ONE LANGUAGE, DIFFERENT ROMANIZATION RULES: THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PINYIN CONVERSION PROJECT

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Our Project

2001-2021

Chinese Romanization and North American Libraries

Wade-Giles (adopted in 1957)

- Easy for Western users
- Conventional standard
- Use of the same letters to represent different sounds
- Frequent use of diacritic marks
- Changing user needs

Pinyin (adopted in 1999)

- Accuracy and clarity
- International ISO standard
- Pinyin eco-system: scholarly & non-scholarly
- Task impossible? Conversion of accumulated bibliographic records
- Reliable computer technologies
- Chinese Romanization Guidelines
- Politics and sentiments

Key Players:
- LC – Initiator and leader
- CEAL – Coordinator of the network of East Asian Libraries
- RLG & OCLC – Bibliographic utilities

Major Timeline:
- Aug. 1, 2000: Moratoriums on Chinese language authority work and the cataloging of Chinese materials
- Oct. 1, 2000: Day 1, when Pinyin officially became the standard for Chinese Romanization in library operations
- Oct. 1, 2001: Day 2, when RLG and OCLC started to convert bibliographic backfiles

Major Accomplishments*:
- Chinese Pinyin Romanization Guidelines
- Conversion of over 15,900 authority files
- Conversion of over 3,200,000 bibliographic records
- Conversion of individual libraries’ bibliographic records


Reflections

Professional Sustainability:
- Adapting to evolving information ecosystem
- Building the East Asian Library community
- Being open-minded and keeping learning

Embrace Changes, Embrace New Technology and Possibilities!

Our Team

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