Being Asian American provides the credentials, credibility, and trust she has experienced when joining ethnic community organizations and serving minority communities. Meehan's greatest satisfactions have accrued from building ethnic collections and providing library services to Chicago's, and now its suburb's, changing ethnic neighborhoods; being able to network with colleagues from all over the country due to her participation in ALA is another source of satisfaction.

In her enthusiastic endorsement of librarianship as a career choice for young Asian Americans, Meehan emphasizes the ability to change lives and lead others to full participation in American society as the skills librarians must possess. She feels that a public service orientation is paramount and the facility to welcome change is vital. Asian Americans should thrive in the new technology environment of library science as long as they are willing to interact with both sides of a digitally divided society. Meehan's passionate dedication to public service, especially to help minority communities to become engaged in American society, is but one of the many admirable qualities of this Asian American library leader.

ASIAN/PACIFIC AMERICAN LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION, 1980-

The establishment of the APALA archives is still in the proposal stage. Each APALA president and some elected officers have papers that need to be collected, organized, and preserved. The information about APALA is from the APALA Web site at the University of Illinois, Chicago (www.uic.edu/depts/lib/apala).

Presidents:

- 1980 – 82 Sharad Karkhanis
- 1982 – 83 Sally Tseng
- 1983 – 84 Lourdes Collantes
- 1984 – 85 Victor Okim
- 1985 – 86 Suzine Har Nicolescu
- 1986 – 87 Asha Capoor
- 1987 – 88 Betty Tsai
- 1988 – 89 Conchita Pineda
- 1989 – 90 Ichiko Morita
- 1990 – 91 Abdul J. Miah
- 1991 – 92 Charlotte Chung-Sook Kim
- 1992 – 93 Marjorie Li
- 1993 – 94 Ravindra N. Sharma
- 1994 – 95 Erlinda J. Regner
- 1995 – 96 Amy D. Seetoo
- 1996 – 97 Kenneth A. Yamashita
- 1997 – 98 Abulfazal M. F. Kabir
- 1998 – 99 Soon J. Jung

1999 – 00 Patricia M. Wong

2000 – 01 Sushila Shah

Other Elected Officers: vice president/president-elect, secretary, treasurer, two members at large. *Executive Board:* president, past president, and other elected officers

Purpose Statement:

- To provide a forum for discussing problems and concerns of Asian/Pacific American librarians
- To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas by Asian/Pacific American librarians and other librarians
- To support and encourage library services to Asian/Pacific American communities
- To recruit and support Asian/Pacific American librarians into the library and information science professions
- To seek funding for scholarships in library/information science programs for Asian/Pacific Americans
- To provide a vehicle whereby Asian/Pacific American librarians can cooperate with other associations and organizations having similar or allied interests

Standing Committees: Awards, constitution/bylaws, finance, membership, newsletter/publications, program, publicity, recruitment and scholarships. Annually appointed committees include nominations and local arrangements

Highlights/Accomplishments:

- Publishes four newsletters annually
- Has held programs at all ALA Annual Conferences since 1981 and membership meetings at those conferences and ALA Midwinter Meetings since 1981
- Publishes conference program proceedings
- The presidents wrote articles on the APALA for *The ALA Yearbook of Library and Information Services* in 1986–90
- Held a joint APALA/CALA program at the 1983 ALA Annual Conference in Los Angeles
- Has given Distinguished Service Awards to APALA leaders
- Analyzed demographic data of the 100 Asian/Pacific American librarians in *Who's Who in Library and Information Services* (ALA, 1982) in 1985
- Profiled members of APALA according to institutions and ancestry in 1986
- Provided representative to participate in the ALA Executive Director's Special Committee on Headquarters Affirmative Action, 1989

- Wrote the ALA Policy Manual Statement 60.6 on Library and Information Services to Asian Americans; adopted by ALA Council in 1992
- Provided representative to participate in ALA President-elect's Diversity Council, 1995
- Wrote "ALA Goal 2000: A Challenge and an Opportunity for Asians and Pacific Islanders for Equal Voices Many Choices—Ethnic Library Organizations Respond to ALA's Goal 2000," 1997
- Endorsed the proposal for the ALA Spectrum Initiative and donated \$1,000 to the Fund for America's Libraries to continue the Spectrum Initiative, 1996-98
- Provided representative to participate in ALA Spectrum Initiative Steering Committee in 1997

Planning for the Future:

- Joint APALA/CALA National Conference of Asian American Librarians for June 2001
- Presentation of the Ching-chih Chen Leadership Development Award (jointly sponsored by APALA and CALA) in June 2001+
- APALA Book Award for Asian/Pacific American literature
- APALA Scholarship Award for Asian/Pacific American library school students

APPENDIX

Questionnaire sent to APALA Leaders (Questions sent to Chang, Collantes, Karkhanis, Nicolescu, Meehan)

- Was there anything in particular, in your ethnic, cultural or family background; work experiences, or friendships/professional referrals, that led you to a career in librarianship?
- When you became a librarian, did you have someone who served as a mentor in advising and guiding you? If so, tell me about the mentor—how you met, his/her position, the type of help s/he gave you, etc.
- If you had a chance to start all over from the beginning of your career, what would you do the same and what would you change in your career path?
- As you advanced in your career, did you ever encounter barriers (e.g., glass ceilings or subtle/overt discrimination) due to your Asian/Pacific ancestry? If so, how did you deal with those situations? If not, why do you feel that you were not subjected to discrimination?
- Would you consider your Asian/Pacific ancestry to have been helpful to you in your career? If so, in what way?
- What has given you the most satisfaction in your career in librarianship? The least satisfaction?
- What would you tell an Asian/Pacific American high school senior or college freshman that would make him or her seriously consider library and information science as a profession?
- What was your role, if any, in planning for and organizing the Asian American Librarians Caucus in 1975 and/or the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association in 1980? Why did you think that such (an) organization(s) was/were needed at the time (whether or not you were involved in planning or organizing the Caucus or the Association)?

NOTE

¹ Data gathered from résumés and questionnaire provided in Appendix.

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